

PANORAMA

MAY 2021



FROM YOUR EDITOR

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Hello colleagues!

I hope you enjoy this final issue of the *Panorama* for the 20-21 school year -- and what a year it was! In *Panorama* news, you may now access this *Panorama* and all of this school year's issues on the ESTA website: www.eastsideta.org/panorama

I am reprinting Melissa Wheeler's article on Self Care practices again with several corrections. You may also note several of this month's contributions are lengthy. I am printing them in their entirety because this is the final *Panorama* of the year. Generally, submissions are limited to one two-column page.

May your summer bring you much-needed rest and joy! If you think of anything over the summer you'd like to contribute for a fall *Panorama*, kindly submit it here: bit.ly/ESTAPanorama

FIND ESTA ONLINE!

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

IC NEW STAFF INTERVIEWS

Susan McDonald
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We're coming into the home stretch of this unique school year! Our newer teachers have experienced this year with limited connection to their ESTA colleagues. They haven't been able to run next door to ask a quick question and or hang out in the lunchroom just to talk shop. So, in our continued effort as instructional coaches to introduce our newer teachers, I'd like to introduce you all to Tim Zaccheo, an English teacher at Evergreen Valley High School.

SM: You are an East Side graduate--what has it been like to teach in the same district where you were once a student?
Zaccheo: I feel really blessed to be part of the ESUHSD team. My own high school experience was full of inspirational teachers, funny teachers, strict teachers, and role models that gave me a well-rounded view of what a career in education could look like. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Mount Pleasant greats that not only gave me a quality education but taught me that this job is one to be proud of. Plus, it's really neat to see some of the teachers from MP who now work at Evergreen Valley.

SM: What has been your biggest takeaway from this school year with distance learning?

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Zaccheo: I checked in with my students early on in the year once a routine had been established in their classes. One major motif kept coming up in the survey: exhaustion. My students were not alone as I, too, had felt exhausted every day. A big takeaway from the survey is that quality over quantity can go a long way. As soon as I started to curb the make-it-all-fit-into-your-lesson mentality, I noticed that student buy-in was higher, discussions were more engaging, and I was much more energized to keep up with distance learning.

SM: What are you looking forward to most about returning to a live classroom?

Zaccheo: Having actual students in the classroom is going to be so great. New teachers need interactions with students as part of their general growth. Building up that momentum again with live is something I am absolutely looking forward to.

SM: What are your plans for the summer?

Zaccheo: Beach days, galore! Spending time near the ocean sounds pretty good right about now considering last summer was much different.

SM: Anything else you'd like to share about yourself?

Zaccheo: I work with a pretty awesome English department! Just sayin' :)



If you have time please reach out and say hello to Tim (Zaccheot@esuhsd.org)

GREAT FICTION READS FOR THE SUMMER!

Heidi Boyd
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Here's a list of a few of Heidi's favorite to inspire your summer reading.

- *Need to Know* by Karen Cleveland (spy, suspense)
- *Breakdown* by B.A. Paris (suspense)
- *Behind Closed Doors* by B.A. Paris (suspense)
- *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah (WW2, drama, suspense, strong female characters)
- *Small, Great Things* by Jodi Picoult (drama, thought provoking book)
- *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova (drama, about early onset dementia and how it affects the person and her family)
- *What Alice Forgot* by Liane Moriarty (Alice passes out at the gym, when she wakes up she can't remember the last ten years of her life)
- *The Clifton Chronicles* by Jeffery Archer (if you like generational sagas)

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

Melissa Wheeler
Teacher on Special Assignment
District Office

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!"

ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Bill Logan

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With a Thanos-like snap, Covid-19 extinguished in-person engagement, instantly dissolving some of our most celebrated campus traditions: student rallies, talent shows, homecoming, club days, dances, sporting events, elections, and more. Like all educators, Activities Directors were forced to get bold and creative, embracing software platforms like never before the blip. In the end, the live streaming service, YouTube Premier, has this Activities Director pondering just how engaged an online student audience compares to an in-person one.

In its most basic form, YouTube Premier is not that much different than the usual YouTube we are all familiar with. Countdowns to video premiers, viewer diagnostics, and an option to release a pre-edited video or livestream are the general features of this upgrade. Personally, I find that pre-edited videos of student performances combined with live student emcees allows our team the appearance and effect of a clean, live show. But a show is not enough! We seek a sense of normalcy - the deafening screaming, the chanting, the singing and the applause - those physical manifestations of actual engagement.

Enter the real-time comment stream. Now, here is where it can get dicey. Opening the live comment field is a terrifying leap of faith, essentially permitting any viewer to write anything, including crude language, negative comments, and discriminatory trolling and beyond. Yet, comments compel interaction in an entirely new manner. Unlike a pre-blip rally, students are not just sitting and watching, clapping and screaming. Now they type: offering support to peer entertainers, expressing amazement, delivering friendly banter, teasing teachers, inserting emojis, and more. No longer is the rally a one-way analog performance or viewership. Instead it evolves into an interactive dialog between both parties of performers and audience members.

The fear of negative and inappropriate comments can be avoided with the installation of the free add-on, Nightbot, which ensures that thousands of words and their variety of diminutives do not pass-through automatic publication. Comments referencing the bot's tagged words are blacklisted and instantly hidden from the comment field. Activating the comment delay feature and employing a small, dedicated staff of ASB leaders further ensures that we are able to catch anything that might escape Nightbot (such as promoting social media accounts, exchanging phone numbers, and racy new song lyrics).

Furthermore, IHS Activities employs a team of positive reinforcers, taking on the monikers of our official mascots, Sammy the Sixer and Amerigo the Eagle. These two serve to engage the audience with questions and comments to generate positivity, engage feedback, and promote friendly banter. And the pre-blip teacher, once reserved to jamming their ears with cotton balls and ear plugs as their back aches and their bottoms numb from sitting in the cramped and humid bleachers, now becomes a source of celebrity interaction for students. Just one comment drop from a teacher compels tens of excited student reactions - "OMG! Ms. Dang is watching!" or "Mr. Berg for President!" or "We need a Mr. Kudsi and Mr. Glassford mash-up!" or "Ms. Banack!!!! I promise I'll turn my paper in right after!"

A final, but intriguing, detail of YouTube Premier is the viewership data. Sure, we are all familiar with the number of views YouTube captures on each video. However, Premier goes much further into detailed data, including: types of viewers, unique views, average viewing time, peak viewing times, and video popularity. Premier even details and captures the variety of platforms from which students access a video link. For example, right now, our data reveals that over 32.5% of viewers accessed our teacher gameshow, Iconic Duos, via Twitter.

Only 10.2% arrived through SchoolLoop, and 3.2% through Gmail. Furthermore, almost 90% of viewers were female (Note - Premier only captures students identifying as male and female). For the variety of stakeholders trying to provide student connection in the era of distance learning, reach

ACTIVITIES UPDATE - CON'T:

data is invaluable feedback. Just like an exit ticket, this is assessment feedback that guides the future outreach of our online events.

Will an online platform ever replace the joys of in-person engagement? Of course not. But Activities Directors heroically answer the call, adapt to new terrains, learn new strategies, train for hours, compile our team of Avengers, and push forward, against all odds, into the unknown to bring light into this time of darkness.

NOT KNOWING

By Prof. X for the East Side

With the risk of 2020-2021's distance learning experience falling into oblivion, this article intends to document some lessons learned during the year in an effort both to understand what happened and to make a brief editorial as to how to approach next year. It has proven not to be the only report of its kind to come out of ESTA this year, and ought to encourage more on the subject. Some of the ideas below have been rigorously observed, others are matters of opinion. We had wanted this article to feature ample quotes etc. but it wasn't feasible or desired at the time.

A widely-felt and reported stressor during distance learning has been the feeling of not knowing. New teachers not knowing nothing, nor how to approach it. Experienced teachers not knowing what to learn to restore their methods' cut-off effectiveness in the reduced time. We assumed that our students would know more, perhaps that middle school had somehow briefed ninth graders in Google etc., simultaneously preparing them emotionally for the cyclonic schedule itself, for the institutional literacy needed to know what is a serious problem and what is part of a common day. Next semester will be an opportunity to

start out with an emphasis on routine, systemic functions, social health and the skill of asking for help.

Our upperclass didn't know that the College Board and the state university system do not care what happens in the world as long as they get their money (the landlords that they are), and they got stressed trying to guess how each instructor might handle that. Likely none of us had considered how much longer it would take to give specific feedback on assignment results over the internet. Next year will be an opportunity to dispel myths about what advantages AP classes etc. offer, that students may make the best decisions possible about their schedules. It will also be a chance to plan lessons with the best practices, so we can finish in class more often and end the destructive practice of replacing good classtime with crushing homework loads.

Neither we nor the students knew when illness and death would strike their families. We didn't know which student had bad internet, which had a mom dying in the next room. Information came too late. Next fall will be an opportunity to establish and practice modes of communication that students can safely own. Some of us are good at having sealed comment boxes...

Admin and the district office made dramatic-looking lists to fatten their emails to us, lists of wildfires, heatwaves, the country's hatred of social justice, all problems that we and our students already had before the quarantine. Lists that came out sounding like lions and tigers and bears that we somehow were courageously fighting. But where was the leadership? To hear the desk-warming crowd, from district to state levels, the "MOU" and the quarantine were excuses to drop leadership, take the year off and prohibit planning, with very few exceptions. In our circles of friends on text message, in our slivers of department time, many of us took our students' best interest into our own hands. Next fall we must not lose what momentum we each may have.

And this is not a new predicament. We were

NOT KNOWING - CON'T:

already going to figure it out with our students. With best intentions we tried to make our workflows clear by posting one assignment per day, then found that ninth graders quit on us when they found they had 30+ zeroes in the gradebook by early October. We couldn't grasp time and priorities' changed meaning fast enough. The way to keep it simple seems to change by the week. Next fall it will too, and we can't let the familiarity of our classrooms blind us.

We didn't know that some students are working very hard and that's why they're not looking at our chats, that students have intelligent workflows that demand minimizing the Zoom window, that our organization methods overwhelmed students, splitting their attention to the thing and to the organizer about the thing. We learned to reduce down to one app per hour max or expect an explosion. Maybe we switched to listing assignments by week, maybe it worked, maybe it didn't. One strategy in our work never did work for all. Next fall will be an opportunity to ask students what's working.

We are left with the pedagogical problem of not knowing what this year meant. Maybe it just meant that after a given level of stress nothing works. Maybe we stared into the abyss of the year's assessment validity. Maybe we've seen the limits of government and admin's arrogant and ultimately selfish assumption that technology can fix every problem.

And yet, we knew a lot too. We knew that if we allowed ourselves to get it wrong, gave our students time that they didn't use right at first, we'd learn. We learned who was who behind the black Zoom handle, who did the thing gladly in the breakout room and who didn't, who were looking for each other even though it took until February to find someone. We learned when to slow down, when to cue, when to stop talking, how long to share our screen before the students' connections melted. We learned who's homeless, who runs

on praise, who will come to tutorial. Hopefully we all got a lot of practice asking the right question and making flexible plans through discussion. Next fall we will need the memory of this blindness in order to look very carefully before diving into the content that we thought was central to our work.

Observation and dealing with the situation better in service of our students are all that we could do to survive 2020-2021, and it's the only way we can give next fall the meaning that this year couldn't have. Our students are relying on us to ask the right questions, to give the right time, to know what to say.

We know that distance learning is what it is, and that the coronavirus pandemic is what it is. Stanley Kubrick reportedly criticized *Schindler's List*: "*Schindler's List* is about success... the holocaust was about failure." The categorical, destined distance learning failure should then be a lens through which to pursue best practices in our classrooms. All of admin's meaningless cheerleading and classist mewling about "self-care" ought well to be ignored. Our huge population of new teachers certainly can't use such high subjectivity.

What will make us feel good, work more effectively, take rest from work before 10pm, is knowing that we're working according to our students' observed needs. How do we do it? By asking them, by assigning initial parent contact for easy points, by transforming our favorite monologues into groupwork-kits, by introducing reflection cycles into our methods, by reaching out to colleagues now, strengthening relationships across departments, starting files on shared students, visiting for consultation instead of digging our heels into our old content-driven models. The isolation of '20-'21 ought to be a clear lesson about communication, and how it must be our first recourse. If we don't know what comes next, we must at least not know together.

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 -- Still Available

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

