

Best of Fulbright ETA August - December 2018





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SPECIAL EDITION OF THE FUBRIGHT
ETA MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS
COMPILING THE BEST ARTICLES
FROM AUGUST – DECEMBER 2018

Fourth Special Edition





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Foreword

Welcome to a special edition of the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights where we have compiled the best stories from the past semester. The 2018-19 cohort of Fulbright English Teaching Assistants has been in Indonesia for five months. This marks the halfway point of their grant period. Time flies!

It's been a busy five months for the ETAs. They have been active in their classrooms, initiated extracurricular activities, engaged with community members and participated in countless examples of cultural exchange. Read on to see how the ETAs spent their time between August and December 2018!

- AMINEF American Program and Communications Team



About the Fulbright ETA Program

The ETA Program, one of US State Department-funded Fulbright programs carried out in many countries throughout the world, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas. The program helps improve foreign students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the United States while increasing the US students' own language skills and knowledge of the many host countries around the world.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (both SMA, SMK and Madrasah Aliyah) where they assist local English teachers. The program has now been going for 14 years and has affected many thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago over that period. AMINEF, in charge of the Fulbright program in Indonesia since 1992, works closely with the Indonesian ministries of Education and Culture and Religious Affairs to administer the ETA program in Indonesia.

About the Fulbright ETA Monthly Highlights

The *Highlights* are informal stories submitted by the ETAs that recount their experiences with co-teachers, students, and community members where they are placed. We hope they are informative and capture the special value of this program. We welcome your feedback.

Email us to socmed@aminef.or.id

If you like to read more of Fulbright ETAs activities in Indonesia, sign up at socmed@aminef.or.id and *The Highlights* newsletter will be delivered straight to your inbox.



Interactive English Classrooms



Following their two-and-a-half-week Orientation in July, the ETAs were excited to start teaching in the classroom. Alongside their co-teachers, ETAs executed lessons with engaging activities and incorporated innovative learning strategies. These lessons encouraged and relied on active student participation by requiring students to move around the classroom and practice their English.

Read on to find out how Sarah, Allison, Kiki, Riley, Neelam, and Darby led interactive English classrooms!



Interactive English Classrooms

Racing Around the Classroom

SMAN 1 Demak
Central Java

November marked SMA Negeri 1's last 10th-grade unit of the first semester: announcements. To encourage students to approach this unit with curiosity, teachers *Ibu Yulia Mufarichah*, *Bapak Khasan*, *Ibu Nur Chasanah*, and **ETA Sarah Wozniak** introduced their classrooms to "Read and Race."

In this activity, students raced around the classroom, reading and remembering sentences from jumbled announcements, then related them to their teammates. Energy levels ran high, and several groups triumphantly yelled: "finished!"

To expand this activity, the teachers and ETA asked students to write questions about the announcements they had assembled. Then, each team switched announcements and questions with their neighbors. Instead of filling out questions from a workbook, students were encouraged to think creatively like test-writers and make their own questions as tricky as they wanted them to be. To round off the semester, students made their own announcements, then practiced their listening skills through music with Michael Jackson's "Ben" and Christina Perri's "A Thousand Years." The classrooms filled with the voices of students presenting their announcements and singing along with the music.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



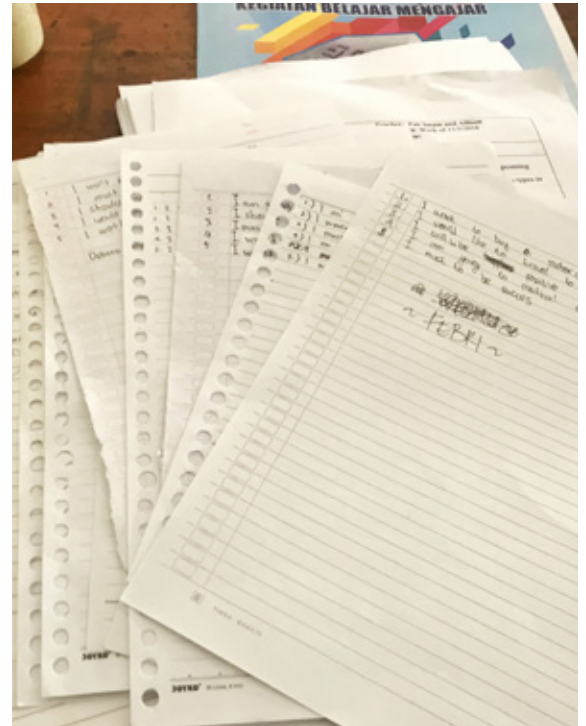
Joyful English Learning

SMAN 1 Temanggung
Central Java

On November 13, **ETAs Allison Cwikla** and ETA Anna Ringheiser were given the opportunity to present as guest speakers at “Enhancing Joyful English Learning”, a full-day conference for senior high English teachers located throughout Central Java. Allison and Anna shared and practiced a few of their favorite engaging classroom activities from the first semester. Allison shared one of her favorites, “Find the Owner”, which she and counterpart *Pak Imam* used in the 10th grade English classrooms at SMAN1 Temanggung the week prior.

At the end of a lesson covering the topic of expressing an intention, Allison had each student pull out a piece of paper and write five intentions they had for themselves for the upcoming five years. Students were instructed to give the paper to Allison when finished without writing their name. After receiving all of the papers, Allison randomly distributed the papers throughout the class, and each student had to find the rightful owner of the intentions in hand before returning the assignment to Allison. The classroom broke out into laughter as they realized that their peers would be reading their intentions, as about half were well-developed and half were rather humorous. Regardless, the students had a blast and Allison was delighted to learn of the goals, hopes, and dreams of all 400 of her wonderful students.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Interactive English Classrooms



Providing the Seeds

SMA Santo Yosef Pangkalpinang
Bangka-Belitung

What would happen if students built their own grading rubric and graded themselves? What would happen if the teacher provided the seeds of knowledge but let the students negotiate how to cultivate life in the plant? Through Knowledge Building practices, students in Sir Don's classes (Grade 11) designed campaigns to promote mangrove growth on the coastlines of Bangka. Mangroves are a fundamental part of island ecology. They protect the shoreline from coastal erosion and coastal storms, promote biodiversity, store carbon and act as a source of livelihood (timber, food, shelter) for local populations. The students developed their own grading rubric, conducted their own study, formed working groups, wrote formal proposals, presented their initiatives to the class, and ultimately self-assessed their contribution to the project (less than a quarter of the students gave themselves an "A"). Each presentation was unique and funny; the students were able to engage their classmates with songs, skits, and dances embedded into a professional display of their accumulated knowledge. All of this was to culminate in a trip to plant mangroves accompanied by the principal of SMA Santo Yosef and local government officials who would give speeches on the importance of mangroves to the island, but due to a series of unfortunate circumstances the trip didn't come to fruition. However, the mangrove project initiatives led by the students was a reminder that given the right tools and direction students can (enthusiastically and without incentive) build their own knowledge.

Article submitted by **ETA Kiyoko "Kiki" Nakamura-Koyama**

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Try English First!

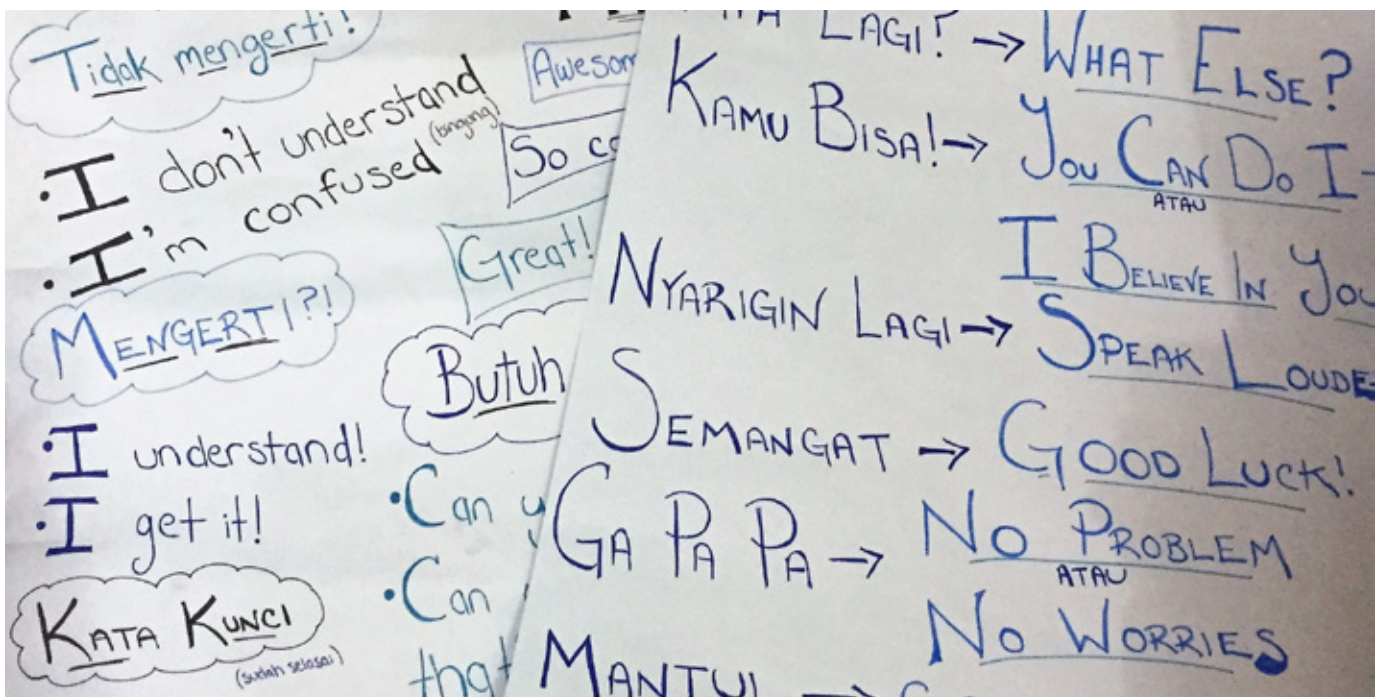
SMAN 10 Samarinda
East Kalimantan

During the first three months of **ETA Riley Heist's** time in Indonesia, she noticed that students would use Indonesian words when telling her and her co-teachers they were not finished yet, they were confused, or they would like something to be repeated. After noticing this, Riley decided to make a poster that included some key vocabulary.

On the poster, she wrote the Indonesian word/s and the English translation – such as “Saya bingung” and “I’m confused.” Riley brought the poster to class and explained to her students that every time they use one of the English phrases, the class will receive a point. Whichever class had the most points at the end of the semester will get a prize.

After students mastered the phrases on the first poster, she created a second poster with slang that the students were using. Riley has also decided to focus on encouragement. Many of her students have told her that they are afraid to speak in class because they don’t want to be wrong in fear of their classmates laughing. Riley decided to solve this by giving students ample vocabulary to encourage their classmates along with rewards five points (instead of one) for every phrase of encouragement she hears.

(First Appeared in Edition October 2018)



Interactive English Classrooms

Stop the Bus

SMKN 3 Pangkalpinang
Bangka-Belitung

In the closing lessons of the first semester, **ETA Neelam Vohra** and her co-teacher *Ibu Wiwik* focused on verb tenses. In the midst of the end of the semester when moral can be low and final exams are around the corner, they knew that teaching grammar lessons would be challenging. Still, they worked together to create lesson plans that kept motivation high while still ensuring students learned the rules for the past and present perfect tenses.

Neelam's monthly highlight was watching students work together in games like "Stop the Bus". In this game, a letter was chosen by a student and groups rapidly brainstormed words beginning with that letter, each falling into specific categories. Categories included irregular past tense verbs to check student understanding as well as those that could serve as a review for what students had learned earlier in the semester, such as personality adjectives. The group that finished filling all the categories first would (loudly) yell "stop the bus!" and time for rest of the groups ended. Points were counted and it was only a matter of time before competition became heated, each group wanting to find the most unique word (more points!) and finish the fastest.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)





Let's Party!

SMAN 2 Sangatta Utara
East Kalimantan

ETA Darby Jones' 11th grade English classes have been an absolute party this past month - literally! For the last lesson in the Party Time unit, Darby's classes planned and executed their own party during class time. Together, students chose a theme, made decorations, developed a program for the party, dressed up, and brought food and drinks to share. The results were absolutely amazing.

Most parties started with a prayer and speeches from students and Darby and her counterpart. Special dance, singing, and storytelling performances by students were the highlights of every party. One class threw a Halloween party complete with lights, ghost and bat decorations, and Halloween music.

Darby shared some American culture with her students by teaching them popular line dances from the US and passing out candy she brought from home. It was a true cultural exchange as students shared traditional food from around Indonesia with Darby. Overall, everyone had a great time, and students enjoyed the challenge of using their English outside of a traditional educational setting. The special event encouraged even some of the quietest students to participate and practice their English in a safe and fun setting.

(First Appeared in Edition October 2018)

Extracurricular Engagement with School Community



Not only are the ETAs active inside the classroom, but they are also involved in various extracurricular activities.

English club is by far the most common extracurricular activity for ETAs. They use this informal time with students to introduce cultural concepts and engage students with creative activities. However, their participation in extracurricular activities doesn't end with an English Club. ETAs spend their time outside of the classroom helping with student competitions, bonding with teachers and more.

Continue reading to find out how Anisha, Sabrina, Anna R., Catherine, Ryan, Amanda, and Emma engage with their students outside of the classroom!



Extracurricular Engagement with School Community

Letters and Stories

SMKN 6 Semarang
Central Java

ETA Anisha Tyagi's highlight this month was finally getting a reason to communicate with her students one-on-one. Prone to *pulang* (go home) right after school ends, her students didn't feel very accessible to Anisha. That was until she started her community engagement projects!

Her first is a letter exchange with SMKN 3 Pangkalpinang, another ETA vocational school focusing on the same industries as SMKN 6. She noticed her most passionate and dedicated students asked to be a part of this project. Reading their first letters filled Anisha with pride and admiration for her students. These same students also promised to come to the English club more regularly.

In one English club, the students had in-depth discussions about what stories they like. Anisha noticed many students expressed interest in story-writing and drawing, so she figured one of her English club projects will be writing and illustrating English children's books. It will also be good practice for WORDS (AMINEF's annual storytelling competition) next semester. Anisha can't wait for these relationships to deepen over letters and stories.

(First Appeared in Edition October 2018)



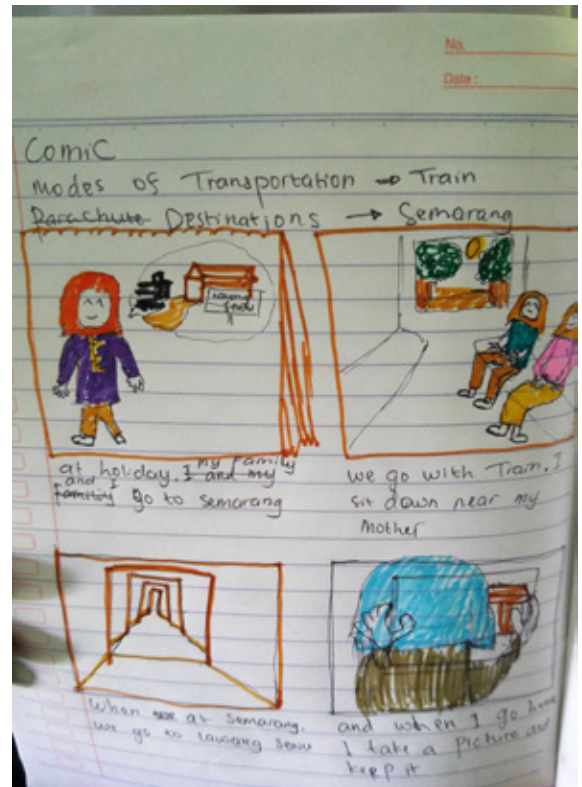
Comic Strip Stories

MAN Demak
Central Java

On September 24th, **ETA Sabrina Verleysen** engaged her English Club students with the opportunity to create their own comic strip stories. By promoting the students' creativity and imagination, Sabrina had found that her students were more excited and willing to dive into new assignments even though they may be nervous. She had discovered that her students, especially her English Club students, love to draw!

The opportunity to create comic strip stories combined their love for drawing and improved their writing ability and presentation skills in English. Miss Sabrina provided the markers! The Comic Strip Stories was an excellent way to put their transportation vocabulary to use, as students chose both a destination and a mode of transportation for the main character of their comic strip story. Each comic strip story included four drawings accompanied with a written explanation of the scene. The students were very proud of their work and were happy to share their creations with their classmates through a mini oral presentation. By the end of the English Club that day, there were lots of smiles!

(First Appeared in Edition September 2018)



Extracurricular Engagement with School Community

Night Talks

MAN Parakan Temanggung
Central Java

As a way to get to know students better and to improve their English listening skills, as well as cultural understanding, **ETA Anna Ringheiser** and her counterpart have been holding "night talks" for the dorm students. These talks happen most weeknights for just 30 minutes and are held in the student dorm.

The students gather and listen as the ETA speaks on different topics each night, ranging from typical American breakfast food to the history and celebrations of Independence Day in America. Students are able to ask questions and learn about typical words and phrases that native English speakers use that are not commonly used in the classroom. Apart from being able to teach the students a little about American culture and the English language in a more casual setting than the classroom, this has also been a great way for ETA Anna Ringheiser to get to know the students on a more personal level.

(First Appeared in Edition August 2018)



Labu-Labu, Bulan Bahasa & Spelling Bee

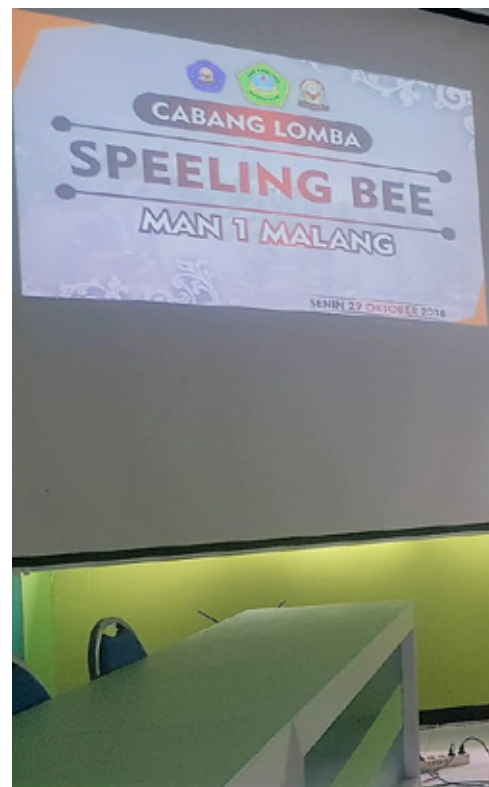
MAN 1 Malang
East Java

October was a very busy month for MAN 1 Malang. In addition to celebrating *Hari Santri*, which involved dressing up and parading around Gondanglegi with music, students also prepared for 3-5 days for a student-favorite event, *Bulan Bahasa* at the end of October. The event celebrates the cultures of Indonesia with a variety of activities, traditional dances, flash mobs, and drama performances. The event was almost entirely student-led and the detail with which each performance was constructed was amazing.

During the event, **ETA Catherine Krol** and her counterpart, *Ibu Vivi* conducted a Spelling Bee competition, inviting two students from each class at MAN 1 Malang to send their best to duel in the contest. The students worked very hard to memorize very difficult spellings such as 'accommodate' and 'carnivorous' and the top three-ranked students won prizes.

In the classroom, Catherine and her co-teachers have been experimenting more with creative projects for the students. Writing poems, making stories and drawing have all become frequent activities and have resulted in very wonderful results. The students of the English club have also been able to test out their pumpkin carving skills with an after-school activity of making jack-o'-lanterns for Halloween. During this event, Catherine explained the significance of Halloween and offered a scary story to set the mood before carving out some frightful pumpkins.

(First Appeared in Edition October 2018)



Extracurricular Engagement with School Community

The Student Becomes the Master

SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gresik
East Java

It was a hot afternoon at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gresik High School, as it often is when **ETA Ryan Ulrich** held his English club meeting. The participants in this meeting were different from previous meetings, however, for they were not the teenagers who Ryan currently instructs as an English Teaching Assistant. Instead, the room was filled this time with his fellow teachers at Muhammadiyah.

When Ryan arrived in Indonesia, many teachers greeted him and attempted to converse with him in his native English tongue. Success was marginal, to say the least, but that didn't stop them from trying. The teachers' enthusiasm, coupled with the fact that many of them often sat in on Ryan's lessons, led him to create the Teachers' English Club.

Now, every Tuesday, Ryan meets with a handful of his Muhammadiyah colleagues at a location of their choosing. He helps them with the finer points of English and lessons are often a balance between lectures and engaging English games, such as Charades or Scattergories. Each meeting brings Ryan and his fellow instructors closer together.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Teachers Retreat


SMA Don Bosco Padang
West Sumatra

At the beginning of this month, **ETA Amanda Cahn** joined her fellow teachers in a retreat to celebrate the approaching end of the semester. The teachers split up into cars and motorcycles and drove one hour out into the forest until they reached the location where they spent the night. They cooked and ate dinner together, then brainstormed ways in which school facilities, programs, and teaching methods could be improved.

After the brainstorming session came the team building games. The first game involved passing balloons overheads and through legs. The second game involved lowering a nail into a bottle. After the games, there was a song performance, and then half of the teachers line danced, while the other teachers continued cooking traditional Indonesian foods to snack on. This event was a fun way for the teachers to bond while continuing to plan for the rest of the school year.

(First Appeared in Edition December 2018)





Extracurricular Engagement with School Community

Learning about Día de los Muertos!

SMAN 5 Padangsidempuan
North Sumatra

The second week of November brought an English Club meeting that focused on Día de los Muertos and aimed to introduce students to Mexican culture's presence in the United States. **ETA Emma Barnes** gave a short presentation about the holiday and described some of its most distinguished traditions, including decorated skulls and the making of ofrendas to honor deceased loved ones. She also discussed American's use of languages other than English – particularly Spanish in the south and southwest. Her students were shocked to learn that over 40 million Spanish speakers currently live in the United States!

After the presentation, Emma provided the skull templates and markers and asked students to try to decorate them in the style of Día de los Muertos. The students got really into it and within minutes were doing their own research on the origins and different ways to decorate the skulls.

Emma is always looking for occasions to teach her students about America's vast cultural diversity and this lesson was a great way to meet that end. The combination of cultural education and creative activity meant the meeting was a big success for both Emma and her students.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Involvement in Host Community



ETAs inherently become a part of their school communities. They also become a part of other groups and the greater community. As they integrate into life in Indonesia, they develop relationships with community members. Through this, they learn about the desires of and challenges faced by their new friends and neighbors. In addition, ETAs desire to give back to their host communities for the warm welcome and care they receive. In the following stories, Brian, Caroline, Peter, and Andrew share their involvement in their host communities.



Involvement in Host Community

International Education Week Celebration

SMKN 1 Sangatta Utara
East Kalimantan

On Saturday, November 17, **ETA Brian Miner** was joined by over 500 students, teachers, and young professionals from all around Sangatta Utara in an auditorium of one of the local government's offices. There, along with three other outstanding panelists from East Kalimantan, Brian discussed international opportunities to study, teach, and work abroad. He talked briefly about his own international experience and the application process of international programs in general.

The other speakers--M. Asri, Iin Siagian, and Zuhri Ruslan--had remarkable international experience themselves; studying tourism in Australia and the United States, teaching Indonesian soccer students English in Thailand, and working abroad through international business trips to Singapore and India, respectively. There was even a surprise video from the captain of Indonesia's national soccer team, who was taught English by Iin Siagian in Thailand.

Brian was encouraged by the great turnout and enthusiasm amongst the audience to learn about and interact with the world outside of East Kalimantan. Brian is especially thankful for his site mate—ETA Darby Jones, who showed up to support the event, and helped him sing some fun English songs.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)





#PrayForPalu

MAN 1 Model Manado
North Sulawesi

In October, Central Sulawesi was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami, with a rising death toll. **ETA Caroline Kim** and the MAN Model 1 Manado community, located in North Sulawesi, came together to fundraise money for relief efforts in Palu, Donggala, and other affected areas. Through a series of Instagram stories, Caroline and the 2018 ETA cohort reached out to their friends and families in the States to raise \$2,600 from 128 individual donors in nearly three days.

Caroline then solicited the help of four aunts, who used their localized knowledge to buy the lesser-known needs. At the end of October, \$2,600 worth of diapers, pads, bras, underwear, noodles, rice, milk, water, tea, coffee, sugar, oil, crackers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, childcare's schoolbooks, etc. were airlifted to Central Sulawesi via army plane.

(First Appeared in Edition October 2018)

Involvement in Host Community

Turn Left, Turn Right, Candy!

MAN 1 Payakumbuh
West Sumatra

For **ETA Gordon "Peter" Bensen**, December was a month of relaxation and rejuvenation. His students at MAN 1 Kota Payakumbuh took exams, while Peter got work done at home, and had a wonderful visit with his family who came all the way to Payakumbuh!

Although school was not in session, Peter still got to run his neighborhood children's English club, which certainly was the highlight of his month. On December 12, he ran a lesson on directions. He created a map of Payakumbuh, with major landmarks of the city marked on it. Students listened to directions, explained to one another how to get from the pharmacy to the market, wrote down how to travel from school to home, etc.

The best part for everyone, however, was the scavenger hunt. Peter hid ten letters throughout the neighborhood. For each letter, there was an associated clue that gave directions to that letter. Teams of three to four students explored the neighborhood, using the written directions and their new English vocabulary terms to find the hidden letters. Once all the letters had been found, the students were able to arrange them in such a way that a word was created describing a place in Peter's house. When the students all rushed to this location they found a treasure bag filled with candy! Everyone left with a smile on their face, sugar in their stomachs, and a few new English words. A success for sure!

(First Appeared in Edition December 2018)



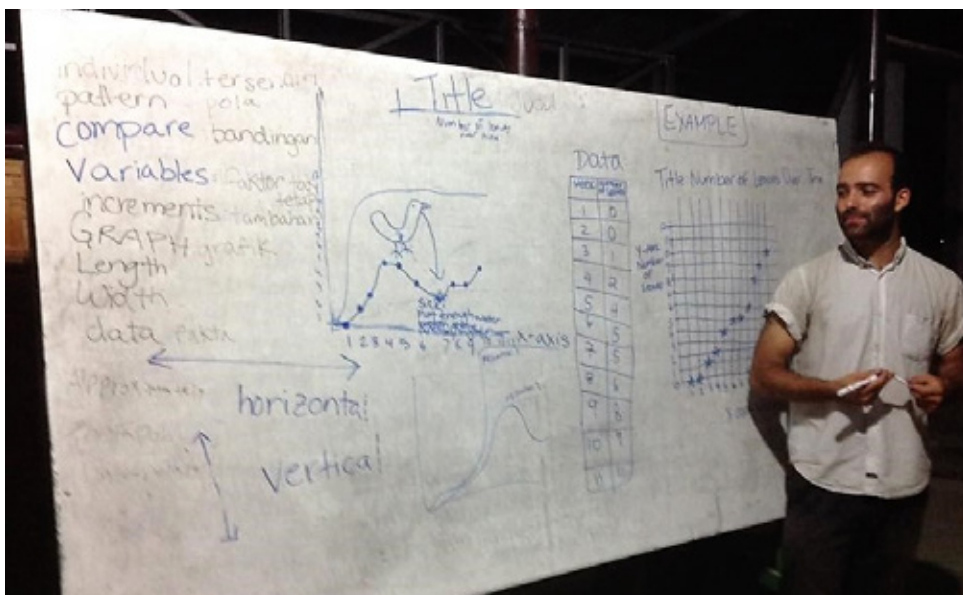
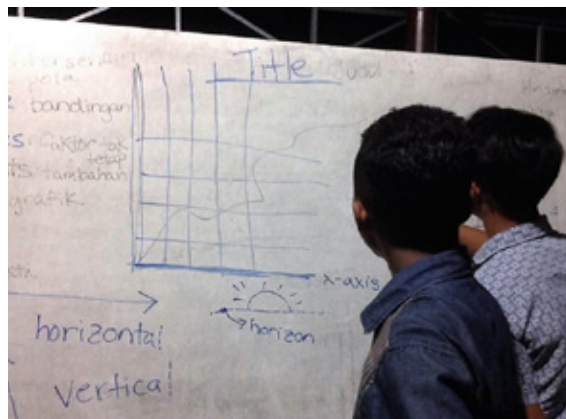
Growing English and Science Skills

SMK Stella Maris Labuan Bajo
East Nusa Tenggara

Thursday, November 22 was the culmination of months of environmental English club at Ketentang, an all-boys seminary on the outskirts of Labuan Bajo where **ETA Andrew Shifren** has been helping the boys to study English on Thursday nights. Every Thursday since early September the 80 boys, in groups of eight, have measured a single plant's growth over time. They recorded the number, lengths, and widths of leaves, number, and lengths of stems, and the height of the plants. On Thursday, November 22, the boys graphed different data over time and then presented to the class.

After the presentations, Andrew sparked English discussion by asking why some plants grew differently than others. The boys enthusiastically shared their ideas in English. Andrew hopes that next semester each group might be responsible for multiple plants and explore how different variables like sunlight affect growth. Using environmental science as a medium to learn English has clearly engaged the students; their comfort with English is growing almost as fast as their plants!

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Cultural Exchange



Learning about the diversity of Indonesian culture is a highlight of the ETA experience. ETAs are often invited to join in community events where they learn about the local culture.

Additionally, ETAs enjoy sharing aspects of American culture with community members.

Read through the following pages to see how Sophia, Alexandra, Anna M., Alexander, and Liz participated in cultural exchange!



Cultural Exchange

Welcome to West Sumatra!

SMAN 11 Padang
West Sumatra

In the first semester, **ETA Sophia Lopresti** worked with the students of SMAN 11 Padang to write and perform their own poems. When her family made plans to visit SMAN 11, ETA Sophia asked her students to write short speeches with the prompt "what do you believe is most important for visitors to understand about your town/region and Minang culture?" Sophia initially pictured her family's visit including a tour of the school, spending time with some teachers/students, and having lunch at one of the restaurants in Bungus, famous for *ikan gulai* (fish curry - her favorite!).

Instead, the teachers and students of SMAN 11 prepared a traditional Minang welcoming ceremony, including speeches from some students in the English club, and a bazaar where each class showcased their homemade foods, drinks, and crafts.

Students wrote poems and speeches about topics such as local culinary specialties, nearby tourist attractions, entrepreneurship, and their hometown of Bungus. Asking the students to write about what is most important to them allows them to express a clear passion while speaking, which is something that captivates the audience, regardless of language! The "EXPO 2018 Bazar & Exhibition," which took place after the welcoming ceremony, was very exciting too! Sophia's family enjoyed the bazaar for hours, talking with the students and trying local foods and drinks. Although they were quite full from all the snacking, ETA Sophia's family still found room in their stomachs to have *ikan gulai* for lunch!

(First Appeared in Edition December 2018)



Animation, Narration, & Thanks-ation

SMKN 9 Malang
East Java

ETA Alexandra Gwynn spent the month of November with many wonderful activities with her students and co-teachers.

On November 10 and November 23, animation students and *Ibu* Itha asked her to come along on two off-campus film shoots that served as school projects. The first shoot took place on the camping grounds and along the stream of Bedengan where students shot some scenes about humanity's relationship with water. The next shoot took place in Ranu Pani; students viewed the Tengger Tribe during the Unan-Unan ceremony that takes place every five years. The ceremony gives thanks to the land, celebrates inter-religious harmony, and safeguards the village from disaster. Both shoots allowed students to capture the connection between nature and humanity.

On another occasion, on November 11, she got to see students interviewing SMKN 9 community members to collect an array of narratives told in English. Each narrative focused on overcoming challenges in life, particularly socioeconomic challenges. Students shared these narratives with the community in both Indonesian and English.

On November 21, Alexandra hosted a Thanksgiving cooking session with English Club teachers. They prepared Thanksgiving staples such as classic deviled eggs, garlic mashed potatoes, gravy, chicken/turkey, asparagus, mushrooms, and a variety of ice cream for dessert. The community responded with, "Can we do that again tomorrow?" It was a success.

On November 22, Alexandra joined students and faculty in the local mosque to celebrate Maulid, the prophet Muhammad's birthday, followed by a communal exchange of traditional snacks.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)



Cultural Exchange

Thanksgiving Potluck

SMAN 1 Padangsidempuan
North Sumatra

On the afternoon of Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 22, **ETA Anna Misenti** hosted a potluck event at her school in the spirit of the American holiday. Students were asked to bring a small dish to share, and Anna brought several cakes to celebrate the event. Although these were not “traditional Thanksgiving” dishes, the Indonesian-style Thanksgiving feast was a hit with the 25 students who participated.

Following the feast, Anna gave a presentation on the holiday’s historical roots and how it is celebrated in America today. The students actively asked questions during the presentation and discussed similarities with their holidays in Indonesia. Afterward, everyone enjoyed making “hand turkeys” together, a craft where you trace your hand, write things you are grateful for inside the drawing, and decorate it like a turkey. This craft prompted good conversations between students as they shared their drawings with their peers. Then students were free to do a variety of activities with Thanksgiving vocabulary - word scrambles, word searches, and read a worksheet about wild turkeys. The event ended with much laughter, as the students headed home shouting “Happy Turkey Day Miss Anna!” as they exited the school.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)





Siap!

MAN 2 Bukittinggi
West Sumatra

When **ETA Alexander Lopez-Perez** was given a little over two months to prepare for an international martial arts competition, there was little the fledging English-teaching-cultural-ambassador could do but accept the invitation from the earnest audience. Luckily for Alexander, a honed and well-traveled master of *SILEK* (Silat) offered space on his team for the ETA to fill.

From November 27-29, Alexander performed in a three-day *Silek Tradisional* Minangkabau Festival competition hosted by the city of Bukittinggi. Alongside his sparring partners, who have been studying the philosophy and discipline behind the group's sect of *Silek*, the members of Harimau Agam competed with the rich plethora of *Silek* schools within and among Sumatra, Java, Malaysia, and Borneo.

In addition, Masters from *Silek* schools around the world convened at this event, with Alexander filling the vacancy for the United States (although, Alexander is nowhere near a master practitioner). Nonetheless, the ETA was both honored and blessed to have received instruction from these masters while touring with them in the city. Constantly amazed by his own team, and under the tutelage of Master Ade, Alexander hopes this is but the first competition he will compete in.

Silek is a popular martial art form in East-Pacific Asia that continues to inspire deep philosophy behind patience and appreciation in modern-day Indonesia. Considered the deadliest martial arts form, practitioners of the study invoke deep religious appreciation during and before each performance.

(First Appeared in Edition November 2018)

Cultural Exchange

A Week of Independence

SMA Nahdlatul Ulama 1 Gresik
East Java

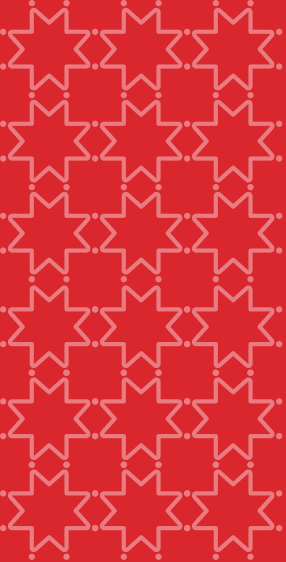
This month was full of celebration in the town of Gresik, but one of the most exciting experiences this month for **ETA Elizabeth "Liz" Wallace** was celebrating Independence Day with her community. The celebrations went on for an entire week and Liz was warmly invited to get-togethers all over the city.

For two evenings in a row, Liz's neighborhood had nightly prayers together and served up a delicious feast of Gresik specialties. On the day of August 17, the official Indonesian Independence Day, Liz's school hosted a flag raising ceremony and a series of student competitions. Or at least, Liz thought they were student competitions. Suddenly Liz was asked to join the student versus teacher tug-of-war game. Fortunately, the teachers pulled through!

To end the celebrations, Liz was asked to participate in the final event: a game where she was blindfolded and led to a clay pot she had to smash with a stick. The instructions the students shouted were in Indonesian, so it was a wonderful chance for Liz to get to try out her new language skills. Unfortunately, she is still working on the difference between "left" and "right." Overall, celebrating Independence Day was a wonderful way of getting integrated back into the Gresik community after being gone for orientation. Liz is excited for the upcoming month and getting back into a normal school routine, as much fun as it was to have so many celebrations in the past few weeks.

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