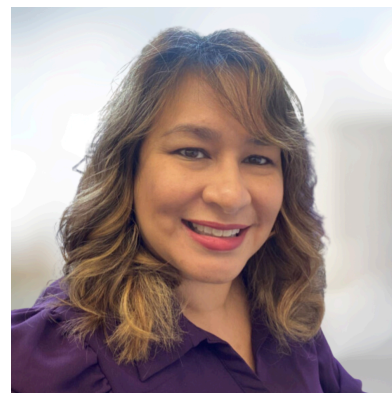




CAELI COE Fellowship Case Study: **Monica Dennis**
2034-224 Cohort

FELLOW BIO: Monica Dennis, M.Ed

Monica Dennis is a native of the Bay Area, her interest in all things STEAM is rooted in the region’s rich history of innovation and the abundance of natural phenomena. She brings a degree in biological sciences, an extensive background as a classroom teacher and holds an Administrative Credential from the University of Southern California. Monica is the Program Manager for STEAM & Expanded Learning at the Alameda County Office of Education inspiring expanded learning programs to nourish students’ natural inclination to explore their world.



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

County Name(s)	Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano
CCS (CCSESA) Region	Region 4
Student Enrollment	631,832 across 7 counties and 187 LEAs
% Unduplicated	40% across 7 counties
% Free or Reduced Price Meals	Alameda County 20.4% Contra Costa County 37.7% Marin County 30.0% Napa County 61.5% San Francisco County 50.6% San Mateo County 30.9% Solano County 50.1%
% English Learners	Alameda County 20.4% Contra Costa County 16.4% Marin County 17.6% Napa County 24.3% San Francisco County 26.3% San Mateo County 21.2% Solano County 13.9%
% Enrolled in Special Education	Alameda County 12.1% Contra Costa County 13.0%

	Marin County 12.0% Napa County 13.9% San Francisco County 12.3% San Mateo County 12.1% Solano County 12.9%
Ethnic/Racial Demographics	African American/Black: 7.1% American Indian/Alaska Native: 0.3% Asian: 18.9% Filipino: 4.8% Hispanic/Latino: 37.7% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 0.8% White: 21.4% Multiracial: 7.2%

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?


Integrating the CAELI fellowship into my work with expanded learning meant networking with others who are like minded in bringing environmental justice to underrepresented communities as a vehicle to increase the quality and quantity of STEAM programs across the region. As a CAELI fellow, I would apply exposure to current environmental initiatives and environmental education practices to support the development of a regional environment literacy award system for expanded learning programs to earn as a means to highlight the valuable work after school programs do for student wellbeing.

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?

A large part of the growth I experience happened through the ongoing networking across the state with past and current fellows. Everyone was willing to share their resources or become a thought partner in my goal towards creating the Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program. Each of the fellowship's monthly meetings unveiled a different pillar in the California Green Ribbon School Award, highlighting the criteria to meet the pillar and allowing time for the group to discuss means of achieving the pillar. Ongoing conversations, rooted in those monthly meeting, continue amongst this cohort of fellow to support one another's environmental and climate action projects

3) ACTIONABLE STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

Provide a high level overview to your actionable plan responding to the prompts below.	
Link to Pitch Deck	 M. Dennis (Alameda) 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.	My project will include expanded learning programs in the 187 Local Education Agencies found in the seven counties served in Region 4 Expanded Learning Programs. In addition to the county and region outreach, the program will also be shared with the California Expanded Learning System of Support STEAM Hub.
Provide a high level overview to the different projects that you included in your plan for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.	Through the CALEI fellowship I have worked to design and create a program that would recognize the valuable contributions made by expanded learning programs in providing students with environmental literacy education. This regional recognition program encourages expanded learning students and staff to commitment to actions that benefit the environment of their campus community. By empowering students to incorporate environmentally responsible actions into their expanded learning program, students will increase their civic engagement as they inspire others to make green behaviors the norm.
Provide a high level overview of ways that you plan to launch or maintain technical assistance efforts for advancing environmental and climate action in schools.	Expanded learning site coordinators are invited to attend an information meeting to learn about the year long Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program. Coordinators will have access to a library of activities organized by grade level and the five principles of environmental literacy. Inline with the Quality Standards for Expanded Learning Programs, sites would utilize the standard to engage youth voice in creating the year long plan to achieve the Green Site Award. As the Region 4 STEAM Program Manager I would provide ongoing review of the students' green program plan and support the facilitation of the chosen activities by connecting them to materials and organization to help students spark conversations with others about building a larger green community.

What are you most excited about in your plan?	Sitting at the threshold of the launch of the new Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program, I am looking forward to growing the awareness about the important work expanded learning educators play in igniting children's passion for learning about the environment and how they can create inclusive and innovative solutions for the challenges we face with climate change.
What about your plan concerns you the most?	The biggest concern about the project that I created during the CAELI Fellowship, is the resistance by others to dismantle the silos between expanded learning programs and school day programs. If we start to envision educating the whole child then it will become more apparent how both after school and school day have similar missions and look toward making a greater impact together.
Imagine five years from now 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>In five years from now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a large integration between environmental literacy, civics and arts education happening during expanded learning programs. • The Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program will have a dozen partnerships with community and municipal agencies to mentor sites participating in the award program. • A sustainable funding source will be acquired to continue the program's ability to provide materials, resources, and offsite experience for students to enjoy the outdoors.

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)

Since the Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program is in its early stages of implementation for the region, I often reflect upon the fellowship's lessons on the process of system change in order to keep the momentum of this new program. Systemic changes take time to curate and more time must be invested to sustain the relationships made with other organizations that will support the long term goals of the Expanded Learning Green Site Award Program. Having received the CAELI fellowship training in system change has allowed me to become confident about passing on system change resources onto youth who will be part of the program. As a whole, our society responds to fast fashion, short videos, and instant chat responses, it is my hope that students understand that the work they do today to support their environmental and climate actions may not be immediate, but will materialize overtime.

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)

Over the next year, my goal is to add to the library of environmental literacy activities available to my region, launch the Expanded Learning Green Site Award to the region's expanded learning programs, form a community of practice (CoP) for sites interested in pursuing Expanded Learning Green Site Award, and continue to utilize my connections made through the CALEI fellowship. In year two my plan is to maintain Green Site CoP, expand the award program by 15%, increase the number of partnerships between LEAs, CBOs, and environmental organizations by 15%. Finally in year 3, the program will work to provide more intensive training for sites already awarded through the integration of civics and art frameworks.