

Case Study for Green Schools

1. **Title:** "A Magnificent Setting Inspires a Sustainable Campus" (Calmont School)¹ (K-8) (Some of the information about programming was from the Muse School Website as well)²
 2. **Location and Dates of Operation:** The school was located in the Topanga Canyon of Calabasas, CA. Their environmental program began in 2008 and ran until 2010, when as part of their environmental goals, they purchased the Cottontail Ranch Property. This caused for their financial situation to undergo some hardships, which allowed for the Muse School to buy them out in 2011.
 3. **Abstract:** The Calmont School was a private school located in the Topanga Canyon for over 30 years, and became part of the "[Green School Initiative Program](#)" in 2008. The Green School Initiative Program was created in 2004 to provide different schools with a universal framework on how to improve the environmental health and ecological sustainability of schools across the United States. As part of the program, the Calmont School was responsible for self-identifying environmental goals to uphold and strive to accomplish. Among these goals were to use resources sustainably, strive to be toxics free, create "greener" schoolyards, serve "healthy food," and teach stewardship through student action. One of the ways the school applied their environmental framework was by incorporating their surrounding environment into their class curriculum. Teachers were responsible for allowing students to interact with the surrounding ecosystems and to teach students the different ways to be part of sustainable change by creating eco-friendly projects.
- Keywords:** Green Schools, Calmont School, Environmental Stewardship, Green Schoolyards, Ecological Sustainability
4. **Type of Case: Green School:** Based on the programs that were available at the Calmont School, it would have been categorized as a Green School. The school was part of the "Green Schools Initiative," a non-profit which provides the framework for schools to learn how to become more environmentally conscious. As part of the program, the school must uphold various principles including taking preventative action, assessing possible alternatives to existing systems, exercising community engagement, and choosing the more environmentally, yet safe, option. In order to be part of the initiative, the school is responsible for completing an environmental assessment, which results in a step-by-step program on how to accomplish the school's self-identified "green goals." Based on the criteria set out by the initiative, the Calmont School was on the right track to becoming a

¹ "A Magnificent Setting Inspires a Sustainable Campus" (Calmont School). Green Schools Initiative : Green Schools Profiles. Web. 16 Oct. 2015.

² <http://www.museschool.org/Page/Sustainability#>

green school by creating programs that specifically aimed to address the various guidelines for the Green Schools Initiative framework.

5. **Mission and Goals:** According to the Green Schools Initiative school profile for the Calmont School, the goals were based on a particular environmental challenge that needed to be addressed in their community. In 2008, the school purchased property from Pepperdine University at a lowered, down payment cost and needed to renovate to find sustainable ways to renovate the land without many costs. As part of their renovation process, they kept their environmental goals in mind, which are listed in **Abstract and Keywords**. They also created 7 steps to follow based on their green goals. These include: adopting a green policy for all programs, develop an action plan, integrate green efforts into class curriculums, monitor progress, and involve, inform and celebrate with the community.
6. **Context: Origins, Organization, and Operation:** As mentioned previously, the school purchased the 22-acre Cottontail Ranch property from Pepperdine University in 2008 at a reduced cost with plans to make their campus “greener.” Because most of their money was spent on the upfront costs, the school needed to find ways to use their own manual labor to help kick off the property into use. As part of the construction and landscaping process, the school voted to only use eco-friendly materials, and to recycle and reuse materials the school already owns that were not being used at the time. The windows/paint were environmentally friendly, the carpet was recycled, the insulation was made from green materials, and there are eco-particleboard for the walls and LED lights. As part of their green schoolyards goals, they also voted to have an organic garden planted. The property purchase was to help expand their existing environmental studies program. There were two teachers heading their “Green Team” who specialize in environmental education and literacy. The entire process was a community effort as even parents donated their time and skill set where they could.
7. **Programs:** The Calmont School had various green programs before it closed down. Students were required to spend one hour every Friday over the course of their semester going into the mountains, looking at nearby ecosystems and habitats and learning how the property’s renovations would impact their surrounding environment. The students would be able to learn about the different environmental challenges in the area and teach others. Furthermore, as part of their environmental curriculum, students had access to two classes that focused on the study of native plants, wildlife, and the different ways to provide healthy environmental protection to these various ecosystems. Some of the projects for these classes also included studying different ways to protect a nearby pond against invasive species.³
During their renovation process, each grade in the school (K-8) was required to participate in some part of the renovation process. For example, the second grade class

³ Groff, Joann. "Calmont School Going Green on New Campus." The Acorn, 11 Jan. 2011. Web. 1 Oct. 2015.

held a Garage Sale Fundraiser from donated items and contacted various families and businesses to donate labor and materials for their cause.

After their renovation process, students were still exposed to more green programs. One of their last programs was a composting program for the Kindergarten class using lunch scraps. Middle-school students made the organic garden, and one 6th-grade class was invited to participate in a class with professional landscape architects. Their project was to research, plan and build models on how to take advantage of their nearby watershed for future environmental programs.

8. Assessment:

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used private funding to secure aid in purchasing the Cottontail Ranch 2. School and programs served students from a more affluent area, which impacted how the school would implement its programs 3. The school used its surrounding environment as part of its “natural” playground. 4. The school had a strong community participation in the way the curriculum was designed and implemented 5. Used donations during renovation process as a way to accomplish a sustainable goal 6. Worked with a program like the Green Schools Initiative, which provided the framework that the school would use in all its programs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorrectly used its funds and fell into a debt that would be one of the causes for its buyout 2. The school focus mostly on its local impact and failed to look more into global impacts 3. Programs were new and therefore, the success rate of each one was not measured. How can we tell if these projects are sustainable over the long term versus the short term?
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School can act as a case study for public schools by looking at the implementation of programs 2. Even though programs were designed to have a more local impact, there is potential to use the programs on a more state and global scale 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school was privately funded and did not have to follow requirements of a higher power for money distribution 2. The school did not use test-scores to base success for its programs and was therefore able to incorporate greener curriculums much easier into its programming 3. Community participation was extremely necessary for the success of its programming, what

	would happen if the community were less involved? Or were less interested?
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9. Lessons for Philadelphia: In my opinion, there is much to learn from the Calmont School. Even though the school was privately funded, there can be some ways for Philadelphia schools to fully make use of what is available to them. One of the ways to do this is by looking at working with existing community gardens or green projects as a build-off point for future projects. Is there a way to contact nearby leaders and work with them as part of class curriculums? Because the Philadelphia Water Department is creating more green infrastructure projects, is there a way to continue to allow for schools to work with these existing projects? This can help minimize costs of creating a new garden or project during the initial phase of implementation. As was done in the Calmont School, schools can allow for students to have opportunities to interact with their surrounding environment and to have time out of their classes to gain firsthand experience of what kinds of green spaces and projects are available to them. If after seeing these projects students would like to have the opportunity to create one, schools can get in contact with local businesses for donations, whether they are monetary specifically for the project or materials that might not be in use. This can also allow for students to be exposed to sustainable alternatives. One of the ways the Calmont School was successful in implementing their projects was by having community support. It seems that a lot of the Philadelphia projects were also very strongly supported by community members, and perhaps having this become more reinforced will help in further implementing more programs in schools. Lastly, if there is a way to collect information from the different organizations working on green initiatives and allow for schools to partner with them, this can help schools work off an existing foundation, in the same way that the Calmont School did. This can also help schools from having to start from scratch where there is an existing program.