



## CAELI COE Fellowship Case Study: Maia Steward

2034-224 Cohort

### FELLOW BIO: Maia Steward

*Maia Steward is a Continuous Improvement Specialist with the Mendocino County Office of Education. Maia designs & facilitates professional learning opportunities for educators about NGSS, Environmental Literacy, Universal Design for Learning, Accelerated Learning, Arts Integration, Instructional Design for Belonging inside and outside the classroom and more. Maia is dedicated to improving educators' capacity to meet the challenges ahead by providing inspiring and supportive experiences to further their practice and connect educators to their driving purpose.*



### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

County Name(s)	Mendocino
<a href="#">CCS (CCSESA) Region</a>	Region 1
Student Enrollment	12,846
% Unduplicated	68.9%
% Free or Reduced Price Meals	73.5%
% English Learners	19.8%
% Enrolled in Special Education	13.5%
Ethnic/Racial Demographics	Spanish Speakers: 2,485 Urdu - 7 Vietnamese - 10 Filipino - 5 Arabic - 6

### 1) ORIGINAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS

The core purpose of this fellowship is to build the capacity of local educational leaders to launch and sustain high impact county/regional environmental literacy and sustainability initiatives. *Why did you originally want to join a fellowship with this focus? (100 - 150- words)*

I am a returning member of this fellowship for a second year because I find it to significantly improve the quality of my initiatives around Environmental Literacy. The focused sessions about Curriculum, Campus and Culture create a framework that improves my understanding of where I have access points and opportunities for collaboration. Like salmon swimming upstream, it is far easier to take on the challenges of climate change together. Since environmental literacy is

inextricably linked to the current climate crisis, camaraderie is key and increasing the scope of understanding is critical. I find this program to be a true fellowship because I am able to think deeply and design initiatives with colleagues from across the state. I have used many of the ideas from this program to support both formal and informal educators as well. Given the urgency of climate change and ecological overshoot, I wanted to make sure I had a cohort of collaborators to provide the best possible messaging and programming to the educators in my region.

## 2) KNOWLEDGE AND INCREASED CAPACITY


At the heart of this program is attention to increasing foundational knowledge and skill building for environmental and climate literacy, as well as sustainable and climate-resilient schools efforts. This took place at the retreat, monthly workshops, and through the online toolkit. Where did you experience the most growth in your knowledge and skills related to being a leader for environmental and climate action in schools?

The advantage of participating in a fellowship such as this for two years is that some ideas take time to absorb and process. In the first year of the fellowship I was able to launch several initiatives, such as the STEAM Expo, and provide a proof of concept. In the second year, I have been able to make those initiatives systemic and begin to expand access points for new initiatives to be built within existing systems. The first year of the fellowship provided a wealth of ideas but I could not take them all in. The second year has given me time to figure out how we can support Environmental Literacy throughout Mendocino County by leveraging far more community partners and departments within our county office of education.

## 3) ACTIONABLE STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Provide a high level overview to your actionable plan responding to the prompts below.

Link to Pitch Deck

 M. Steward (Mendocino) Pitch Deck - COE Fellowship 23-24

Provide a high level overview to the different **programs and networks** that you included in your plan for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.

- Engage more school sites to participate in the Science & Engineering Fair & continue to build out the STEAM Expo with Envi Lit themes each year
- Continue to build enrollment at the annual MCOE Science Retreat for Educators (each year has an Envi lit topics in workshops)
- Continue to support adoption of NGSS aligned science curriculum with a robust [WEBSITE](#), communities of practice & curriculum guidance with a focus on AB 285 climate change

	<p>support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement Year 1 of <a href="#">The Greening Schools Award</a> (GSA)</li> <li>● Implement Year 2 of the <a href="#">LCSSP Naturalist Program</a> to engage students in environmental action projects</li> <li>● Further promote systemic and sustainable partnerships between schools and local <a href="#">Outdoor Education Community Partners</a>.</li> </ul>
Provide a high level overview to the different <b>projects</b> that you included in your plan for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.	We are partnering with CREEC North on the Nature's Narrative grant from CDE to further advance Environmental Literacy by supporting teachers with year round professional learning opportunities at various sites across 4 counties. This will be a three year project that is open to any educator including community partners and expanded learning educators.
Provide a high level overview of ways that you plan to launch or maintain <b>technical assistance</b> efforts for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.	MCOE maintains a website of Environmental Literacy resources that we access during trainings to ensure that teachers can dive deeper into specific lessons and guides to enact student solutionary action projects. We provide districts with the option to partner with us for support if they want to try for a Green Ribbon Award or the local Greening Schools Award.
What are you <b>most excited about</b> in your plan?	Our Senior Naturalist Program is expanding to run as a full year program! We are bringing K-12 students back to Angelo Coastal Preserve for the first time in decades. At least 9 classrooms will be part of the program and returning schools can continue to access support for solutionary student action projects as well as field trips to local outdoor education community partners. It is my dream to have
What about your plan <b>concerns</b> you the most?	My consistent concern is the equity factor of how to reach all the schools and classrooms that are interested in support. We do create flyers and marketing materials for our programs, but educators are busy folks and opportunities get missed. We are still looking for the best methods to ensure that all interested educators are aware of the support we offer.
Imagine <b>five years from now</b> with your plan fully implemented - what do	I want to see outdoor environmental partnerships with local community partners embedded at various grade levels in schools across the county to ensure that every student receives multiple

you imagine will have changed in your county/region and how do you see historically marginalized students benefiting from these changes?

opportunities to explore the natural wealth of Mendocino. I also want to see a robust network of educators that are implementing hands-on exciting environmental literacy curriculum with students throughout Mendocino County. Lastly, I hope to expand the STEAM Expo to be a showcase of the fantastic environmental service projects students are creating throughout the county.

#### 4) REFLECTION AND COMMITMENTS

As you complete this program, what is your enduring understanding about leading systemic change focused on environmental and climate action in schools? (50 - 150- words)

I think it is crucial to find my champions wherever they may be. Facilities are such a crucial component of how much schools impact the environment as well as how schools respond to climatic events. After years of focusing on curriculum and instruction, my perspective has broadened to really start looking to facilities, business departments and transportation to expand our impact. I am also inspired by the number of people who are willing to be part of solutions who just need to be asked.

As you complete this program, what are your commitments for the next few years to advance this work, and what kind of support do you need in order to implement these commitments effectively? (50 - 150- words)

I am committed to ensuring the success of the Senior Naturalist program and expanding the partnerships between schools and our local outdoor education community partners. I am also working to expand the STEAM Expo and incorporate in student action project presentations. I will also continue to grow the science and environmental literacy retreat each summer. This has become a well loved event that educators look forward to. I am committed to continuing to support educators through this type of inspirational professional learning where the teachers leave with full hearts and a refreshed sense of purpose. Several other initiatives will require the support of the agency as well as grant funding. Given that we are a small county office, we function with a small staff working very hard. Further initiatives will require funding sources to bring on additional people to support the work. I am committed to seeking out such funding opportunities.