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School goes solar with rooftop panels

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Curious children eyed a rooftop at the Cornerstone Learning Center, watching as the building was transformed into the city's first solar school.

On Wednesday, workers installed solar panels on the roof of the small private school, located on Hartsfield Road. It's the only local school with a photovoltaic system connected to the city, meaning the solar panels will feed power to the city system.

The 2-kilowatt system will help save \$500 per year. Although the utility savings aren't huge, there's another bonus, according to Tony Brown, upper-school and development director.

"It was also a question of what can we use as a teaching tool," he said.

Software will record how much solar power is generated. The information will be collected on a Web site that each classroom can access. Students will use math and science to understand the benefits.

Private donors are paying half the \$20,000 cost. The state is paying the other half. OneWorld Sustainable, a Georgia company specializing in renewable energy, installed the panels.

Meanwhile, the Leon County district will be teaming up with the city to bring solar panels to some of its schools. Work on the "Schools on Solar" project is expected to begin next month at Oak Ridge Elementary. The city will cover the cost of the Oak Ridge project, while customer contributions will go toward panels at other schools.

Several students seized the chance to ask the pros questions about solar energy.

"I think it's cool that we are the first school in Leon County to have this," said 9-year-old Sam Whitfeld.