



## CAELI COE Fellowship Case Study: *Solano County*

*2023-24 Cohort*

### FELLOW BIOS: Summer Belloni and Jas Bains Wright

#### **Summer Belloni**

Program Manager, Environmental Literacy

Summer Belloni is the program manager for environmental literacy at Solano County Office of Education. Mrs. Belloni believes in the transformative power of outdoor play and that integrating outdoor learning nurtures inquisitiveness and sparks creativity in the hearts and minds of students. Summer strives to create meaningful connections for educational leaders and community partners so they may help students explore, wonder, and cultivate problem-solving skills to be future leaders.

Mrs. Belloni's experience as a classroom teacher and teacher on special assignment, coupled with her background in community engagement brings extensive knowledge and expertise to her role. Mrs. Belloni earned a master's degree in education with an emphasis in educational leadership and a bachelor's degree in political science. She also holds a California administrative services credential, a single-subject social science, and a multiple-subject teaching credential.

#### **Jas Bains Wright**

Coordinator, Full Service Community Schools Partnerships and Initiatives

Jas Bains Wright is the Coordinator for the Full-Service Community Schools Partnerships and Initiatives at the Solano County Office of Education. Jas works closely with state, county, and district leaders to emphasize the importance of establishing coherence among the programs and services in community schools to ensure equitable access and services for students, families, educators, and community partners.

Raised in a farming family, Jas developed a deep appreciation for agriculture and the natural world from a very young age. This upbringing instilled in her a strong work ethic, a passion for sustainability, and a profound respect for the environment. One of Jas's proudest achievements is the establishment of an agriscience school that seamlessly integrates her dual passions for education and agriculture. Under her leadership, the school received the 2022 California Department of Education Green Ribbon Award and the 2022 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Award. Through her leadership and dedication, Jas continues to inspire students and educators alike to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

County Name(s)	Solano County
<u>CCS (CCSESA) Region</u>	Region 4
Student Enrollment	60,232

% Unduplicated	50.9%
% Free or Reduced Price Meals	50.1%
% English Learners	13.9%
% Enrolled in Special Education	12.9%
Ethnic/Racial Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· African American: 12.6%</li> <li>· American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.3%</li> <li>· Asian: 4.2%</li> <li>· Filipino: 8.1%</li> <li>· Hispanic or Latino: 43.2%</li> <li>· Pacific Islander: 1.0%</li> <li>· White: 20.9%</li> <li>· Two or More Races: 9.0%</li> <li>· Not Reported: 0.8%</li> </ul>

## 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)*

The Environmental Literacy Program Manager and the Coordinator, Full-Service Community Schools Partnerships and Initiatives are new positions at Solano County Office of Education this year. As a partnership, we wanted to join this fellowship to learn how to support our county office's mission and vision through the lens of environmental literacy and connect this work with our superintendent's priority areas. We wanted to learn about the environmental literacy frameworks and best practices used in other county offices of education and how others are integrating this work across the curriculum. We also wanted to establish collaborative partnerships with job-alike counterparts at other County Offices of Education (COEs) statewide to increase our collective efficacy for supporting districts, schools, and programs with environmental literacy programming and be prepared to offer professional learning opportunities for educators in Solano County.


## 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?

Important foundational learning was understanding the three pillars for implementing environmental literacy across the educational system; including curriculum, community, and campus. The kick-off event's entry-point activity helped bring to life the many access points we can leverage to support environmental literacy across the organization. Success is more likely when we can build partnerships with one or more departments to establish support systems for staffing, budgeting, and garnering buy-in to increase the likelihood of successful programs. Creating parallel partnerships helps build a broad network of colleagues who serve as supporters and collaborators, which ultimately helps us design meaningful professional learning programs, community partnerships, and campus design efforts that positively impact educators and students. This framework can establish sustainable programs that promote student learning within and about the environment.

### 3) ACTIONABLE STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Provide a high level overview to your actionable plan responding to the prompts below.	
Link to Pitch Deck	 <i>Solano - S. Belloni &amp; J. Bains Wright Pitch Deck - COE Fellowship 2...</i>
Provide a high level overview to the different <b>programs and networks</b> that you included in your plan for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.	In 2024-2025, the District and School Support team plans to collaborate with the Early Learning team to offer educators a professional learning series. The series will focus on integrating outdoor learning and environmental literacy within academic content areas such as mathematics, language, and art. The objective is to align these efforts with foundational learning components for early learning, advance developmental learning goals and facilitate playful learning experiences. This partnership aims to enhance the P-3 Continuum through a comprehensive approach, including conference sessions, seasonal community of practice conversations, and immersive outdoor activities incorporated into each session.
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.	<b>Curriculum</b>  Early Childhood Conference - Host a session for early learning teachers in Solano County about how teaching within and about the outdoors increases awareness of the natural world highlighting the book, Me and My Sit Spot for Early Learners.

	<p>In collaboration the District and School Support team, lead a professional learning series about integrating outdoor teaching through the seasons. The goal is to inspire and empower early learning and elementary educators to consider how their campus or nearby park can serve as an extension of their classroom and how they can integrate content into their outdoor experience.</p> <p>Support the NOAA-BWET grant, Spinning Salmon, in partnership with UC Davis. Secondary teachers partner with researchers to learn about thiamine deficiency in the CA salmon population, and then lead their students through a series of lessons and data collection procedures in this community science project.</p> <p><b>Community Partnerships</b> Identify and support community partnerships for educational programming to leverage expertise within the community that may positively impact educational programs. Examples include hosting the City Nature Challenge at Patwino Worrtla Kodoi Dihi Open Space Park, piloting a youth culinary program with Sustainable Solano, and offering professional learning support for Solano Resource Conservation District’s education team.</p> <p><b>Green Schools Recognition</b> We are considering a small-scale pilot green school recognition program, modeled after the program created by Santa Cruz COE, to recognize student and teacher commitment to environmental literacy and sustainable classroom or school practices (conserving water and energy, recycling, etc.).</p> <p>We are also in the early stages of conversation about how we might support our community schools in determining if they are ready to apply for the Green Ribbon School Award, or what steps they could consider to move toward that outcome.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Making Connections</b> As of now, there is not a defined technical assistance plan, however, we actively facilitate connections between school educational partners and a variety of community-based partner organizations and environmental education providers capable of enhancing educational opportunities for schools. Through this approach, we establish relationships with districts and community partners, ensuring</p>

	<p>educators have access to meaningful partnerships that enrich classroom programs.</p> <p><b>Professional Learning</b></p> <p>We are working toward providing customized professional learning services tailored to specific focuses such as curriculum, community, and campus. These services can include an individual session or a series accommodating a theme or district priority.</p>
What are you <b>most excited about</b> in your plan?	<p>The professional learning series that integrates environmental literacy with classroom content is the most exciting aspect of the plan. It presents an opportunity to support educators and inspire them to consider how they might extend their classroom settings to include the outdoors and see how their campus can facilitate student learning. This series offers a chance to collaborate within the county office, along with districts and community partners, to empower educators to incorporate nature into their teaching repertoire and ignite curiosity in students. This initiative has the potential to nurture the next generation of students, instilling the understanding that the outdoors is a vital space for learning, growing, thriving, and achieving lifelong success.</p>
What about your plan <b>concerns</b> you the most?	<p>The main concern in this plan is the understanding that the workload will increase and evolve as the needs of both the community and districts change over time. As the work grows, efforts are ongoing to integrate and build cohesion across content areas with environmental literacy. This fellowship offered a specific time this year for individuals to think deeply and collaborate with peers to determine how the system of thinking through professional learning through the lens of the 3Cs will have a positive impact moving forward as we work to incorporate environmental literacy principles and concepts within the support provided to districts and community partners.</p>
Imagine <b>five years from now</b> with your plan fully implemented - what do you imagine will have changed in your county/region and how do you see historically marginalized students benefiting from these changes?	<p>A fully implemented plan entails ensuring that every student has access to outdoor learning experiences at school and that their teachers are empowered to integrate environmental literacy principles across their curriculum, including math, science, art, language, and more. As the program progresses, school leaders will possess the awareness, skills, and knowledge to explore how their campus can function as an extension of the classroom, fostering community partnerships to promote ongoing stewardship and sustainable practices. From early learning to college and career readiness, we envision that educational leaders across the county will know how</p>

	teaching and learning within and about the environment can benefit all students, fostering a strong and sustainable community that promotes equitable outcomes, supports academic success, and enhances overall health and wellness for classrooms and the community.
--	---

#### 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)

Enduring understanding from this fellowship is to use a systems change approach when developing new programs that integrate environmental principles and concepts into the educational framework. Utilizing the 3Cs model helps to maintain coherence and keeps ideas organized while moving the work forward strategically. Understanding the current efforts within the community, and leveraging their expertise to assist educators in accessing resources plays an important role in our work. By recognizing the needs of educational leaders and being aware of available resources, our team can connect and support teachers, which may empower them to continue to inspire and engage students effectively.

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?

Over the next few years, efforts will be made to utilize the 3Cs framework of curriculum, community, and campus to facilitate the integration of environmental literacy. The focus will be on initiating professional development opportunities for educators and fostering relationships with community partners who offer resources and support for educational activities. Additionally, we can offer guidance and resources for expanding access to outdoor spaces on campus and within the community for students to support academic growth and overall health and wellness.