Energy conservation, especially during the fall and winter months, has always been a top priority of the Rutland School District in Rutland, Vt. With some 3,100 students, the Rutland School District serves the city of Rutland and the adjacent communities of Rutland Town, Chittenden and Mendon. So it came as no surprise when in 1983 the school board voted to retrofit a middle school, two elementary schools, a behavioral management school and an intermediate school in an effort to lower the district’s annual heating bill. Each of the buildings was constructed in the 1950s.

The retrofit entailed the replacement of all glass walls and brick with an exterior insulation and finish system, and the installation of new, high-efficiency windows at three schools. Also included in the project was the addition of 18 inches of insulation to all ceilings, the replacement of inefficient oil burners, the introduction of energy-efficient ballasts and the replacement of all incandescent lighting with fluorescent fixtures.

In the process, the district cut oil consumption from 250,000 to approximately 190,000 gallons a year, according to Bruce Williams, the school district’s director of buildings and grounds. The resulting savings enabled the district to totally recover its retrofit costs in just seven years.

When in 1995 the district built a new high school (pictured) and technical center, it again selected EIFS to provide an energy efficient cladding for the buildings. Now the school board is contemplating 5,000-square-foot additions to each of two elementary schools that are clad with EIFS. If the project proceeds as planned, the additions will likely be sided with EIFS to ensure a uniform look and to generate additional energy savings.

The performance of the EIFS installed to date has met or surpassed all of the district’s expectations, Williams says. While the cladding has worked well, there has been minor moisture intrusion around some of the windows, which Williams attributes to a lack of proper caulking and flashing.

“We recognize the need to provide better maintenance, but we haven’t always had the manpower or budget to get the job done to our liking,” he said.
Williams will soon invite bids from contractors to re-paint the EIFS on some of the older school buildings, which were last painted in 1990.

In the meantime, the district is bracing for another cold winter, and is grateful that the EIFS cladding continues to generate substantial savings in fuel costs. “Thanks, in part, to the EIFS cladding, our oil consumption has remained very stable over the years,” Williams asserted. “The decision to install EIFS on 80 percent of our buildings has probably saved us a million dollars.”