

Sustainable and Climate Resilient Schools Administrator Fellowship Case Study: **Delma Camacho** Administrator Fellow 2021

FELLOW BIO: **Delma Camacho**

Delma Camacho has worked at Ravenswood City Elementary School District since 2013. She has worked in several supporting roles at the school sites and district office. She began her career as campus support staff, then as administration support, Transportation Supervisor, MOT Coordinator and is now in her third year as the Director of Operations. In all her roles, she strives to improve the function and condition of RCSD facilities to create a safe and inviting learning environment for the students, staff and community. Which all begins with ensuring that students who need a safe way to get to school and back home, are served.



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

School Site	Ravenswood City School District	
School Demographics	n/a	
District	Ravenswood City School District	
District Demographics	Enrollment: 1916 students FRPMA %: 89% English Learners: 53% Source (from 2019-2020 school year) http://www.ed-data.org/district/San-Mateo/Ravenswood-City-Elementary	
General Vision/Mission of School and/or district	Ravenswood City School District empowers every student to fully engage critically and creatively in their education with the skills and mindsets necessary to successfully fulfill their unique potential.	

1) ORIGINAL GOALS AND INTENTIONS

Share what drew you to being a leader for Sustainable and Climate Ready Schools. Why did you originally want to join the SCRS Administrator Fellowship (50-100 words)?

Working in education has helped me realize that we can play a huge role not only in curriculum based education but also, in the social development of our students. Adopting "green" initiatives and developing processes within our operations, can help us to educate and learn along with our immediate community. Involving the students and community in the learning process to reduce our carbon footprint can lead to a greater impact and into creating projects and awareness. We must value our planet for what it is, unique and irreplaceable. We must take better care of our natural resources. So that, we may pass on a better world to the coming generations. Realizing that our lifestyle has changed tremendously from previous generations and understanding that we generate so much more waste now. Grave damage has already been done. I want to learn how to extend my abilities within the departments that I oversee, to maximize the impact we can have as much as possible.

2) KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL BUILDING

A critical thread throughout this program was building knowledge and skills related to Sustainable and Climate Ready Schools Leadership. Examples include: Environmental Sustainability Education (ESE); Change Theory; Building pathways for leadership and whole school engagement through campus, curriculum, community and culture efforts; The role of educators in the climate crisis, etc. Where did you experience the most growth in your knowledge and skills related to being a general leader for sustainable and climate ready schools (100 - 150- words)?

When I first joined the SCRS Admin Fellowship, I felt hesitant to take on something that felt like additional work outside of my normal roles and responsibilities. Those feelings changed during the first workshop on climate change and ecological overshoot. The knowledge of how climate change is impacting schools and the local San Mateo County area made climate change very real and it became clear how my role can make positive change.

It is possible for students to make big impacts with little behavior changes. There are missed opportunities to reduce environmental impacts and teach students at the same time. I didn't realize that I could make a difference from my position, but since being in the program with the other fellows, I realized I can do that from my job. It is exciting to create spaces for students to grow food and have an empowering experience.

The SCRS Admin fellowship made me connect my own experiences as a young student to my profession now. As a young student we would grow food in our own yard and do some of these projects at school as well. Cultivating this experience at a school site can make a big impact on those students moving forward into their lives.

3) FELLOWS IN ACTION - COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT OVERVIEW

Provide a brief summary of the purpose of your project and overall goals, and a summary of why this change is necessary at this time (200-400 words).

Summary of Purpose and Overall Goals:

The green ribbon process surfaced a lot of amazing work and projects happening in our school district, but in siloed and unsustainable ways. Often passionate teachers start and run programs that might be shared at a site level but there seems to be few opportunities for sharing with broader, district wide audiences. Or ways to leverage successes across the district. In this project I worked with Nico Janik, STEM Coordinator to strengthen the ongoing living schoolyard projects across the district.



How does this project connect to the broader mission and vision of the school/district?

- This living schoolyard project will help support the maintenance of each site's gardens and ensure good long-term investments of resources. This project fits into the district's overall mission of empowering students and environmental education.
- This project will help cross pollination of ideas and equity in environmental education across our school sites in documenting successes that can be “piloted” and rolled out across the district

Why was this change necessary and relevant at this time for your school community?

- Creating sustainable living schoolyard spaces will ensure long term success and access to school gardens across the district. There have been challenges across the district with communication about how the schoolyard projects are started and maintained. Without taking actions that improve communication and an institutional culture of school gardens there will be continued cycles of disuse of these valuable learning spaces.

Who are some of the key stakeholders engaged in this project?

- Site Level Administration
- Teacher Champions
- Site maintenance staff
- After School Program staff
- District Leaders: Nico Janik (curriculum), Delma Camacho (facilities and maintenance)

4) FELLOWS IN ACTION - IMPLEMENTATION STORY

Describe how implementation of your community impact project went. *If your project has not finished yet, describe how the start has gone, and how you anticipate it completing (300 - 500 words).*

General story of implementation:

Over the course of the fellowship the project focus shifted several times. The initial focus was going to be transportation, however my team and I eventually landed on living schoolyards. Living schoolyards made sense as this is an already ongoing effort that would benefit from our additional time and attention.

The project has culminated so far to be a Living Schoolyard History and Overview Plan. The Living Schoolyard History and Overview Plan is being drafted by site level stakeholders and will be continued past the end of the Fellowship.

Challenges and obstacles and how you overcame them:

- Finding the focus of the project took a large portion of the fellowship time. The coaching sessions with SMCOE helped us get over the hurdle, and really identify what is in our heads, and what our true needs are.
- Timelines were also a challenge - we had to really find a project that would work within a timeline
- Getting site level stakeholders engaged: We are still working on engaging two school sites.

Successes and what contributed to success:

- Finding overlap with already existing initiatives: Two of our schools were already looking to engage with a site level analysis (Michelle with the water project, and Alex with their big garden vision) so this project was good timing to support their efforts.
- Utilizing the support of SMCOE to guide the process, and to help us with the technical assistance on the project
- Having a partner fellow within the school district helped maintain momentum - it is really great to be on a team for this type of work since it is about systemic change

Next Steps for this project:

- Our next step is to engage the remaining two schools who have not been visited as of November 2021.
- Continuing to find the areas that are my actionable areas





5) FELLOWS IN ACTION - METRICS AND OUTCOMES

- **Overall Assessment:** How would you characterize the success of your project?
- **Ecological Benefit:** If possible, how were you able to measure the ecological benefit (reduced GHG emissions, reduced waste, increased biodiversity, etc.)
- **Student and Staff Learning:** *Reflect on evidence of student and staff learning from this project, and how this project shifted your community to further integrate environmental literacy.*

Overall Assessment:

- Identified an effort within the district that was already ongoing and how district and site level administrators can work together to help it grow.

Ecological Benefit:

- Food/ produce grown that is being used in classes
- Square footage cultivated on some campuses.

Educational Benefit:

- Additional communication between stakeholders
- Institutional culture that we are caring for the land and connecting back to the students.



6) REFLECTION AND COMMITMENTS

What is your enduring understanding about leading for Sustainable and Climate Ready Schools? And what are your commitments for next year and beyond for this important work?

Reflection:

- When I can contribute in a more tangible way, I feel empowered, so I am learning to take the support when it is offered.
- I have the power to make a difference in the maintenance of the living schoolyard areas on our campuses, and that is easier to do with communication between stakeholders.

Commitments:

- Before the fellowship I struggled feeling a sense of responsibility for the school gardens. Moving forward I am committing to supporting school garden leaders with the materials that they need.

- Finishing out the site walks and Living Schoolyard Plan to preserve the history of the school gardens.
- Making the information available and transparent for the school gardens. This will help get the people who want to help connect with us in more meaningful ways.