



From student to school principal

School principal knows the system from top to bottom.

Glenda Sumida knows a lot about Rancho Santa Fe School.

She's the principal. And it's no wonder.

There aren't many people who can say they've experienced this rural school district from as many different positions and for the length of time that she has.

Sumida know what it's like to be a Rancho Santa Fe student. She once lived in Rancho Santa Fe and attended the school herself in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

She knows what's it's like to work there, too. After she graduated from high school, Sumida came back and worked for a year as secretary in the administrative office.

And she certainly knows what it's like to be a teacher at Rancho Santa Fe School.

Sumida accepted her very first teaching position in 1964 at Rancho Santa Fe School



after graduating from San Francisco State University.

She taught for the next 22 years before moving into administrative roles at the school. In 1988, Sumida became the principal.

The Rancho Santa Fe School is unique. The district accommodates the affluent Rancho Santa Fe and Elfin Forest communities. It has only 667 students, in grades kindergarten through eighth.

All the students attend the one campus, located just outside the downtown Rancho Santa Fe Village.

Though the school is small in size, it's not when it comes to learning. The school's two modern computer labs

equipped with dozens of computers exceeds the learning facilities of much larger public high schools.

Yet the school still retains a distinct rural character that matches the community it serves.

"We don't have school buses or a school lunch program," said Sumida. "The parents bring and pick their children up. People feel very comfortable about that."

"It's safe. That's part of living in Ranch Santa Fe — you bring your children to school and they bring their own sack lunch. (The parents) are on campus so that give us a lot of opportunities to communicate with the parents."

"It's been like that since I went to school here. I think that has always been our strength. We're a very community-oriented school. It's wonderful."

With an career track like Sumida's, one would think that

she had a career in education in mind all along. However, she said that wasn't the case at all.

"I wasn't really sure what I wanted to be after high school," said Sumida.

"So I worked here for a year until the district superintendent suggested that I go back to school and get a teaching credential."

And looking back, Sumida knows she made the right career choice.

"I thoroughly enjoyed teaching at Rancho Santa Fe School," she said. "I will have to say, though, the first year of kindergarten was rather rugged."

"My first day, I thought I had lost it. The kids were going everywhere. They were like a big amoeba, you'd capture one corner and then the other part would run out the other side. You could never get them all together." ■

— Jeffrey Justice



Glenda Sumida was once a Rancho Santa Fe School student. Today she is the school's principal. Photo/Jeffery Justice