



Life as a Green School Fellow at Sacramento City Unified School District

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Over the last six months, my life has changed dramatically. Not only did I relocate from Colorado to California, but I was given a position in an organization that I respect, in a school district that I admire, doing a job that I love. In July of 2011, [Sacramento City Unified School District \(SCUSD\)](#) was one of two school districts in the country to receive a [Center for Green Schools UTC Fellow](#). SCUSD was selected to host a fellow for three years to help achieve sustainability goals and create change throughout the organization.

Superintendent Jonathan Raymond was introduced to the idea of creating healthy, resource efficient learning environments in November of 2010, while attending the [Greening of America's Schools Summit](#) at the Redford Center in Sundance, Utah with Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. Armed with the information received at the summit, Superintendent Raymond began working tirelessly to guide the district toward a more sustainable future. This commitment demonstrated the district's need for dedicated staff to guide and assist the green efforts. The top-down support across the district is unmatched, and as the a Center for Green Schools Fellow it is my job to initiate the grassroots effort with students, teachers and community members.

The fellowship started off with a sustainability coordinator training at the Center for Green Schools in Washington, D.C. Sustainability directors and coordinators from school districts across the country were invited by Fellowship Program Manager [Anisa Baldwin Metzger](#) to participate, share and learn about opportunities to take back to our school districts. It was a great experience, and I walked away understanding that I am not in this alone and there are many other people across the country I can turn to for support and guidance.

I hit the ground running during my first few months at the district. Being new to the Sacramento region, I was not only learning a new job, but also a new part of the country. I spend a large majority of my time meeting with departmental directors across the district to introduce myself, gain a better understanding of the departmental functions and assess the needs of the district. As I moved forward in my fellowship, I saw three common threads I needed to weave into my role: educate faculty, staff and students; increase communication about green efforts; and locate funds to help with these sustainable changes.

Once the school year started, much of my time was spent at school sites, meeting with principals and teachers to gather information about the current campus greening activities. I also spoke with principals about the programs I planned to implement, such as Project Green. Project Green is all about student engagement through place-based service learning. Students, with the help of an advisor, will conduct green school audits of their schools sites. After gathering information, the students will make educated recommendations for what they want to see change at their school in order to green the campus. These recommendations will be showcased and presented to a "blue ribbon" panel at an event in April. The panel will then determine where \$5 million of reallocated bond money will be used to implement the student recommended projects. Projects are tentatively scheduled to begin during the summer of 2012.

On Wednesday, Oct. 12, I facilitated the first "[Green District Working Session](#)" with directors and employees from a variety of departments. We worked together to answer the question, "What will it take to turn Sacramento City Unified School District into a green school district?" The working session had three specific objectives: connect district greening activities to the district's current strategic plan; generate specific goals for departments to support greening SCUSD; and develop a "District Green Team" that is able to provide support to the school site green teams.

My list of duties across the district is far-reaching. I am advising the district on green retrofits for the current modular classroom building stock and the possible purchase of new green modular classrooms. In the district-wide push for school gardens, I am trying to streamline the process to make gardens easier for champions to install and easier for the maintenance shops to maintain. With the help of the operations and purchasing departments, we are getting building occupants involved as leaders in the recycling program. While learning about a new region, I am also getting connected with local non-profits and education resources who want to help green the district. Finally, with the help of the District Green Team, we will develop a strategic plan to green the district as we move forward.

All of this, while also learning about the great biking available in the Sacramento region, makes me a very busy lady. The transition to Sacramento has been made easier with support from local green school advocates, district personnel and staff at the Center for Green Schools. I wouldn't have it any other way.



Farah McDill

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