

PANORAMA

March 2021



FROM YOUR EDITOR

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Thank you for the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the last issue of the *Panorama*! It was a labor of love. I am equally excited about this month's issue. Spring is in the air, we are going to hear from more of our ESTA colleagues, and we are just a few more weeks from another much-needed break from school. Hang in there, friends!

New this month is a Classifieds section! If you have something for sale, rent, or giveaway, please send me the information, and I will include the listings as space allows in future issues.

I want to remind everyone that the application deadline for the **2021 Ralph Giannini Educational Reimbursement Fund is March 26th**. This fund is for the Children and Grandchildren of Members (maximum of \$2K with a \$6K total maximum). This Committee is chaired by Jennifer Eckley (AH) eckleyj@esuhsd.org

Ralph Giannini Reimbursement Fund Application

FIND ESTA ONLINE!

ESTA website: eastsideta.org
Facebook: East Side Teacher's Association
Webmaster: Jayson Chang - changj@esuhsd.org

IC NEW STAFF INTERVIEWS

Shaira Barnes
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Let's go ESTA, LET'S GOOOOOOO! Happy March to all of you! This has been quite a year, but everyone has worked hard to rise to the challenge of distance learning in support of our students and families. What an absolute joy it has been to work alongside so many dedicated teachers who regularly stop to reflect on their practice and push to be better. In a typical school year, you would be able to mix, mingle, and learn about our newer teachers. The instructional coaches, knowing that distance learning makes it difficult to meet newer staff, are hoping we can start to introduce a few of our newer ESTA colleagues via the *Panorama*. This month, I want to introduce Bikeramjit Singh, who teaches English in the Special Education Department at Independence High School.

SB: Hi Bik! Thank you for letting us interview you for the *Panorama*. I understand that you were a student in East Side Union High School District. Can you tell us a little bit about your experience?

SINGH: Yes, I was! I am 100% wholeheartedly an East Side Union product representing the Big O, you know! In an area full of culture, life, and characters (King & Cunningham), Overfelt undeservedly gets a nasty rap. But it offered me so much in terms of academics and extracurricular activities. My experience included being part of a championship basketball team, President of the Electronics

IC Interview con't:

Academy, a southern California college tour, and teachers and staff that brought out the best in you. I still maintain those positive relationships today, and that's a testament to our tight-knit school and community.

SB: What made you want to go into teaching?

SINGH: I know it's the old cliché, but I was inspired by those teachers who believed in me. Elementary school was pretty lackluster. Parent-teacher conference was mostly "your son could do this better," "he is just satisfactory in all subject areas," and that just was ingrained in me. It wasn't until high school my teachers noticed and highlighted my potential. My mindset changed about education and myself. It's the sole reason why I wanted to go into teaching, to help students recognize their untapped potential. Since I got this spotlight, I want to take a moment to shoutout to some of those teachers Ms. Kanuga, Mr. Dorsa, and Ms. Burwen. Thank you all.

SB: What is something new that you are doing in your classes that is working for your students in distance learning?

SINGH: I thoroughly enjoy seeing my students interact and respond to all the new tech at our disposal. But if I had to choose one thing, it would be my Social Emotional Learning opening. We start every class with a five-minute online mandala coloring. I present a link via chat, bump my Lofi playlist on Spotify and let the students vibe out. It's my interpretation of mindfulness, and it calms everyone in the room by lowering anxiety so we are all ready to engage in learning.



If you have time please reach out and say hello to Bik and welcome him to East Side! (singhb@esuhsd.org)

SB: What are you doing to help maintain a work/life balance during the pandemic?

SINGH: I am a person who enjoys social interaction, so my wife and I have found ways to keep in touch with family and friends safely. We started a Zoom Book Club, outdoor cornhole tournament, hiking, and eating (yes, we are big-time foodies!)

SB: What are you looking forward to the most when schools reopen?

SINGH: I look forward to seeing students back in the classroom. I know they are struggling with their mental health, coping with distance learning, so to see their faces in a seat right--in front of me--will be a special moment.

SB: What else should we know about you?

SINGH: I'm a simple man. I like communal benches, a scrumptious bold American IPA, some good food, and some buddies to talk sports.

"THE PRESSURE COOKER"

Raven Sisco
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It feels like the world is falling apart.

Is this a cliché way to say this? Absolutely. Does it feel accurate? Hell yeah.

As I watch *Star Trek: Deep Space 9* on Netflix for probably the tenth time, I come across an episode in which an aphasia virus starts spreading to everyone on the station, causing affected individuals to lose the ability to speak or understand others. The contamination only lasts for a single episode, and one of the characters finds the cure by the end of the episode. There are no repercussions beyond this 40ish-minutes of screen time. I think we have been hoping that COVID-19 would play out like this, that like on a science fiction TV show the cure would be found quickly and everything in our lives could go right back to normal. But we're realizing that isn't going to happen. No sci-fi magic is going to rid us of this tragic, global plot twist.

Like a pressure cooker, the coronavirus lockdown has clamped down on us physically as many of us are restricted to our homes. What started as a scientific reality has become politically polarized. So much information and mis-information is spreading instantly from fingertips to phone screens as social media becomes gorged on the topic. On top of all this uncertainty, hundreds of years of systemic racism has also been shoved under the lid of the pressure cooker. This, in combination with COVID-19, is a mad-scientist level experiment that has caused the pot to explode.

Until recently, I felt like I wasn't doing enough. As an educator and role model to teenagers, what am I telling them by locking myself in my own home and sometimes even avoiding social media and news? My anxiety has often led me to avoiding current events because I feel powerless to do anything to change what is going on in the world, so I would rather focus on the small things I actually have control over. So, I have decided to do what I am comfortable doing: write my own poetry and prose, create a platform for others' voices, and help people process what's going on in the world.

So, here's to learning for ourselves, educating others, and processing current events, even as the world feels like it's falling apart.

CRITICAL SELF-CARE PRACTICES. NOW MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER.

Melissa Wheeler

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Self-care. It's a term that often means different things to different people. Things like spa days, a new scented candle, a glass of wine, or a visit to the farmers market might come to mind. I'd like to point to a specific list of practices though, what I call critical self-care practices- sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental health support, positive relationships, and mindfulness. This list comes from a popular [TED talk about trauma](#) by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, a local pediatrician, author and [California's first Surgeon General](#). She talks about how the more trauma or adversity someone has experienced, the more they need these practices. So while there's nothing wrong with a new scented candle or a farmers market visit, I just don't know how far those things will get us if we haven't first addressed our sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental health, relationship, and mindfulness needs. These needs are medical facts.

According to at least one study, the [Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs](#), study, over two thirds of us have experienced at least one significant adverse childhood experience or traumatic event. That's most of us, that's just one study, and that's just childhood. [Trauma is defined by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#) as resulting from "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects

on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being". With that in mind we could make the conclusion that it's difficult to get through regular life without experiencing a traumatic or adverse event. Think loss of a loved one, a major accident, or a natural disaster. On top of that, a global pandemic is a type of trauma, a type of complex trauma that we're all experiencing. We're also caring for others who are experiencing trauma which often translates to secondary or vicarious trauma. This is why we need these critical self-care practices now more than ever.

So where can we start? Choose the critical self-care practice that needs your attention most. Start there. Change can be challenging though. Mindfulness practice is especially helpful. For more support, consider signing up the next time a [Self-Care During the Workday](#) retreat-like workshop is offered, for another [supportive offering](#), or for the [Whole Life Challenge](#). Take Silver Creek Math Teacher, Leena Guttal's word for it "Melissa has been such a positive influence on my personal and professional life. I look forward to attending her sessions that are engaging, productive, energetic, and supportive. She has made an impact on my students too."

If it feels too selfish or self-absorbed, especially since many of us are givers and put others' needs before our own, keep in mind that when you're better taken care of first, you can take much better care of others. You can't pour from an empty cup. Fill yours up first. James Lick Counselor, Veronica Vasquez shares "I'm very grateful for this space that allows me to share, learn and practice mindfulness techniques in a group setting. After the sessions I always feel calm, supported and centered. Thank you!"

MY DISTANCE LEARNING REFLECTIONS

Neil Wilson
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As I am wading through my 26th year of teaching, this year has been unlike any other. If anything that statement has become almost cliché and redundant. But in any many ways it has been like I have been a first year teacher all over again. In being that first year teacher all over again I get reminded of my experiences, and when I compare them I notice:

- The late hours I have been spending putting lessons together or grading homework. Even as I write this in a late hour, my daughter is fast asleep in a crib near my desk. Of course she even keeps me up and distracted from completing some of my basic professional tasks at times. But that is the joy of being a dad.
- The time I'm looking at my curriculum has been a necessity. What should I be teaching? I'm reevaluating the standards and figuring out what I can accomplish and what I can't accomplish. How am I modifying projects I have done in the past? The nice thing is that I don't have to rewrite the curriculum, but instead I'm making plans for how I can lighten the load on my students but not sacrifice the quality of their education.
- How do I want to grade? I know years ago I alternated between weighted grades and straight points. This year I'm finding I'm doing a combination of both. I've been looking at my rubrics and also modifying and adjusting them. Or with some assignments, I'm creating scoring rubrics altogether.
- I'm evaluating what activities work and what activities don't work in a Zoom setting. At the same time, I'm reminding myself of my personal style. What aspects of my personality work

within what I'm teaching? What activities or technologies am I not going to use because they don't work within the tone I wish to set? Or which do I use, because they keep me organized and at the same time reflect my personality within what I teach. Basically, I'm relearning the art of teaching all over again.

- How can I use technology in my classroom? When I first started teaching in 1995, the internet was in its infancy. I got to experiment with gradebook programs, being able to e-mail parents or students and being able to find information. I was in that transition between the traditional methods of teaching and incorporating technology. If these closures happened in 1995, school would have really been out likely for a whole school year, or we would have been placed in the arena of danger by having to be at school on a daily basis. Neither would have been beneficial for our students. But even now I'm still exploring what works within my personal style.
- I'm reminded of how much I appreciate my colleagues. I like being able to bounce ideas off of them, and vice-versa. Having those discussion about what is working for us, our pacing in our respective courses, or even how can I do an activity better to even something simple such as how do I want to organize google classroom for the second semester? My coworkers are my family away from home, and I appreciate them all very greatly. At the same time, I also miss them very much, and I look forward to when I get to hang out with them on the front lines of my profession again.

It has been quite a rollercoaster ride for me, my colleagues and everyone else reading this. I wish everyone a great rest of the semester knowing we are all going to have those challenges ahead. So for now, I shall saddle up my horse and take the ride into the Great Adventure ahead.

LOGGED IN BUT DISCONNECTED

Emily Zavala, LCSW, PPSC
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Last week in session, my senior client talked at length about her job. She shared how she said “good morning” to co-workers. During lulls in shifts, she and her colleagues catch up on life, laugh and check on each other. As she spoke, it hit me especially hard that what she was describing in great detail is human connection; the kind of human connection that we gave little to no thought to before 03/13/2020. Simple eye contact and friendly exchanges with her colleagues are worthy of detailed description in her hour-long session with me. This illustrated something about which the Social Work team at ESUHSD has given much thought. As the individuals tasked with improving the mental health and well-being at our school sites we are concerned. We acknowledge that by being home we are all far safer from contracting Covid-19, but what about the impact to our collective mental health?

And these struggles are not just our student’s struggles, they are very real for all of us. Depression is characterized by isolation and a lack of connection. Across the board at our district, students are being referred to social workers for a lack of motivation. Depression is a likely result of too much screen and indoor time as well as lack of access to normal coping strategies, connection to community, and peer relationships. As a clinical team, we have felt helpless in addressing this lack of motivation. So many of the contributing factors are unchangeable given the global pandemic that we face. And thus, we have switched gears to focus on coping tools and mitigating the impact of depression.

In social work, much of what we do is hold space for the reality of what is. We have reached a full year of distance learning and sheltering in place. It is okay to say that we are not okay. If you are feeling overwhelmed, ineffective, burned-out, unmotivated or anxious you are not alone. It is nearly impossible to be a full-time teacher with small children that require your constant attention, we see you. Human touch is vital and for all of those who live alone and have not given nor received a proper hug since March 2020, we feel you. For the countless educators that now teach to a screen of black squares with little to no feedback, it is okay to feel frustrated and ineffective. Sometimes it is vital to take a moment to just acknowledge what is. To all of those experiencing grief and loss during a time when loved ones are not allowed to visit in the hospital, unable to say proper goodbyes, we know that your grief process has been profoundly impacted.

With a light at the end of the tunnel and vaccines being offered as a ticket back to normalcy there is hope for a return to connection on the horizon. In the meantime, know that all of your feelings are relevant. This is hard, but we can do hard things. As educators, we do hard things every day.

*The Employee Assistance Program offers therapy sessions to every employee through UNUM. This can be a great way to access immediate support:

www.unum.com/lifebalance

CLASSIFIEDS

The ESTA Classifieds are back by popular demand!

The Classifieds are a space for you to advertise anything you have for sale or rent, a service you provide outside the classroom, or anything you'd like to give away. Please include a photo (if applicable), brief information about the item or service, price, and how to contact you.



For Sale

LeClerc Nilus loom, 45"- USED
4-shaft Jack-Type Loom, 45 inch weaving width. Used for only a couple years then stored in a garage for about 20 years. Maybe more. Good shape. It belonged to my mom who passed away so I have no personal experience with it. Link to manufactures page:

<https://www.eugenetextilecenter.com/nilus-36-45-and-60>

Asking \$800 or make me an offer --
Lynn Johnson-Conrad (OG)
conradl@esuhd.org



Want to submit something to the Classifieds or to the next Panorama? It's easy with this link: bit.ly/ESTAPanorama

