How is it that after 40 years of teaching, I feel more insecure in the classroom than ever before? It is because I have just immigrated to a smart classroom. As of January 2, the Clairemont and Linda Vista ESL classes moved into our beautiful new building on the Mesa Campus. Instead of overhead projectors, we now have document cameras, LCD projection, and instant access to the Internet.

The possibilities for enhancing language learning in a smart classroom are huge, so I suddenly feel like a novice instructor learning something new each day. While it is a little disconcerting to be taken out of my comfort zone, I realize that change is good. Instead of pulling out the same visual from my files of 30 years to illustrate a vocabulary word, I can go to the Internet and bring in a real life image instantly from Google images. When I was teaching the superlative to my class in January, I was able to show pictures of the “tallest” building in the world, which happens to be in Dubai. At that point, one of my Chinese students who had been very shy shared that the most expensive and only 7 star hotel in the World is also in Dubai. Students were fascinated to then see a virtual tour of this hotel right there in our classroom. The conversation that was generated from this experience definitely facilitated language acquisition in a way not possible before. Similarly to present a new grammar point, there are already-made PowerPoint presentations available on the Internet that make the teaching of grammar so much more dynamic. So, what does this mean for lesson planning? It means that I am spending more time thinking about all the new and creative ways I can present new lessons and facilitate language learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. In some ways, I really feel like a new immigrant, but instead of having to learn a new language, I am scrambling to learn a new methodology that integrates technology in the language learning process. However, I am not forgetting, either, the value of good old fashioned face-to-face interaction in the ESL classroom. Nothing takes the place of this in language learning. Nevertheless, each day after teaching, I am obsessed with how my class could have been more interesting via the use of technology.

At this point, I would like to publically thank Cindy Wislofsky and several other ESL instructors in our program such as Jim Brice, Steve Gwynne, and Stephanie Thomas who have taken the lead in training us on the new technology in our classrooms and sharing innovative projects for language learning. We are not there yet, but the road would be much harder without their patience and guidance. In the months ahead, we as a program hope to invest in new presentation software and explore blending learning options for our students. We have a long way to go, but we will get there. Some of us might even evolve from being digital immigrants to being digital citizens.
Gloria Schon De Liberberg sadly passed away on March 27 after a valiant fight against cancer. Gloria taught ESL for us at the Mid City campus from May, 2006 – October, 2011. In a short amount of time, she earned esteemed respect and admiration from both her colleagues and students. She was an outstanding instructor who put her whole heart and soul into every lesson she taught, giving her students as much individual attention as she could in the multi-level class that she taught at the Mid City Extension. When visiting Gloria’s classroom, the sense of community was obvious, as well as the detailed lesson planning to meet individual needs. In addition to being an outstanding instructor, Gloria was the most positive and loving human being. She never complained about anything and always had a kind word for everyone she interacted with. When Gloria was diagnosed with cancer about two years ago, she had one main goal – to attend her grandson’s Bar Mitzvah. About a month before this event, her doctor told her she probably would not make it, but Gloria defied the prediction, Not only did she attend the Bar Mitzvah, but she danced at it. She got her final wish. May she rest in peace.

Gretchen Bitterlin, ESL Program Chair

Gloria joined our Mid-City family in 2006. I was immediately impressed by Gloria’s passion for teaching, professionalism, determination and persistence. She took over the Beginning Level ESL Class at the Mid-City Extension seamlessly and quickly gained the respect and admiration of her students and colleagues. Although Gloria may have been new to our district, she certainly wasn’t new to the field of ESL, with many years of experience teaching at a university in Mexico. Gloria showed her determination and persistence in many situations. When I first met Gloria, she was seeking a position in our district. She was so determined to work for SDCE that she was willing to work as a volunteer, even with a doctorate degree. After Gloria began teaching ESL, she relentlessly requested additional aide support for her challenging multi-level 1-3 off-campus class. When she was diagnosed with cancer, her tenaciousness was even more evident. Gloria made up her mind that she could still teach, even if it exhausted her and even if she had to use a walker. She found the strength to keep teaching much longer than one would have expected. Finally, it was Gloria’s determination to attend her grandson’s Bar Mitzvah that kept her battling cancer for two more years.

Gloria’s strong spirit has been such an inspiration to her friends, family and colleagues. We will miss her, but her great example will continue to motivate and encourage us.

Corinne Layton ESL Assistant Program Chair, Mid-City Campus
For 38 years Richie Mitchell worked for our district in many capacities. From Clerical Assistant recording student grades on microfilm (remember that?), to GED Examiner, to Career Center Admin Tech testing clients (including many weekends testing at Solar, Associated Builders and Contractors, and the Port of San Diego among others), to Office Manager. And like so many employees, she worked at several different sites: the District Office, Centre City, Mesa College, North City, and West City. But it was her additional role that began in 1988 that we are most proud of....ESL Instructor. At the end of January this year, we bid Richie well as she joined the ranks of those who have made the leap to retirement.

Richie was first an ESL instructor at Centre City and then mainly thru North City, with a short stint at West City. For 22 years she taught beginners with care and skill. Much beloved by her students and colleagues, Richie was easily approachable and always made time to share words of support and discuss timely issues. She also had the occasion to team teach with Nancy Bachman, Leslie Shimazaki, Sofia Davis, and yours truly. When you teamed with Richie, you were instantly struck by the love and respect the students expressed for her. When she was in front of the room, the students’ light bulbs were all lit. You found them on task and very much engaged in the challenge of learning the basics of English.

Having grown up in Lubbock, Texas, Richie moved to San Diego in 1971. She attended our own Mesa and City Colleges before receiving a full scholarship and completing a BA in Behavioral Science from National University. Originally, Richie thought she would go into counseling, but quickly realized the magnitude of dealing with other people’s problems. Luckily though, for the rest of us, she still had some of those counseling qualities that would serve her well within our district.

On the horizon for Richie now are plans to spend more time with her precious five-year-old granddaughter. She and her only son and only granddaughter share a unique bond, not only as a family, but in their birthdays as well. They are all one day apart at the end of December!
In December, 2012 we moved out of two long time off-campus facilities – The Linda Vista Presbyterian Church and the Clairemont bungalows next to Clairemont High School. After more than 30 years in these facilities, we could not just walk away. Thanks to the organizing efforts of Cindy Wislofsky and Ann McCrory, there were two farewell potlucks at these locations. In one activity, each of us wrote down the one thing we would not miss. Of course, the most prominent items were “no air conditioning, no heating, cockroaches everywhere.” When asked about the one thing we would miss, the response was unanimous - the incredible sense of community that developed over the years among each other and with our students. This sense of community was clearly evident by seeing all the retired teachers who came back to bid a farewell to these facilities: Roberta Alexander, Joan Meier, Lee Mosteller, Lane Landin, Judy Richonne, Paula Sassi, Bobbi Hutchinson, Darlene Elwin, Sandy Coler, Norma Hake, Lynn Jewell, and Martha Sager. We were so touched that they all came back to toast the good times with us. The challenge ahead is to create a new community at CE Mesa. The official opening of our CE Mesa campus on March 20 was a great start! We were honored by the Chancellor’s remarks that finally the quality of our facilities might match the outstanding quality of instruction that exists in our program.
At the Los Angeles Regional CATESOL Conference held on March 2, I attended an excellent presentation by Christina Cavage on “blended learning” in which she distinguished this type of learning from purely online learning and the hybrid model we hear a lot about. She also shared some research which supports accelerated learning using a blended approach. Whereas a hybrid model includes a reduction in classroom face to face instruction, a blended approach does not reduce face to face classroom time. Instead she defines blended learning as the “thoughtful fusion of face to face and online learning experiences.” In an older model of blended learning, students would just reinforce classroom learning by working in a digital workbook outside of class. In the newer model, she recommends extending classroom instruction by creating opportunities for learning outside the classroom, not just practicing the language. For example, students can be asked to read something online and then use class time for a group activity to react to the reading orally or do writing activities. She describes this as front loading. Students learn content prior to their face to face class time. In addition to reading, a lot of listening and pronunciation can be done online prior to class time. Another method in blended learning is “back loading” whereby class time could be spent doing pre-speaking or pre-writing activities. Then students would interact with each other online in group discussions or through interactive writing assignments.

In order to discover whether students learned more with a blended approach, she conducted a little study in her own classroom. Using North Star as her text, she used two different approaches to preparing her students for a vocabulary test. First she just used traditional classroom vocabulary activities and textbook activities. On this test, 18 of her 20 students scored less than 80% on the vocabulary section of the test. For the 2nd test, she assigned all the vocabulary practice on My English Lab (online tool that accompanies North Star). On this test, 16 of the 20 students scored an 80% or higher on the vocabulary section – a 70% increase in learning gains. Another study in 2009 found that students showed an 11% increase in learning gains using a blended approach vs. using only online instruction or only face to face instruction (Siltzmann, Ely 2009).

In conclusion, she has discovered that “blending classroom instruction with a digital tool leads to greater learning.” This research makes us more aware of the importance in considering how new course materials will assist us in implementing blended learning options for our students.
National Geographic Learning Hosts ESL Institute at UCSD by Steve Gwynne

On a crisp sunny Saturday in February, National Geographic Learning, formerly known as Heinle/Cengage, held the ESL Spring Institute at the Rady School of Management on the North UCSD Campus. Our own Lynn Graver, wearing her Publisher Rep hat, along with Steven Maggiore, hosted the event. Authors Mari Vargo and Laurie Blass flew in from the Bay area to present their collaboration on the Pathways academic book series. An added special treat was a presentation by a National Geographic Explorer.

After a book fair and coffee, things got underway. The Rady School of Management is an impressive venue with its modern architecture and media center equipped with high tech seating that had some of us feeling like old timers just trying to sit down in the swivel-out seats. The presenters showcased their new line of books and demonstrated the integrated approach using National Geographic content complete with photos and video (captioned, too!) in an academic series called Pathways.

After lunch, as promised, a real live National Geographic Explorer made a presentation. In this case, it turned out to be UCSD’s own Albert Lin, who immediately engaged attendees by relating his personal journey as an English as a Second Language learner.

From there, he presented a highly interesting account of a trip he made to Mongolia to discover a part of his ancestry. This trip inspired his most recent exploits which include an 'Indiana Jones' type archeological quest to find the lost tomb of Genghis Khan purported to be hidden in a sacred mountain in Mongolia. Lin gave an enthralling account of how he combined his engineering
skills along with high tech equipment such as aerial drones and ground penetrating radar to collect data. He accomplishes all this without removing even a shovel full of earth. How archeology has changed! Remarkably, he also enlisted the Internet in a technique called, “Crowd Sourcing.” Faced with vast satellite data images that he and his team could never examine on their own, Lin relied on “Citizen Scientists” via the website to view the images and map any anomalies in topography that might indicate a potential site. Meanwhile, Lin and his team were on the ground in Mongolia viewing real time data and following up on it. Professor Lin later synthesizes his data and examines it in a futuristic 3-D virtual reality room known as the ‘Star Cave.’ Talk about wading through data. Professor Lin does it literally!

Lin’s lecture was inspirational and made you believe that like him, you too, could follow a dream and achieve it; or maybe one day become a ‘citizen scientist’ and participate from the convenience of home. Most impressively, I thought, was Lin’s sensitivity to the indigenous people. He hopes one day to have the sacred mountain declared a World Heritage site and thus obtain better protection. To learn more about Lin’s expeditions, click here to see a video. [http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/videos/the-missing-tomb/](http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/videos/the-missing-tomb/)

Click here to read more about Professor Lin’s research: [http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/bios/albert-lin/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/bios/albert-lin/)
We now have 10 designated Transition to College ESL classes. Each class includes special curriculum or activities to help prepare our ESL students to transition to college. Seven of our 10 classes reported the following outcomes at the end of the fall semester:

- 32 students were concurrently attending college and the Transitional ESL class.
- 30 were concurrently attending a GED class or job training class.
- 22 have transferred to a job training program.
- 26 have transferred to a GED program.
- 66 have gotten jobs.
- 21 students have moved.
- 37 have transferred to a college course. All of them placed into ESOL 30 or higher on the credit side.
- 141 plan to stay in the class one more semester.

After meeting with the instructors, we hope to increase the amount of counseling provided to students in these courses. We are also asking counselors to administer the TABE test to all students in these classes, since many of them need to get their GEDs before going to college in order to qualify for Federal financial aid.

### Recent Noncredit ESL Transition Student Study

(Published December, 2012 by the Office of Research and Planning)

Last spring, the Transition to College ESL teachers and some faculty from Miramar college got together to pose some research questions about the rate of transition of non-credit ESL students to credit ESOL classes. The questions posed were as follows:

1. **How many CE students transition to the credit colleges for the first time?**
2. **At which placement levels are recent noncredit ESL transition students entering credit ESOL/English?**
3. **What were the highest CE ESL course levels recent noncredit ESL transition students achieved before entering credit?**
4. **How successful are recent noncredit ESL transition students in credit?**

The sample of students in this study were CE ESL students who entered credit ESOL or English courses between 2007 -2012. They were also students who transitioned to the college courses within one year of completing eight or more hours in a given CE term.

See highlights next page . . .
Below are the highlights of this study:

- 1,040 students were in the sample.
- 58% took at least one ESL credit class in their first term. 27% did not take an ESOL or English class in their first term. The majority (67%) did not receive counseling or educational plan services in their first term.
- 56% were first generation college students. 45% were Asian, 19% were white, 17% were Latino, and 8% were African-American.
- Among the 724 students who were recommended into an ESOL or English course based on a placement test, 46% placed at or above ESOL 30 and 54% placed below ESOL 30.
- Among the 578 students who were enrolled in Advanced ESL courses in CE ESL classes before going to college, 46% placed at or above ESOL 30.
- Among the 353 students who had their highest enrollment in an intermediate ESL CE class, only 15% placed at ESOL 30 or above.
- CE ESL students who transferred to the credit ESOL classes were very successful. 95% completed the courses they enrolled in and 85% were successful, meaning they completed their courses with an A, B, C or Pass. In comparison, the retention and success rates for the general population during this same period were 83% (retention) and 66% (success).

Other outcomes of this cohort:

- When tracked 4-6 years from their first year at the credit colleges, 10% received a degree or certificate within 4 years and 20% received a degree or certificate within 6 years.
- 32% of this sample completed 30+ transferrable units within 4 years, and 37% completed these units within 6 years. This is significant because it shows the intention to transfer to a 4-year institution.
- 9% of this sample transferred to a 4-year university within 4 years, and 19% did so within 6 years.

While the above statistics are very positive, our goal is to improve the rate of transition of non-credit ESL students in CE to the credit programs. In the coming weeks we plan to place another request with the District Office of Research to make the above study an annual study so that we can see trends over time. We also plan to modify the research questions to include the following questions:

1. What are the top 3 CE campuses that students were enrolled in before they transitioned to each college?
2. What % of students who placed into ESOL 19, 20, 30, or 40 later enrolled in English 101 within five years?
3. What are the retention and success rates in credit college courses from the CE students enrolled in our Transition to College ESL classes?

We would like to thank Jessica Luedtke and her research team for doing this study for us so promptly. If you would like to see the results of this study in detail, you can log onto the district website at [http://research.sdccd.edu/](http://research.sdccd.edu/)
I am pleased to report that a total of 415 course and program completion certificates were awarded at the end of the fall semester 2012-2013. The following 37 instructors who participated in this program should be congratulated for going the extra mile to make their courses more rigorous and meaningful to their students by setting completion benchmarks and documenting their students’ progress: Lesley Tate, Lesley Robin, Mechelle Perrott, Donna Price, Magda Kwiatkowski, Miguel Blancas, Lissette Quinby, Kathren Bouldin, Chris Stone, Sandie Linn, Toni Fernandes, Beth Bogage, Marcy Bergqvist, Gretchen Bitterlin, Rose Babayan, Lydia Hammett, Barbara Raifsnider, Richard Weinroth, Marina Vera, Victoria Regier, Angie Moeen, Patricia Miyamoto, Ann McCrory, Liz Flynn, Jim Brice, Badia Dizaiy, Amy Watt, Kenna Vetatch, Eric Miller, Nancy Johansen, Sharon Javdan, Mozhdeh Fadavizad, Cindy Wislofsky, Barbara Pongsrikul, Laurel Slater, Jean Washington, Steve Gwynne, Carolyn McGavock and Corinne Layton.

The certificates were awarded as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Completion</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 6</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Completion</th>
<th>Beginning Program (Level 3)</th>
<th>72</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate Program (Level 5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VESL</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The program completion certificates will be reported to the State, which assists in verifying our program accountability. Thank you to Mary LeDuc for processing the certificates and Alma McGee for personally signing each one.
Recently, a student from my fall 2010 ESL Transition Class and ESL Pronunciation and Conversation Class returned to let me know how she was doing and spoke to my class. Ms. Casey W. said that when she left my class she was able to enroll at Miramar College in native speaker English Levels 42 and 48 classes. Since leaving she has completed or is currently enrolled in the following college classes with excellent grades: English 42, 48, 101; Math 104, 119, 116, 121; Computer Science 181; Music 101; Economics 120, 121; Chemistry 101 with the Lab; History 109 and; Business 119.

Casey shared with our class that our continuing education classes helped her in several ways. First, “your teacher here reads, the entire essay and gives detailed feedback about your mistakes.” Casey said that at the college “the teachers don’t have time to give you detailed feedback and they give you general feedback. If you want to find out about your specific mistakes you need to ask the teacher individually.” Casey feels that the specific error feedback was helpful in her moving forward in being able to write good essays. Second, she encouraged students to also take a pronunciation and conversation class as, “You don’t want to feel lonely and you want to be able to talk with your classmates and talk with your teachers. Also, all the listening activities that you do in the pronunciation class help you take notes when the professor does not write on the board.” Casey said that she found that speaking with others and making friends with students of different ages gave her a “different perspective and this broadened my views.” Third, Casey stated that she found out a lot of information about financial aid by talking with her non-native speaking and native speaking classmates. Students discuss their situations with their classmates and she was able to get some valuable information about the differences between financial aid and the EOPS program.

Casey told my students that she has had to write many essays in several of her other classes, besides English. For example, she has written essays in Economics, Chemistry, and History. My students questioned her about the format of the essays in these college classes and Casey said, “it is the same grammar and writing structure that you have in your essays in here, just the topic is different.”

Casey also shared something about her way of learning that is critical to staying on top of her classes. She said that when the professor lectures, she takes detailed notes and when she doesn’t “fully understand the material, she goes home and researches the material and learns it until she feel comfortable with it.”

Casey is currently taking 19 units at Miramar College and working part-time. She is a remarkable student in many ways and is representative of the many immigrants and refugees who come to this country ready and willing to sacrifice much to achieve their dreams. America is lucky to have people coming to our shores that work so hard to make America the country that we are today. This is what transformational education is all about, and what a wonderful journey it is for both students and teachers.
The 7th VESL Personal Care Assistant I-BEST graduation was held at Centre City on January 24, 2013. Patty Stottlemyer, RN and Gita St. John, LVN were excited to attend their first VESL PCA graduation!

This class, with students from 13 different countries, was an extremely tight knit group. If someone didn’t show up to class, everyone wondered why and was concerned. I encouraged them to continue communicating on our VESL PCA private Facebook group and to let the group know about employment and training classes.

The students who graduated had been coming regularly to the class since September 4.

There were 37 students on the class roster on September 4. There were 34 students who graduated. These 34 students made a commitment to study in the class 4 days a week for the entire semester. They fulfilled the exit requirements and earned a certificate. The students came from all over the county: City Heights, Chula Vista, Linda Vista, Spring Valley, Point Loma and Rancho Penisquitos.

Many students had taken classes in other Continuing Education sites, including: ECC, MC, and WC, and some students were taking classes concurrently, such as computer, grammar, conversation, pronunciation classes and GED.

In the spring 2013 semester, the students are going to the following classes:

8 students are going to ESL Level 5.

Most students are going to look for a job as a caregiver.

The VESL Personal Care Assistant fall 2012 class was certainly a memorable one. Thanks to the nurses who were an essential part of the class, we have many exceptionally trained caregivers in San Diego!

My thoughts:

I have been teaching ESL for a long time. I taught VESL for many years and one of my dreams was to teach a class along with the vocational teacher, to have the language teacher and the content specialist in one class.

I remember one day in class after about 3 weeks when I realized the students were learning the content and language very quickly…it was one of those ahha moments when I thought to myself: this is really working.

Contextualized learning: students learn faster when they learn the language and the skills together.
This lesson is ideal for integrating technology, culture and language. In addition to introducing students from various cultures to the Chinese Lunar New Year and the vocabulary engendered, the technology portion of the lesson introduces students to skills such as copying, pasting, saving, creating borders, finding images on the internet, Google translation tools, printing, font size, Word Art and being able to upload an image into a blog using Paint, a simple graphics program found on every computer that has Microsoft Office. This lesson is one of a continuing series of computer technology lessons that use holidays to teach skills such as creating a table, searching for images on the internet, copying, pasting, setting margins, printing, using special skills such as creating a transparent effect over an image, and using a variety of fonts. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, the Lunar New Year, Valentines Day and the Persian New Year Norouz have been opportunities to create greeting cards, flyers with vocabulary from the holiday, calendars and emails.

In this particular lesson, I begin with a typical ESL lesson showing the list of the Chinese zodiac animals on the projector and also giving the students a handout. This is an exercise that every level of student can enjoy. Typical vocabulary practice includes pronunciation of the dates, the names of the animals and vocabulary at the appropriate level. The primary objective of this lesson is to create a flyer, but collateral benefits include aspects of culture and vocabulary acquisition.

Typically I first read aloud and have the students repeat how to say the years for each animal. At the same time, we also repeat the animal names. I then ask who is a monkey, and everyone who has that sign stands up and we applaud. We continue through all the animals. The next day I ask the students to fold a piece of paper and walk around the room to find out the zodiac animal for each of their classmates. Then they go to the board and we put up the names of the zodiac animals so that students can write their names under their sign. This gives the students the opportunity to go to the board and also to talk about the characteristics of the signs. Sometimes I put the pictures of the animals on a bingo sheet and we play a version of people bingo in which the person who gets the whole page signed first is the winner. If you make a 24 square grid, you have plenty of room for each person to sign their name.

The next step is for the students to use the computer to look up the definitions of the words in Google translation tools. They can type in or paste the words describing their zodiac character and read the definition in their language. After translating individual words, I show them how to find the file where I have saved the Chinese zodiac document. They can then copy and paste the entire description into Google Translation Tools and hear the English spoken as
The next step is to create the flyer. If you are in a lab once a week, you will need three or four whole sessions to complete this task. The lesson is a handout which is given to the students, but at the same time, the teacher is demonstrating each step. In the lab, I ask the students to read each instruction, while I ask other more advanced students to help the less advanced students. I have done this lesson with very beginning students, but you must have more advanced students to help them. It is important to be able to print and to have colored paper available. After the students print their flyers, I ask them to stand in front of the class and show everybody their work. Again, we always applaud their efforts. Both the handout for the zodiac animals and the directions for the flyer are included for you to use.

I have a blog for my class and I typically teach those who are interested to upload the flyers into the blog. The Word documents have to be converted into a picture file before they can be uploaded, and I teach students who are interested how to do this. All of these tasks are important tools in using technology while reading, writing, listening, speaking, and building vocabulary and cultural awareness skills. Please take time to explore the blog to see how creatively and skillfully our ESL students have implemented their technology skills. The blog address is http://computerlab107.blogspot.com/.
Students in Sandie Linn’s ESL Transition to College class are reading Reyna Grande’s memoir *The Distance Between Us*. This book sheds light on the difficulties children of illegal immigrants experience when their parents come to the United States, and they have left the children behind in their native countries. Ms. Grande writes a heartwrenching story of how she and her two older siblings grew up without their parents when they lived in Iguala, Mexico. They relied on each other to survive, despite extreme poverty and abuse, while their parents worked in Los Angeles during the 1980s. As a pre-teen, Ms. Grande came to the United States to be reunited with her parents, but the familial bonds that were severed when her parents left her were not easily repaired.

Ms. Grande is participating in this book project by answering questions the students have posed on Sandie Linn’s blog: [http://sandielinn.wordpress.com/about/assignments/ask-the-author-reyna-grande/](http://sandielinn.wordpress.com/about/assignments/ask-the-author-reyna-grande/)

The students have also posted their reactions to reading *The Distance Between Us* at the bottom of the page. One student wrote to Ms. Grande saying, “You accomplished your purpose by giving an immigrant like me the motivation to take advantage of the opportunities this country gives you.”

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**World Traveler Speaks to ESL Class**  
by Mimi Pollack

Bob Gannon, the pilot who flew around the world for 10 years in his Cessna 182 and went to 155 countries, came on Thursday and his presentation was a hit. This was his second time at Mid-City. Over 40 students came and asked him good questions when he was finished. He was supposed to stay for 1 1/2 hours, but stayed over 2 hours. Bob is a corn fed midwesterner who although being 100% American, loves to discover and learn about other cultures. His presentation fit in perfectly with my EL Civics "cultural differences" lessons. I have 15 countries represented in my evening class.
My Brother by Abel Fuentes

My brother made a difference in my life. Five years ago, when I was looking for a job, he taught me how to cook. It was very important because it was going to be my first job. I never learned before to cook anything. He got permission from his boss to take me to his job and to train me before I started working. He wanted me to be independent and a good worker. He was very patient and taught me how to cook all the different dishes. Now I have been working four years in the restaurant. He made a difference in my life.

The Secret by Artem Taranov

The film “The Secret” made a difference in my life. In 2006 when I was working in a company as a sales manager, I saw this very interesting film. This film taught me to think differently. The idea of the film is that all of what we think comes true. Therefore, we must learn to think only of good. I am beginning to try to think as it says in the film. After a short time, I felt a result. For example, I began to make more money and got a new job. I like that this method is available to all people. The Secret is designed to help people think properly. In 2010 I had planned to move to live in another country. Now, I am living in United States and I am very happy. The most important thing is to always set the correct target and it will change your life as well as mine.
Nate York by Ayub Azizi

Nate York is one of the nicest, supportive, and most helpful people I have ever met. He had been my boss for over ten years, in the nonprofit organization. In the 2006 my family received death threats and we had hard time, the political situation had changed. Then Nate, my family, and I made the decision to move from Afghanistan to Africa. Nate helped pay for our visas and tickets. In Africa, he bought land for a small fish farm. I did not have any experience fish farming. He showed me how to fish farm. I was successful in Africa. He had a lot of information about marketing and had many contacts with other farmers. We produced baby fish and then sold them to other farmers. He taught me how to find the market and how to sell the baby fish. Handling the fish was not easy for me. He showed me about that too. Now, I know a lot about fish farming and agriculture. Before that, I didn’t know anything. He made a lot of positive changes in my life.

My Sister Misaki by Miyuki Nagata

My youngest sister Misaki has made a difference in my life. She has taught me to think differently about disabled people. Though she cannot walk, she has never allowed her disability to stop her, nor has she ever regretted her destiny. Growing up together, I often wondered why she could not walk or why she had a handicap. I felt confused. When I was nineteen years old and she was a six-year-old, I had the chance to visit her school. I was impressed in her classroom. I had never seen her use a wheelchair and she was developing skills with her hands. Then I realized she was doing it with little effort. She attended the regular public school not one for disabled children. Though she was different, she always did her best. She never complained how hard life was. I realized that I should not judge if her life was happy or not. I decided I wanted to help people who had diseases or disabilities; I wanted to support them and their families. I had not wanted to be a nurse, because I had thought nursing was dirty and hard work until I thought about my sister’s handicap. I then knew I wanted to become a nurse.
In life sometimes, there are certain things that we feel we need to accomplish—things that for some reason were put on hold. However, at times we feel the need to persuade ourselves to achieve those things. Education is a good example. For we all know that it is one of the most important things and an essential tool for success. Without it, life can be a little more difficult.

Moving on, I’d like to proceed and tell a little bit of my own story. A couple of years ago, my life was as normal as anyone else’s life. But back then, I felt that there were a few things I needed to work on. Among other things, English was my biggest concern, especially grammar. So, I rolled up my sleeves and decided to take action about it. I came to Mid-City and registered for the ESL classes. Therefore, I knew hard work and effort would be necessary for good results as well as a firm will to succeed.

When I first started, my grammar was very poor. In fact, I had no knowledge about such a thing. Just to give you guys a hint, I wasn’t even able to start writing an essay, not even a complete sentence. And when writing, I misspelled almost every single word. My spoken English wasn’t bad, but there were words I wasn’t sure of their correct pronunciation. Even though I had been living here for many years, I didn’t feel very comfortable when talking.

So, as you can see, the gap for improvement was very wide. For obvious reasons, for about two semesters, I made a commitment to myself to not give up and to move forward. And I did—I showed up to class every night. It was hard attending school every night, I have to admit. I felt exhausted at times, because working full-time and having a family didn’t make it easy to combine. It wasn’t easy to get off from work, make a quick stop at home, leave my kids behind and come to school. I can say that the hardest part was depriving my kids of my presence, because literally, I was absent from home the majority of the day.

But motivated and inspired by the hunger to succeed, I felt enthusiastic and adamant to reach my goals. I was convinced to stay on the path that I had chosen and decided to expand my knowledge.
This is Sajjad Naseri. I was your student at School. I've received your email and I'm going to write a Paragraph.

My Experience at Clairemont School

At September 2010 I came to San Diego from my native country Iran. At the beginning I didn't know any English at all. Then I started to learn English language. I was so excited to learn English and all my classmates were from all the countries in the world. However the language was so hard and boring. But I decided to work hard to improve myself as soon as possible because I wanted to Continue my Education at University. Fortunately all the professors were so nice and helpful, especially Mrs. Stephani They tried their best and I really appreciate. Now English is one of my favorite language and when I speak I really enjoy.

My Experience at Mesa College

After 15 months working hard at Clairemont School. I applied for a Community Mesa College. I'm so glad that I can join the College. Here, Everything is so complicated and all the student must challenge themselves. It is a big different between the our country and here. I still take English class and most of my classmates are American. This is a wonderful opportunity for student to take advantage of the services that college created for us. My plan is to apply for UCSD and my major is pharmacologist.

Success Story from our new Mesa Campus

Grand opening of our CE Mesa Campus

New home for 12 ESL classes
Websites to create crossword puzzles, word searches, and more.

To supplement vocabulary lessons, try one of these free puzzle and worksheet making sites to create printable handouts.

**www.puzzlemaker.com**   Pick a puzzle type from the middle section, follow the step-by-step directions, then print your puzzle.

**http://tools.atozteacherstuff.com/**   Word searches - with extra options such as including diagonal words or not, forward vs. backward words, number of rows/columns, font size, etc. Crossword puzzles

Word shapes - for lower levels, a worksheet where students write the vocabulary words in the corresponding box shapes.

**http://worksheets.theteacherscorner.net/**   Word searches, crossword puzzles, matching, cloze exercises, word scrambles, telling time worksheets, money worksheets, and more. Use premade ones or create your own with multiple options.

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Some interesting statewide statistics from CASAS

- 161 adult schools and 17 community college districts provided adult education services under our Federal WIA grant in 2011-2012.
- 8 of the above agencies enroll 45% of the learners in California
- There has been a 39% decrease in enrollment. Since 2008 – 09, the ESL enrollment in the state has dropped from 519,739 to 287,082.
- 1/5 of all adult education learners are in California.
- California has the highest % of ESL students in adult education programs – 30%.
- The good news – In 2011-2012, California exceeded its NRS performance goals in all areas.
Citizenship Success

This fall we implemented our new citizenship course completion certificate and 25 citizenship students received one. An advantage of having a completion certificate available is to accommodate those students not yet eligible for citizenship that wish to complete the course work in advance and leave the class with evidence of their efforts. Our biggest success comes from those students achieving U.S. citizenship. From the Fall of 2011 through the Spring of 2012, we helped 153 students pass the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) interview to become U.S. citizens. From the Summer of 2012 through the Fall of 2012 we had another 110 students succeed for a total of 263 new U.S. citizens through our program this past year!

Helping the Disabled, Elderly and Less Literate Students in our Citizenship Classes

At our citizenship faculty meeting on March 1, we focused on ways to serve our disabled, elderly and less literate students. The government program called Supplemental Security Income (SSI) financially helps the disabled and the elderly, and the program requires SSI recipients to become U.S. citizens within 7 years or lose the benefits. Achieving the goal of U.S. citizenship can be extremely challenging for students with health and age-related issues. With a panel of experts, we discussed waivers and accommodations to the naturalization process. Our guests were: Leslie Qiñones, counselor for the Disability Support Programs and Services (DSPS); Laura Lopez, Immigration Program Manager at International Rescue Committee; and two USCIS officers, Ricardo Valadez, Supervisory Immigration Services Officer for the Chula Vista Field Office, and John Ramirez, Community Relations Officer. We discussed, for example, one road block to success -- the difficulty in identifying a learning disability in an ESL student because the diagnostic testing tools are designed for a native speaker of English and not a second language learner. We probably raised more issues than solved, but our guest speakers agreed to keep lines of communication open to us to address our special needs students. After the panel discussion, Rosaelena Pilco gave us lesson planning tips and materials from her Citizenship Class for Seniors. Leslie Tate explained how she organizes her class using group work and many community volunteers. We admired Leslie's ability to recruit so many helpers from the community. This citizenship class was in another school district with different and easier volunteer service policies. We see a need to increase support through aides and community volunteers to help on an individual and small group level to target instruction to the needs of our diverse student body. We appreciate Alma McGee, Gretchen Bitterlin and our assistant program chairs working to get citizenship classes more support.

Sequestration

The sequestration, across the board cuts in federal government programs, has not affected the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). There have been no cuts in immigration services because USCIS is a fee-based program without government subsidies to operate. For example, the fee for naturalization is $680 which covers the cost of the government services. Paul Pierre, the USCIS San Diego District Director, announced this at the April USCIS/CBO (community based organizations) meeting. No cuts! However, the director announced that USCIS services may continue to slow. There has been an increased workload to process the applicants for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a program to process undocumented young people qualifying for a two-year work visa. According to statistics on the USCIS website, about half of the estimated 1.2 million eligible to apply for DACA have done so. Also at the April meeting, Carole May of the San Diego Passport Agency located at 401 West A Street reports that the sequester has
affected her office with a 30% downsizing of Passport Agency services.

New Voters Web Page

http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/new-voter/

The Voter Education and Outreach Services of our state government created this page to help people new to voting, or who will soon become eligible to vote. This link provides basic voting information and materials on line in English and nine additional languages including Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. Arlene Pinzler, Assistant Deputy Secretary of State of California, asks for your help in spreading the word about this valuable resource to our new voters.
San Diego District Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Paul Pierre, speaks to the Senior U.S. Citizenship Class taught by Rosa Elena Pilco.
Instructional Assistants at Centre City and Cesar Chavez
by Barbara Raifsnider, Assistant Program Chair

Overath Bassa became an assessment aide at Centre City in fall, 2009. Overath was a Centre City student, too. He began in Ana Olivesky’s class, then he studied with Richard Weinroth, Barbara Raifsnider and Sandie Linn before enrolling in the CE Auto Tech program. He graduated from Auto Tech in October, 2012. He plans to attend Miramar College to study in their Auto Tech program in fall 2013. His goal is to eventually become an airplane mechanic.

Ana Cody first started working at Centre City in October 1988. She became a contract aide in 1992. Ana was an ESL student at Centre City before she began working for us. Ana first started ESL classes in 1987, and Edith Dabbs was her first ESL teacher. She also studied with Roberta Alexander and Mary Greenburg. Ana got her GED from Centre City in 1990.

Concepcion Lopez started working at Centre City in September, 1988. She received her contract for 15 hours a week in October, 1991. She took ESL classes with Carolyn Dunlap for three years before she started working for us. She also took English and math classes for two semesters at City College. She says her goal is to have a 20 hour a week contract with medical benefits.

Yolanda de la Torre (formerly Araos) began her career working at ECC. Donna Price was her teacher at the time, and Donna encouraged her to apply for a position as an aide. She also received her contract in 1992. Yolanda has worked at many of our campuses. She has worked at North Shores, West City Point Loma and Clairemont. She moved to Chavez a few years ago and has been there ever since.

Esther Im began her career at Centre City when she started taking classes in Electronics Assembly. She started working as an aide in that program with Vi Kirk. She started working for us in 1980 then got her contract in 1990. She has worked with Jim Park, Jan Jarrell, Cathy Coxey, Jim Brice, Darlene Elwin and Barbara Raifsnider. Esther loves her job because she loves the students.
Diyana Kitchev is the newest member of our aide community. She began working at Centre City in March of 2013. Diyana arrived in the U.S. from Bulgaria in October of 2010. In November, 2010, she married her boyfriend, a naturalized American citizen also from Bulgaria. Beginning in October of 2010, Diyana started taking ESL classes at Centre City. Her first instructor was Irene Ayon, but she has also studied with Richard Weinroth, Barbara Raifsnider, Marcy Bergqvist, Andrea Sperling, Iryna Scharer-Filatova, Ann Marie Holzknecht and Kathren Bouldin. Diyana already has a degree from Bulgaria, but her goal is to get another degree that would permit her to work in Human Resources.

Cindy Mora started taking ESL classes at ECC. Cindy transitioned to City College in Spring, 2010. Currently she is studying at Mesa, but plans to transfer to UCSD next year where she plans to major in Chemical Engineering. Cindy first began working as an aide in the GED program at Chavez and moved into our ESL program in 2012. She still works for GED in the GED in Spanish class at Centre City. She really likes her job because she is able to help and encourage the students and also because she knows what they are going through.

Martha Gomez

I think most of us integrate soft skills in our classes—those transferable skills we hope our students use in other classes, at work and in the community. These are things like good interpersonal skills and the ability to work well with others, taking initiative, and having a good attitude in spite of whatever is happening at home. I have been so lucky for the past year and a half to have Martha Gomez as the Instructional Assistant in my VESL Personal Care Assistant class because she demonstrates those soft skills every day. I am sure that students are learning more about transferable workplace skills from Martha’s example than anything I could ever say.

Martha works beautifully with the students. She is kind, patient, and consistent. She seems to anticipate my needs; the class runs much more smoothly when she is there.

In addition, she has learned caregiving skills from the nurses and assists them during the hands-on part of the class. When she is needed in the assessment office, she volunteers. I have never heard Martha say, "I can't do that."

Martha Gomez is an outstanding instructional aide and caregiver assistant! The students, nurses and I are extremely fortunate to have someone as caring and versatile as Martha in our VESL PCA class.
ECC’s Instructional Assistants by Jim Brice, Assistant Program Chair

I am not telling you who is who, but I would describe the ESL instructional assistants at ECC as professional, graceful, stoic, exuberant, and mysterious. Maybe all of them are all of those things on some days. I believe 4 out of 5 of them were graduates of the Mary Beauparlant Academy of Instructional Assistants, so I can’t take much credit for grooming them to perfection, but I have enjoyed the fruits of her labor for four years and it has been a pleasure and a privilege to know and work with this fine team.

Eva Duenas
Eva, the senior instructional assistant at ECC for ESL, has been providing excellent service to students and staff on a daily basis for 20 years, including one year as a DSPS aide. This bilingual (English & Spanish) aide started out as an hourly instructional assistant, and after just 7 months, got a contract. Her lucky number is now 11 – the years left until she retires and becomes a world traveler, seeing all those countries which the students she assists come from!

Liz Rodriguez
In addition to her ongoing commitment to her educational and career goals, or maybe as a result of them, Liz’s life goal is to raise her young son to have the best life possible. With 10 years (1.5 as Hourly aide) & (8.5 as Contract), my concern is that ECC will soon lose Liz to a higher level administrative position. As a native Spanish speaker, who speaks English like a native, Liz started in our ESL program at level 4 and matriculated through the VESL program with Donna Price right into the ESL office.

Blanca Corona
As Blanca will reach her goal of obtaining an AA in Child Development and start working in the child development field this summer, it is with boat loads of bitter sweetness that we say thanks, goodbye, and good luck. After 5 years of being spoiled with Blanca, now it’s the children’s turn. However, I think we are looking at another rising administrative star. Someday, we may all be working for Blanca. And what a compliment to hers and our program if that happens. Blanca completed ESL 1 through 7 and then went to college.

Janisse Marron-Hernandez
Janisse is our evening contract aide. In the future, she would like to pursue a Master’s degree in Speech Pathology and is completing the prerequisites now. Our fourth bilingual instructional assistant started back in 2005 as an hourly and was granted an evening contract in 2007. When she was an hourly, she was also enrolled in ESL level 7 at ECC in the morning. Later, she studied in the CNA program in Cesar Chavez. She stopped coming to ESL classes in January 2006 when she transferred to Southwestern College. She completed her undergraduate work at San Diego State University with a BA in Psychology in 2010.
Oumar Ba

Oumar, ECC’s newest instructional assistant, has been our Friday night Citizenship aide for the past few years. He has assisted Citizenship teacher Leslie Tate in doubling the number of students who pass the Citizenship test from ECC. Oumar speaks four languages, including English, French, Arabic, Pular, and Wolof. Now that he has passed his ESL classes at ECC and finished his GED, he would like to transfer to a 4 year institution.

Mid-City ESL Instructional Assistants
by Corinne Layton, ESL Assistant Program Chair

Daytime ESL Instructional Assistants:

Our dedicated and conscientious aides have been integral to the success of our ESL Program. They are usually the student’s first contact as they go through the assessment process. By providing a warm, friendly and reassuring welcome, they set the tone for a student’s experience at Mid-City. They also provide assistance to classroom instructors in innumerable ways, such as tutoring individual students who need help, preparing students for EL Civics assessments or Citizenship interviews and assisting students in the ESL computer labs. We are so fortunate to have a wonderful team of instructional assistants at Mid-City Campus.
Albina Velazco
Albina has been working at Mid-City for 16 years. She started out as an Americorps volunteer in the ESL GAIN Labs, worked as an hourly aide and later became a contract instructional assistant. Albina has made an outstanding contribution to our ESL program working in Assessment, assisting in a variety of classrooms from Level 1 to Citizenship to VESL, and assisting with a myriad of tasks that contribute to the smooth running of our program, including helping with CASAS make-up testing, assisting with the supply order and distributing books and materials. Albina is a highly dedicated employee who demonstrates great kindness and patience while working with students in assessment and the classroom. She loves her job and describes each task as “meaningful” since it directly or indirectly affects students. We are delighted that Albina’s goal is to continue providing her very best every day she comes to work.

Lily Gonzalez
Lily has worked for continuing education since 2005. After a brief assignment in Business Services at ECC, Lily became an hourly aide and shortly after that a contract aide. Lily’s primary assignments have been in our ESL Assessment Office and the Vocational ESL (VESL) class, although she has also assisted in the Citizenship Class and ESL Computer Lab. Due to her excellent organizational skills, Lily has made a strong contribution to the smooth running of the VESL class. She is very knowledgeable about the various VESL programs and offers expert assistance to our students. Recently Lily joined our VESL Committee where she will be able to provide her valuable input to the ESL faculty. Lily is also in charge of preparing the monthly assessment report for our daytime ESL program.

Zakia Nassrat
Zakia has been working at Mid-City for 16 years. Although Zakia started as an instructional assistant in the ABE Program, the majority of her career has been working for our ESL Program in Assessment and in the classroom. She began as an hourly aide but has been a contract aide for many years. Zakia has a warm and caring personality and the ability to make our students feel comfortable and confident. She demonstrates kindness and compassion as she works one-on-one with students in Assessment and in the Citizenship class as they prepare for their Citizenship interview. In addition, her ability to stay calm and collected has been a great asset in addressing problems and difficult situations. Always willing to take on new challenges, Zakia’s goal is to improve her computer skills and someday travel the world.

Abdisalaam Haji
Abdisalaam “Abdi” Haji has been working at Mid-City since October 2011. In addition to working in our ESL Assessment Office, he is an instructional assistant in the beginning low literacy classes (morning and evening) and the evening Citizenship class where he demonstrates great patience and understanding. Always willing to take on new tasks, he has been given new responsibilities in Assessment and recently participated in a pilot that compared the effectiveness of a variety of visuals used for the oral interview. Abdi wrote up a detailed and insightful analysis that was later shared with the Assistant Program Chairs at each campus. A senior at San Diego State University majoring in English, he hopes to graduate in the fall of 2013 and pursue a Master’s Degree in Education. After Abdi earns his M.A., he would like to teach English overseas in a variety of cultural settings.
Maribel Diaz

Maribel came to Mid-City in September of 2012. She has been working in beginning level ESL classes at one of our off-site locations and at our main campus. In addition, Maribel assists with online registration in our ESL Assessment Office. As the newest member of our great team of instructional assistants, Maribel demonstrates patience, enthusiasm and eagerness to help our students. Maribel is working on a double major of Business Finance and Spanish. She expects to earn her bachelor’s degree in the spring of 2015. Her goal is to graduate with honors and seek employment in a bank where she hopes to use her background in finance as well as her ability to speak Spanish and English.

Edilberto Mendoza

Edilberto has been working at Mid-City since 2011. Edilberto originally came to Mid-City as a continuing education student. He earned a number of certificates in our Business Information Technology program which he proudly displays in a well-organized binder. In addition, Edilberto worked hard to complete his G.E.D. at Mid-City. While a continuing education student, Edilberto became an active student representative on our ASB. As an instructional assistant, Edilberto’s main responsibilities have been working in our ESL Assessment Office and assisting the classroom instructor in the level 1-3 class at the Mid-City Extension where he is valued highly for his conscientious nature and willingness to help. Edilberto is currently taking classes at City College.

Noel Puga

Noel Puga has been working at Mid-City since February 2011. Originally hired to work for our EL Civics program, Noel became an ESL instructional assistant in June 2012. He has worked in ESL Assessment and a variety of classes, including Citizenship, a beginning level evening class at the Mid-City Extension, the ESL Computer Lab and Pronunciation class. Noel demonstrates great enthusiasm for his job and a sincere willingness to serve students. He is currently working on his Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work: Community Corrections Case Management at San Diego State University. He hopes to graduate in May 2014, pursue a Master’s Degree in Social Work and become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Noel states that his “end goal is to help people in need, particularly immigrants and low-income families.” He wants “to connect those in need with the available resources that will help them achieve their goals and dreams.”

Evarist Kharelimana

Evarist Kharelimana originally came to Mid-City as an intermediate level ESL student in January 2010. He was promoted to the advanced level of ESL and began working as an instructional assistant in 2011. Originally from Rwanda, Evarist completed his education in Russia where he earned an impressive master’s and doctorate degree in Physics. Evarist has been a great help in our ESL Assessment Office and level A literacy classes where he demonstrates great kindness, patience and initiative. He is able to communicate with many of our ESL students in their native languages because of his multilingual background in Kinyarwanda, Russian and French. Evarist is currently studying at City College and hopes to teach mathematics and physics in the future.
The gateway to our Mid-City ESL program lies in room 123, our ESL assessment office. And here, the Instructional Assistant team has an important impact on the student experience. Beginning from the moment they greet a potential student and answer eager questions, and continuing through the interview and assessment process, our instructional assistants guide and launch new students on a pathway that we believe can change lives, fulfill dreams, and create opportunities all for the better. No small task then, is it? Yet, time after time, I am impressed with the dedication, determination, awareness, and sensitivity that this instructional team displays daily.

Online assessment is but one role they undertake. Let’s not forget CASAS, assisting in the classrooms, and the countless other essential duties, most of which they carry out behind the scenes; yet, they are so vital in making Mid-City run smoothly. I greatly appreciate their effort both collectively as a team and individually. We could not have a successful program without their contributions.
Hector Salazar
Hector has worked in the district for 16 years and at Mid-City for the last three years. If Hector has a super power, it is his ability to organize and carry out projects. He is our only contract aide in the evening and our designated team leader. He also assists in the Citizenship class.

You might be interested to know that Hector has studied in our program earning a High School Diploma, GED certificate and studied computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint. He speaks Spanish, Portuguese and some Italian. His educational goal is to earn a Masters Degree in business. He enjoys working at Mid City because, “it is like a big family.”

Bianca Belmonte
Bianca has worked for the district for six years as she attends college with a goal to get a counseling degree to help assist battered women. She enjoys working with adults. In addition, she is the evening VESL aide and assists the students enormously with their vocational materials. She is my right-hand person in the classroom and I greatly appreciate her assistance. Even when assessment gets hectic, Bianca always keeps cool under pressure.

Maria Elena Hernandez
Maria Elena has worked as an instructional assistant for the last two years. She has completed VESL classes and the Caregiver class. Now she is a licensed CNA. She is currently a student in the Transition to College class. Her goal is to go to college and become a nurse. And I have faith that she is going to do it! Maria Elena demonstrates a strong work ethic by always arriving on time, ready to go, and dealing with the myriad of daily tasks with the same caring determination. As she puts it, “I love to help people,” and it shows by the countless students who are thankful for her assistance. I know I can always count on her.

Alan Lam
Alan is a student at San Diego State where he studies Biochemistry and Nutrition. His goal is to become a pharmacist. He has worked as an instructional assistant for two years. In addition to his assessment duties, where his language abilities are greatly appreciated, he also assists Eric Miller in our extension class. Alan is always ready to take on any task at lightning speed. In his words, “I’m on it.”

Erick Villa
Erick has joined our team this semester. (Check out his bio with EL Civics,) His educational goal is to become a professor and a writer. He likes working at Mid City because he enjoys being around students and he is gaining valuable experience. Erick is very flexible tackling any task that comes his way. I appreciate his good humor and ability to get along with everyone.

Abdisalaam Haji
Abdisalaam Haji assists in the assessment office, but mostly with our evening low-literate class. (Check out his extensive bio in the day-time ESL Instructional assistant page.)

Instructor Elaine Barrett and I appreciate Abdisalam’s care and patience working with student’s who benefit from one-on-one tutoring and the extra attention he provides. I think Abdisalaam will be a great teacher in the future!

Noel Puga
Noel Puga assists one evening in our extension program with instructor Eric Miller in a multi-level ESL class. (Please read his extensive bio in Corinne’s section.) He provides invaluable support in the classroom. Furthermore, I appreciate his good nature and positive energy.
Thuy Nguyen has been part of North City since 2005, first as a student at the Linda Vista Presbyterian Church offsite campus and then as a classroom instructional assistant. She studied English with Nancy Bachman as a beginning ESL student, but was quickly moved to Xanh Lam’s level 5 class and then to Uta Cole’s advanced class. She also used the computer lab at LVPC and worked with Ola Steenhagen in improving her writing skills. Thuy began taking classes at Miramar at which time Nancy Bachman offered her a position as an instructional assistant. Thuy worked with Mimi Pollack and Jane Uhle in the LVPC evening program and then began working with Ola Steenhagen at Miramar College. Thuy’s passion is teaching and she always has enjoyed working in the classroom with students. A former high school literature teacher, Thuy is an avid reader and writer. She completed her AA degree and is now a senior at SDSU with a major in Public Administration and a minor in Linguistics. Her goal is to get a Master’s Degree in counseling. She also wants to become an ESL teacher. Working in education and helping students are her major career objectives. She feels her experience as an immigrant will add an extra dimension to her ability to assist students.

Van Pham arrived from Vietnam in October of 2006, and began ESL classes at Miramar in November. He completed levels 4, 5, 6, and 7, and then entered Miramar College. After he completed his AA degree, he transferred to San Diego State. He is now in his senior year at SDSU completing a degree in Social Work. When he finishes, he would like to work with the elderly, as he did in his recent internship. Van has studied Spanish, in addition to speaking Vietnamese and English.
The beginning of 2013 was a very busy time for our ESL Instructional Aides from West City/Clairemont and North City/LVPC as we merged the two ESL programs together into our new SDCE Mesa College Campus building. We would not have been able to have such a smooth transition to our new location without the hard working and dedicated group of ESL aides that now work at the CE Mesa Campus ESL Assessment office everyday with a smile. As the ESL Assistant Program Chair of the CE Mesa Campus, I cannot put into words how much the ESL Instructional Aides have done for our ESL Program, and I feel so fortunate and blessed to work with each one of them.

Comments from Instructors:

Cindy Wislofsky wrote this about our CE ESL aides:
They jump in to whatever we are doing, show patience and care with the students, and follow directions so easily. Their translation skills have also been invaluable when students have concerns and can't communicate them in English. They have become allies for the students, and everyone lights up when one of them arrives to assist in our class.

Stephanie Thomas wrote: Our ESL aides are the best! They go above and beyond every day. My electronic registration process went without a hitch because of our aides.

Celia Lujan
Celia, our evening contract aide, started over 27 years ago while she was working for San Diego Unified School District. She was told that her job as an hourly ESL Instructional Aide at Continuing Education would just be a few months and here she is 27 years later. She received her ESL Instructional Aide contract 20 years ago. Everyday Celia provides courteous and excellent service to our ESL students with a smile. She also enjoys taking CE classes such as piano and guitar classes and her future goal is to have fun.

Jennifer Bennett
Jennifer is our only morning contract ESL aide and this year she will be receiving her 10 year award as an ESL Instructional Assistant for CE. After taking SDCE transfer classes Jennifer transferred to UCSD on a TAG from SDCCD. She has a B.A. in Linguistics and in the future would like to get an M.S. in Speech Pathology. Always improving herself Jennifer likes to study languages such as French, Japanese and Chinese and also has taken CE sewing classes. Every morning Jennifer is eager and ready to help students with a smile.

Saeed Abdollahi
Saeed started working at WC/Clairemont (also has an El Civics bio) as an ESL Instructional Assistant in January 2011. He has a B.S. in Business and is currently getting an M.B.A. in Business and will graduate in August 2013. In the future Saeed would like to get a Ph.D. in Management or Administration. Currently Saeed helps in both the West City/Point Loma and CE Mesa Placement offices. Along with this he helps us in the CE computer lab and in some of the ESL classrooms. He is also able to translate in Farsi. Saeed is always helpful and happy to work with students with a smile and friendly manner.
Tomas Paz

Tomas started working at West City/Clairemont in January 2011. Tomas works in the evening at the CE Mesa Campus. He works in the ESL placement office, in the computer lab and also in the classrooms. He is always ready to help all students and works well with the other aides with a smile. He has a Technical Certificate in Computers and he worked for IBM as a Network Administrator in Argentina. He has been taking CE classes starting from level 4 to his current level 7 class with instructor Toni Fernandes. Next, he would like to take a CE Computer Job Training course and in the future Tomas would like to become a business owner in computer service.

Martha Gomez

Martha Gomez also works in the CE Mesa College Campus ESL Placement Office while attending college classes. She started working in the West City/Clairemont campus and then moved with us to the new CE Mesa Building. Martha is always very helpful and can speak Spanish to students if needed. She shows up to work with a big smile and is always ready to help wherever needed.

Cuong Nguyen

Cuong began working at North City/LVPC Campus about two years ago in the ESL computer lab as a computer lab assistant. He is currently working in the CE Mesa ESL placement office as an ESL Instructional Aide. Cuong is a classroom aide and also helps students in the ESL computer lab. He speaks Vietnamese and is very happy and quick to help students and other ESL aides with anything they need with a smile. Cuong is a student at S.D. Mesa College and he has taken CE ESL classes in the past. He would like to transfer to UCSD and get a B.S. in Computer Engineering. In the future he would like to get a computer technology job with the San Diego Community College District.

Nga La

Nga started working at the West City/Clairemont ESL Placement office in Fall 2010. Each day Nga helps in the ESL placement offices at CE Mesa and West City Point Loma and in the classrooms/ESL computer lab as needed. She is always very enthusiastic with a welcoming smile when new students come in the office. Nga speaks Vietnamese and Chinese and is currently an ESL student at Centre City in Kathren Bouldin’s level 7 class. In the future she would like to get an A.A. in Business Administration at S.D. Mesa College. Nga is also the ASB President at CE Mesa.

Gladys Gonzalez

Gladys works in the morning at the CE Mesa College Campus ESL office. She started working for CE at North City/LVPC Campus about three years ago. Gladys does whatever is necessary in the CE ESL Placement office from ordering supplies, helping place ESL students, and in the afternoon works in the ESL computer lab. She is very professional and is very friendly and assists in the computer lab with a smile even though she is very busy registering students for all the afternoon ESL classes. Gladys is currently taking ESL classes and in the past has taken Business Information Technology courses. In the future Gladys would like to get a contract position as an ESL Instructional Assistant for the San Diego Community College District.
Abdullah Abdullah
Our new CE Mesa Campus is so happy to have Abdullah working as an ESL instructional aide while he is taking classes at S.D. Mesa College. He helps in the ESL placement office, computer lab and also in the ESL classrooms. All of our instructors have commented on how helpful he is, and students find him very friendly and helpful, too. And yes, he always smiles too!

Oumar Ba
Recently Oumar Ba started as a Citizenship aide in Carolisa Morgan’s citizenship class at CE Mesa College Campus. Welcome Oumar to the CE Mesa ESL Program. (See Oumar’s bio by Jim Brice at ECC.)

EL Civics Office Team by Jan Forstrom, EL Civics Coordinator

Hourly office assistants are the working axis of EL Civics. They are at the center of every facet of the program from distribution of student booklets to assembling of examiner materials to processing enormous amounts of paper work for funding purposes. Noel Puga (left) has bubbled in more test forms that anyone would want to count. Erick Villa (center) has been the primary person for distribution of about 10,000 EL Civics student guides this year, and Saeed Abdollahi (right) is a whiz on the computer. All of the office assistants work together on all of the various EL Civics projects with astounding team spirit and personal professionalism. This team truly keeps the EL Civics program in forward motion.
"We want a society in which making it better for ourselves makes it better for everybody."

**Tim Jackins**

Put your own oxygen mask on first is what they tell you on the airplane. Selfish or essential? Being an educator implies a desire to be of service. You are part of that service by taking care of yourself. I created a workshop on this after Dr. Beebe, several teachers and myself were talking about stress. He mentioned that he had been in the hospital due to stress related problems, and he has since found some balance. “It’s not worth your health,” he said. I have also noticed stress, anxiety and feeling overwhelmed among teachers throughout the years, especially in September at the start of a new school year.

I have been curious myself for many years about finding a balance between work and health – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, being of service to others and taking care of myself at the same time. At this point it is less about how much I have to DO but how present am I in the moment with what I am doing. It is this ‘being present’ that is difficult to quantify, to touch. You can only DO what you can DO. How do you want to BE while you are doing it? We lose energy when we DO helping rather than BEING who we are. Tim Parks in his book *Teach Us to Sit Still – A Skeptics Search for Health and Healing* said, “In the mainstream, doing cancels out being as noise swamps silence. “

One way to get in touch with your being is to cultivate self-curiosity and mindfulness - simple and profound at the same time. Mindfulness is simply referring to the process of cultivating compassionate awareness of the present moment. The concept is simple even though the practice can be more challenging. However, you don’t need to wait until you can go to the gym or your yoga class or whatever you do to take care of yourself. Your awareness is available 24/7. It is closer than we think. It’s like the fish asking where the water is. Self care starts right here and right now. There is no other time. Change can only happen in this moment. You plan for the future – now. You think about the past – now. What are you paying attention to? You have a choice. Am I present in the moment, the only moment I have.

Throughout the day there are simple practices available all the time. For example, I try to pay attention to remember to take out my flash drive from the computer. When I am in a meeting or around a lot of people, I pay attention to my breathing and own connection as well as the content and the energy. I can be present with my steps as I walk down the hall rather than being in my head or at least notice that I am thinking. When I am busy, I triage frequently and attempt to pay attention to the task at hand. When I give a dictation I notice my posture.

Learning to be more balanced is like a training process like learning a new skill. And we are all life long learners as people in education. We have habitual patterns, habit formations, that when we become mindful and aware, we make changes. We all work for the same district. We all want to enjoy our work, connect with others, and be of service while at the same time feeling healthy and in touch with our being. We can hold it all in our awareness, and our students and our school reap the benefits of our well being.
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Back to Contents