A Day in the Life of a Bus Driver

By Dominick Bonny

Greg Hendrick, a third-generation bus driver, enjoys his part-time job with the Eastmont School District. It provides him with extra income and fits in between his sales routes for his small business.

Being a bus driver is practically Greg Hendrick’s birthright. His grandfather drove the first school bus in Omak in the early 19th century, which was actually a wagon pulled by a team of horses. His father and older brother also became bus drivers. So he followed in their footsteps and became one as well.

“The buses have changed a lot since I first started,” he said. “I had never heard of automatic chains until I started (driving) for Eastmont.”

Although he has only been a driver off and on for about five years over the course of a long career, it’s something he keeps coming back to as a side-job for a little extra income. He says he enjoys the job and likes that it allows him to use the four or five hours between his morning and afternoon routes to work on his small business selling hydroponic technology. Being a bus driver for Eastmont gets him out of his home office and he said he likes to be able to get out and see some of the country instead of being cooped up all day.

"Eastmont is an excellent district to work for, honestly,” he said. “I’ve been really impressed with the team – the other drivers, the mechanics, the administration. They pull together, they work hard together, they do whatever is asked and it’s fun being a part of that kind of team.”

When asked what type of a person the (continued, page 2)
Focus On: Migrant Programs

February 2021

Migrant Graduation Specialists Overcome Pandemic Obstacles

By DOMINIC BONNY

The pandemic has presented obstacles to academic growth for all our students, but it has disproportionately impacted our district’s migrant students. Already a population on the margins, school shutdowns put even more barriers up for them to overcome. But they have some dedicated people in their corner – our District Migrant Graduation Specialists. Maribel Mendez, a migrant graduation specialist at Eastmont Junior High, says her job is to keep migrant students engaged and on track to graduate, and the path to success starts in middle school. “Our goal is to get them to graduate on time and break barriers,” she said. “We work closely with other migrant graduation specialists and counselors to do that.” Even during average years, their jobs come with certain challenges, but those challenges have only increased since the pandemic hit.

“Frequent movement is our number one barrier,” Mendez said. “A great deal of our students leave two or three times a year because of their parents’ work. The second barrier is communication.” It has become even more difficult to reach many migrant families because many don’t have access to the internet. Those who do might also be facing technology issues, so the best way to reach those parents is via phone call after business hours, she said. “So that’s what they do in order to reach those families.”

“Get the one-on-one attention they need,” Navarro said. “So by the time they get to high school, they have the benefit of all that attention.” It’s not just about making sure they’re on track credit-wise, it’s also about social and emotional well-being of their students, she said. “They really take into account the whole child,” she said. “If they need PE clothes or want to play sports, we will help them get the things they need to do that.” That kind of one-on-one attention has been paying dividends. The program’s graduation rates are the highest they’ve ever been, according to Mendez, at 94 percent.

Now that her students have been back in school for about two weeks, she hopes she can catch up on the relationship building that has been so hard to accomplish remotely.

“The benefits are unparalleled,” he said. “Medical, health, retirement, etcetera.” Eastmont School District is hiring bus drivers right now. No experience is necessary, you will be paid for training time. The hours are flexible and benefits are included. If you are interested in becoming a bus driver for the Eastmont School District, call (909) 884-4621 or go to eastmont206.org and find Transportation under the “Departments” tab at the top to learn more.

PPE KITS FOR MIGRANT FAMILIES

All migrant families will receive this PPE kit via the district’s Migrant and Bilingual staff. Special thanks to Molina Health and Migrant Education for their continued support to ensure our families are staying healthy during these difficult times.

Focus On: District Messages

February 2021

Superintendent’s Message: Navigating the New Normal

Our newsletter a year ago was focused on a strong ending to what had been a normal school year. Now, one year later, normal has become history and a new normal is emerging. In most ways, I do prefer the prior normal. Yet in the last year, I have also observed students and parents doing more activities together even before.

These range from playing board games, playing catch with balls of all sizes and shapes, walks, hikes, bike rides, camping trips, and planning, designing, and building projects of all types. Though parents and grandparents may clearly miss opportunities to hug and hold their children/grandkids/family members, most of us have learned to navigate Zoom, FaceTime, etc., and other video call systems so we can still maintain these connections.

To look forward, we must often first look back. Frequently I remind those around me that we are only here today because of our parents, grandparents, and previous relatives managed to endure other pandemics. Similar to so many things in today’s world, things will be different as we move forward.

For years, there has been an increasing number of degrees, trade licenses, and additional training of all types that recognized and often required on-line courses. For a decade, Eastmont has had goal of ensuring all students had access with online learning. I chuckle because one outcome of this pandemic is all of our students from preschool through seniors will now meet that goal.

I must thank everyone for their help and cooperation. There is no doubt the current situation is very hard for many of our families, and previous relatives managed to endure other pandemics. Similar to so many things in today’s world, things will be different as we move forward.

Reconfiguration and Attendance Area Revisions

February 8th final action on school attendance areas. All students will need to reapply as a choice student beginning March 1st if they desire to attend a school outside of their newly assigned area. All choice requests will be evaluated based upon a variety of factors that include recognition of other siblings who may have attended the preferred school as well as total prior years at the school.

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The requirements to operate safe schools with COVID in our community are regularly being updated. Those changes are immediately implemented at all school levels on all campuses. As the situation continues, we will be using our weekly electronic ParentSquare Superintendent’s Bulletin as our primary communication tool regarding these changes. This is available to anyone interested and requires less than five minutes to sign up. The information will be sent to you by text or email depending on your preference or can be read on our website. To subscribe, please visit the Parents/Community page of our website and click on the red Emergency Text Messaging System link. You can also search Eastmont ParentSquare at eastmont206.org.

Sincerely,

Garn Christensen, Superintendent
Focus On: Support Staff
February 2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have demonstrated their value to communities. Education of students, though modified, has continued even when health conditions have prevented in-person learning. Remote learning has improved as teachers have become more comfortable with technology and had time to develop new strategies.

Often overlooked is the contribution of support staff to the continuous operations of school districts. Paraeducators (teacher assistants), bus drivers, custodians, maintenance/journeymen, food services, school secretaries, technology, and district office staff have all worked behind the scenes to keep schools in position to support students and families. The staff highlighted below serve as examples of hundreds of other support staff in the Eastmont School District who have kept students fed, maintained schools, transported students, and created environments for students and educators that are clean and safe.

**Unique experiences:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson, Paraeducator, Cascade Elementary
- Lindsay Lawrence, Payroll & Human Resources District Office
- Jaime Herrera, Custodian, Grant Elementary School
- Cathygee Benson, Custodian, Grant Elementary School
- Belinda Hartman, Technology Districtwide
- Jacqueline Sanchez, Paraeducator, Eastmont Junior High School
- Yvonne Rojas, Achievement Specialist, Eastmont Junior High School
- Rebecca Cattin, Paraeducator, Kenney Elementary
- Jo Davis, Transportation Districtwide
- Kristi Meadows, Office Manager, Cascade Elementary

**Time with the District:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: Started at Eastmont as a volunteer in my child’s school and PTO president.
- Lindsay Lawrence: Worked at the district office for 9 years.
- Jaime Herrera: Has been working at the Eastmont School District since 2007.
- Rebecca Cattin: Started as a para sub in September of 2014 and was hired in October at Cascadebluffs.
- Jo Davis: Has worked for Eastmont for three years as a paraeducator and has just completed her 10th year as an office manager at Cascade Elementary.

**Challenges:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: The hardest part of working through this pandemic was the emotional and mental toll. Hearing about the loss of cows and something we took for granted. We are a little family and it is really hard. I just want to see kids at school running up and hugging me because they know I have a hug for you. Missing the kids on the other end of the computer was something we had to do in order to keep them safe.
- Rebecca Cattin: The hardest part of the pandemic was not being able to have face-to-face interaction.
- Jo Davis: The most difficult things have been the unknown and having so many different types of communication.

**Unique experiences:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: Unique experiences: A unique tool I have been involved in during the pandemic is working with our HIP/Payroll team on sourcing resources to pay employees the funding of face-to-face interaction from fees and implementing procedures for emergency Paid Sick and Family Leave.
- Lindsey Lawrence: Challenges: The hardest part of working through the pandemic has been adapting to working in a hybrid that deals with a flux amount of face-to-face interaction.
- Jaime Herrera: Unique experiences: I have been able to help students connect with their teachers.
- Belinda Hartman: A unique experience I have been involved with during the pandemic has been the transition to online learning. Not being able to see a smile across the screen and hearing how students have missed the face-to-face interaction.
- Jo Davis: Unique experiences: Delivering lunch to the community by school bus.

**Time with the District:**
- Jo Davis: Since 2012.

**Challenges:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: Challenges: The first and most challenging part of the pandemic was getting the district ready to reopen.
- Rebecca Cattin: Challenges: The hardest part of working through this pandemic was not being able to have face-to-face interaction.
- Jo Davis: Challenges: The hardest part of working through this pandemic was the emotional and mental toll.

**Unique experiences:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: I have been able to help students connect with their teachers.
- Rebecca Cattin: Unique experiences: I have been involved with many areas, from getting student resources from the computer lab, to helping with the district office.
- Jo Davis: Unique experiences: I have worked closely with staff from all departments in the district to be sure the transition was as smooth as possible for all.

**Unique experiences:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: Cathy has grown so much! In a normal year, she would not have received this much help.
- Rebecca Cattin: I have been involved with many areas, from getting student resources from the computer lab, to helping with the district office.
- Jo Davis: I have worked closely with staff from all departments in the district to be sure the transition was as smooth as possible for all.

**Time with the District:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: 9 years.
- Lindsey Lawrence: 9 years.
- Rebecca Cattin: 5 years.
- Belinda Hartman: 10 years.
- Jo Davis: 12 years.

**Challenges:**
- Cathy Higgins-Olson: Challenges: The first and most challenging part of the pandemic was getting the district ready to reopen.
- Rebecca Cattin: Challenges: The hardest part of working through this pandemic was not being able to have face-to-face interaction.
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Focus On: Reopening
February 2021

COVID-19 Tracking Essential for Safe School Reopening
By Russ Alman

Contract tracing and mitigation protocols have created a tremendous amount of work for the Eastmont School District, but it appears to be paying off.

Russ Waterman coordinates the COVID-19 case tracking program for the district. Waterman and his team monitor all of the cases in the Health department and then compile them into a weekly report for the district office, which in turn feeds into a dashboard reviewed by Superintendent Garn Christensen.

“[Contract tracing] is a valuable part of the process,” said Matt Carlton, Assistant Superintendent. “It helps us develop a clear picture of what the next steps of preventive measures we should take are.”

The nurses and their support staff are on the front line for data collection at each school and those results are relayed to a primary contact point. When they are informed of a positive case, a district protocol check is set in motion, identifying everyone who potentially had contact with the individual, assessing the risk to each person and verifying that all precautions have been followed, such as social distancing, hand washing, masking, sanitizing and ventilation, and if there was close contact, how long that exposure existed. A district committee then decides whether further measures need to be taken such as notifying parents.

Every case is logged, whether it was contracted on or off property and if the individual has been on campus. If the case is symptomatic, the individual is required to quarantine for up to 10 days or confirm an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare professional. Based on this information, the team is able to calculate the exposure rate and the percentage of active cases for each building. That information is summarized weekly and emailed to parents and staff via ParentSquare.

Sports workouts are subject to the same tracking and protocols. Coaches take attendance and screen every day, and that information is logged in the FamilyID registration program. Waterman is hopeful that the community will meet the metrics to move to Phase 2 of reopening under the state guidelines and teachers will soon be able to participate in outside competition.

Like the rest of the community, the district saw a significant spike in cases and potential exposures after Thanksgiving and winter break, but numbers have since been declining. “We have some of the strictest

The Swiss Cheese Respiratory Virus Pandemic Defence
Illustration: This Swiss cheese approach to prevention is used by caregivers in the healthcare setting to keep virus from spreading.

Shower Curtains Provide Effective PPE for Eastmont Staff
By Russ Alman

With all of the shower curtains separating workspaces in the district and school offices, you might be tempted to bring a washcloth and a back brush. All kidding aside, the elaborate network of transparent curtains was an innovative solution to help schools remain safely during the pandemic.

Jason White, custodial supervisor for the district, and Warren Clark, the carpenter in the maintenance department, came up with the shower curtain idea, but it evolved from discussions within the district committee that was developing protocols for school reopening. The consensus was that health department guidelines required barriers in the district and school offices as a personal protective equipment (PPE) measure. However, traditional clear barriers, such as Plexiglass, were too expensive in short supply. The committee learned that shower curtains were a viable option and tasked the custodial and building staff with devising a plan to install them.

White oversaw the plan to implement the shower curtains. He is responsible for coordinating and implementing protocols for cleaning and disinfecting all of the schools within the district. As part of his duties during the pandemic, he works with Russ Waterman, who coordinates the tracking of COVID cases, on protocols for sanitization and ventilation. Clark, whose normal responsibilities include repairs, orchestrated the installation of the shower curtain system in the district offices in early November.

The installation method he devised involved attaching fishing line to the walls with hooks and interconnecting the lines with tensioners as a framework to hold up the curtains. In school offices where walls weren’t accessible, this latticework was installed by hanging it down from the false ceilings. Of course, being separated from coworkers in this fashion is not ideal for staff, but the clear curtains at least allow you to see each other and not feel as isolated. It also allows them to lower their masks while working. Health department guidelines do require workers to have their masks readily available so they can put them back on if someone enters their space.

All kidding aside, the elaborate curtain system in the district office, initially, building staff began using pleated barriers, but due to their high cost and limited availability, the district switched to using clear plastic shower curtains. Shower curtains were a viable option and improved their comfort level while they work. Health department guidelines do require employees to have their masks readily available so that they can put them back on if someone enters the space. The innovative and low-cost solution requires very little maintenance, other than sanitizing high-touch areas and general cleaning.

Focus On: Reopening
February 2021

Clovis Participates in Univ. of Wash. Inclusionary Program
By Russ Alman

Clovis Point Intermediate School is one of 16 schools collaborating with the University of Washington and the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to develop a new approach to working with students who have an individualized education plan (IEP).

The inclusionary practices program (IPP) launched in the fall of 2019 as a joint effort by the Haring Center for Inclusive Education at the UW College of Education and OSPI. Traditionally, students with an IEP have been separated out from the general student population and sent to a different classroom for instruction. The primary goal of the program is to develop best practices for including IEP students in regular classroom settings where they can interact with their peers while supplying them with grade-appropriate learning tailored to their individual abilities. In this way, all students in the class learn the same topics, but the tools and content are adjusted to fit different learning abilities. As needed, IEP students can still receive additional support outside the classroom. IEP students are also graded on a modified rubric that takes their limitations into account, making it possible for them to achieve success benchmarks like the honor roll.

As Clovis develops their program and light remodeling and repairs, orchestrated the process for installing the curtain system.

The building maintenance staff, led by Clark, began installing the shower curtain system in the district offices in early November. The installation method he devised involved attaching fishing line to the walls with hooks and interconnecting the lines with tensioners as a framework to hold up the curtains. In school offices where walls weren’t accessible, this latticework was installed by hanging it down from the false ceilings. Of course, being separated from coworkers in this fashion is not ideal for staff, but the clear curtains at least allow you to see each other and not feel as isolated. It also allows them to lower their masks while working. Health department guidelines do require workers to have their masks readily available so they can put them back on if someone enters their space.

The innovative and low-cost solution requires very little maintenance, other than sanitizing high-touch areas and general cleaning.

(continued, page 8)

Personal Finance Class Gets Boost from $10,000 Grant
By Dominick Bonny

Although personal finance class has been taught for many years at Eastmont High School, the trimester-long course recently became a requirement for graduation.

And thanks to a $10,000 grant from an organization called Next Generation Personal Finance, EHS can afford to add even more resources to this important class. The course, which is required for juniors, will also be available for seniors. The goal is to provide students with real-world skills for their personal financial lives, said Mark Bloom, the course teacher.

During the class, students learn skills like:

- How banking works, and how to set up accounts, how to reconcile an account with the bank statement.
- How to prepare a budget
- The grant from NGPF is funded by a private endowment whose goal is to help students understand the current earning account throughout the country,” said Bloom.
- They provide curriculum supplements and professional development at no charge to the school district or teacher.
- The curriculum and professional development are always current and data-driven.

Every single skill the students learn in this class will be applicable to their entire financial life, he said.

“The class is really fun to teach,” Bloom said. “I have gotten a lot of positive feedback from past students who have been able to use the skills they learned here.”

If you’d like to learn more about this personal finance course at Eastmont High School, you can email Mr. Bloom at bloom@eastmont206.org.

(continued, page 8)
extra precautions to keep schools that school custodial staff is taking for in-person learning. White stressed and prevention created by the district's one of the many layers of protection transmission could have occurred. I think we err on the side of assuming that a there's a possibility for transmission... has erred on the side of caution. “When decision-making committee, said Eastmont considering the amount of staff that we compliance is A, A-. That's great work you give it a grade, probably districtwide, letting their guard down. “I would say if we're working.” Charlton, a member of the district COVID decision-making committee, said Eastmont has erred on the side of caution. “When there's a possibility for transmission... we err on the side of assuming that a transmission could have occurred. I think that's the right thing to do, to be proactive and keep everyone safe. So far, our track record would indicate this has been a wise approach. But really, the things we're doing to mitigate, to lessen the chance of transmission in the schools, really seems to be working.”

Christensen offered the analogy of a 'Swiss cheese' approach. There may be holes in each layer, but by stacking multiple layers, the district has been able to cover most of the holes. Both Waterman and Charlton stressed that to their knowledge there has not been a single COVID transmission that can be tracked to a district building or sports activity. All cases were contracted outside the district, either at home or elsewhere. This echoes the recent announcement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that schools are showing very low transmission rates, recommending that schools can begin to safely reopen with proper mitigation in place.

The shower curtain barriers are just one of the many layers of protection and prevention created by the district’s building and maintenance staff to allow for the safe reopening of schools for in-person learning. White stressed that school custodial staff is taking extra precautions to keep schools clean. Since the schools are currently on staggered schedules, this gives staff an opportunity to clean between groups. In addition, high-touch areas like doors and bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected multiple times per day. "We're disinfecting two to three times per day, all of the time," said White.