Escondido, CA – The Escondido Union High School District EUHSD monthly Spotlight highlights one teacher and the work their students are creating. This month, the spotlight shines on Escondido High English Teacher Alison ‘Ali’ Aardappel.

Aardappel is a long-time Escondido High staff member, a school and district leader, and a former Lighthouse and Teacher of the Year award winner. She grew up in North County knowing she wanted to be a teacher.

She started as a new teacher at Escondido High almost 15 years ago after completing the first semester of her student teaching in another school district.

“I came to Escondido High and what people say about this school is true,” said Aardappel. “It felt like a family. Everyone shared everything with me. People stopped by and offered help. I felt really welcomed and loved from the second I came on campus.”

She has grown as a person and teacher while at Escondido High.

“As I became more comfortable in my own skin, teaching became way easier because I just showed up as myself,” said Aardappel.

Letting students show up as themselves is something she is deliberate about. Her classroom is designed to make students comfortable in their environment. She is intentional in making sure that students see themselves reflected in the space. Hanging on walls at the end of the school year were memoir assignments completed by her 11th grade students.
“The memoir assignment is my favorite assignment that we do,” said Aardappel. “What I learn about students from the assignment allows me to be a better teacher because I know where they come from.”

Her classes focus a lot on the claim, evidence, and reasoning model, which includes a claim that answers a question, evidence from data, and reasoning that involves a rule or scientific principle that describes why the evidence supports the claim. The model is applicable for students outside of their English class and Aardappel is always sure to start her lessons with the direct connection to how students will be able to use it.

“It’s teaching them that with any good argument, you need to bring evidence to the table and any conversation you have will be made stronger by claim, evidence, and reasoning,” said Aardappel. “I tell them that all it means is backing up what you have to say.”

According to Aardappel, good teaching means doing whatever it takes to get students to learn.

“You have to pay attention to be a good teacher,” she said. “Good teaching is planning but then paying attention to the students and how they are engaging or not, then being willing to ditch something in the middle of it. You have to make sure they are getting what they need at all times, even if you’re sacrificing a beautifully thought-out lesson plan.”

For Aardappel, a perfect day in the classroom includes music and a lot of laughing. She works out regularly and feeds her own creativity by reading a lot.

“I always say we have the best kids, and we really do,” said Aardappel.

More information on the teachers, classes, and programs offered at Escondido High can be found at www.ehscougars.com. A complete interview and video with Aardappel can be viewed at www.smore.com/tk8yr.

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**About Escondido Union High School District**

The Escondido Union High School District has empowered students to graduate prepared for college, career, and life through excellence in learning for more than 125 years. The district serves more than 7,000 students across five high schools including: Escondido, Orange Glen, and San Pasqual, Del Lago Academy and Valley; as well as the Escondido Adult School. More than 900 staff members are employed by Escondido Union High School District, which offers more than 180 courses, including nationally recognized Advanced Placement courses, College & Career Technical Education, Independent Study, after school enrichment, career exploration, STEM opportunities, and more.