

COMMUNITY



Mount
Vernon
Schools



+Link

A Publication of Mount
Vernon Schools



IN THIS ISSUE

Fall 2016 NEWSLETTER

Featured Alumni

You will find our alumni working in every field imaginable, changing the world around us every day. Take a look at what our alumni are doing today and where they started.

Featured Articles

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Welcome to the fall 2016 edition of Community Link!

Last spring, several of our School Board Directors, administrators, and I attended a professional development conference focused on improving educational outcomes for all students. We heard the stories of several school districts around the state that had achieved major improvements by focusing on one goal – graduation rate.

Over the summer, several of us attended a related conference to learn more about what these districts had done. Further professional reading and discussion led the board to adopt a single, aspirational goal:

100% of our students will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in post-secondary education, careers, and life.

This goal clearly and powerfully communicates the ultimate outcome we're here to achieve and we believe the result will be greater focus and alignment of our work, K-12.

Previously presented as goals, our four areas of emphasis - Early Learning, Quality Instruction, Family Partnerships, and Creative Independence – have been reframed as Key Strategies. These strategies remain highly relevant to our vision and mission and define the specifics underpinning our goal.

In the pages that follow, you will find our revised Mount Vernon School District Commitment, placing the 100% goal front and center. You will

also read about the work we are doing in each Key Strategy this academic year.

There is one thing all of the districts that have made significant improvement in their graduation rates have in common – community involvement.

In the coming months, we will be working to implement our lessons learned, both within the district and the broader community.

Our hearts continue to be with the families and friends of the victims of the Cascade Mall shooting. We lost two members of our Bulldog family in this tragedy - MVHS sophomore Sarai Lara, the youngest victim, and Shayla Martin (MVHS Class of 1981).

Our District's emergency response team comprised of support staff, teachers, counselors, psychologists and administrators from across the district played a pivotal role in supporting students and staff following this incident. Additional training for this team is scheduled later in the school year.

Carl Bruner, Superintendent
Mount Vernon School District

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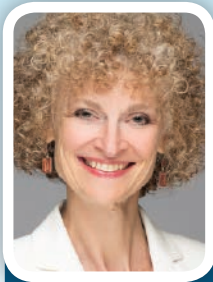




FEATURED ALUMNI

Our alumni are working to change the world around us.

A career path with a twist brings satisfaction to MV grad Judy Mohr Peterson...



Judy Mohr Peterson

Sometimes preparing for a job in one profession can lead to an unexpected path. And that can be a very good thing according to 1978 Mount Vernon High School alum Judy Mohr Peterson.

After studying at Pacific Lutheran University and earning a PhD in Cultural Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin, Mohr Peterson appeared headed for a career in academia. "I believe my early interests in people from different cultures led me to this path," says Mohr Peterson. "In high school I loved hanging out with exchange students and I studied abroad as a Rotary Exchange Student in

Australia. At MVHS, I was encouraged to learn more about the world by Mr. Summers and by FFA leader, Mr. Howell."

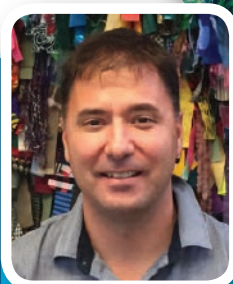
It was after finishing her education and working in short-term academic positions that Mohr Peterson's career took a different direction. A series of jobs with Oregon's Medical Assistance Programs (Medicaid), eventually led her to be appointed Medicaid Director for the state. She loved the work, which drew from her field research in Guadalajara, Mexico among women and others in low-income settlements who faced issues of healthcare, poverty, social mobility and homelessness. Today Mohr Peterson is the state's Medicaid director of Hawaii's Department of Human Services.

"The Medicaid program serves some of the most vulnerable members of our society," says Mohr Peterson. "My team and I are helping to transform and expand the ways in which healthcare and other social services are delivered and that is very gratifying. I would encourage students to be open to unexpected twists and turns their career paths may take, as they could lead to a job they are passionate about doing every day."

When not working, Peterson loves living in Hawaii and opportunities to enjoy snorkeling, swimming and keeping in touch with her two daughters.

"...My team and I are helping to transform and expand the ways in which healthcare and other social services are delivered and that is very gratifying."

– Judy Mohr Peterson



Chad Norman

In October, teacher of the highly capable, Chad Norman, presented his work in robotics and engineering at a conference at [Stanford University on STEM education](#). The conference was attended by researchers, developers, and teachers from 26 countries.

Each school year, our teachers and administrators have the opportunity to share their research and expertise with colleagues across the state and the nation.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR 2016-17



Early Learning

2016-17 Priorities:

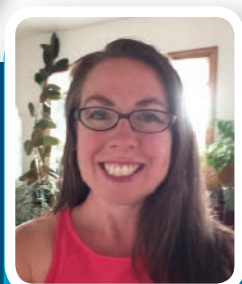
- Provide professional learning for kindergarten teachers to support their focus on speaking and listening activities and behavioral expectations.
- Expand our involvement in Communities in Schools to connect Little Mountain and Lincoln with early learning providers in their attendance areas, to ensure students are prepared for kindergarten.
- Prepare to implement an early start kindergarten program in 2017-18 for students who have not attended preschool.



Quality Instruction

2016-17 Priorities:

- Support elementary, middle and high school math teachers in their second year of implementing their new math curricula.
- Support middle school English and Spanish Language Arts teachers in their first year of implementing the Collections program.
- Provide professional learning for teachers to help them focus on speaking and listening activities and expectations.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for administrators and instructional staff regarding the effects of childhood trauma and strategies that are effective in overcoming these effects for students.
- Support schools in creating early warning systems to identify and intervene with students who begin to experience problems in learning, attendance, and/or behavior.
- Support collaboration between middle schools to increase a focus in all classrooms on learning standards.
- Pilot two elementary writing programs, recommending one to the School Board for adoption by spring.



Heather Farren



Anne Mortimer

Mount Vernon High School Science teachers, Heather Farren and Anne Mortimer have been asked to present on their department's efforts to integrate more powerful technology into science instruction at the upcoming **National Science Teachers Association** conference.



Family Partnerships

2016-17 Priorities:

- Expand Parent Academies to include grades 6-8.
- Ensure that students and parents have easy access to real time information on academic progress and behavior through Skyward Family Access.
- Open a third community support center and expand the capacity of all community classrooms to serve as resource centers for parents.
- Involve parent representatives in the process of reviewing elementary writing curriculum materials considered for adoption.



Creative Independence

2016-17 Priorities:

- Build a culture across the district supporting the 100% graduation goal.
- Focus on student perseverance and growth mindset, beginning in elementary
- Expand opportunities for students to earn college credit in high school and AP courses.
- Provide opportunities through GEAR UP for all students in grade 12 to prepare for postsecondary education, including apprenticeships, Career and Technical Education programming and college experiences.
- Participate with Skagit Valley College and the Sedro-Woolley School District to implement the Skagit Open Doors program to reengage students who have dropped out or are at risk of failure.
- Participate with Skagit Valley College and other Skagit County School Districts to implement the Skagit Invest program to serve students age 18-21 with disabilities.
- Prepare to implement a magnet program for at least one elementary grade level of highly capable students in 2017-18.



Dr. Joni Swanson

Executive Director for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Joni Swanson, presented on her work with Skagit Valley College and Western Washington University at the October meeting of the **National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships.**

Bond Projects Update

Last spring, TCF Architects, and HKP and Mahlum Architects, began the next steps in planning for our five bond projects with the goal of providing more detailed and accurate preliminary cost estimates.

They completed their work on September 9. The information we received gives us a much better idea of those areas we need to pay close attention to in moving forward in order to successfully complete all projects within budget.

We have applied and been approved to use the General Contractor/Contract Manager (GCCM) process for both the new elementary school on E. Division and the rebuild of Madison Elementary. Unlike the traditional design-bid-build process, GCCM allows us to use an application and interview process to select a contractor. The contractor then works together with the architect and their consultants through the design process. This will provide an advantage as we work to meet the tight timelines for both these projects. We expect to have a contractor identified by November 2.

Our plan for phasing the two elementary school projects remains the same. Once open, the new school on E. Division will house students attending Madison for one year while Madison is rebuilt. Upon completion,

Madison students will relocate to their new building the following year. Lincoln Elementary will close and new attendance boundaries will be implemented to better equalize student enrollment across the District.

More information on the timeline for phasing our elementary projects will be shared in the coming weeks.

On September 8, October 5, and November 2 we held open houses to allow community members an opportunity to review and ask questions about the preliminary design of the new elementary school.



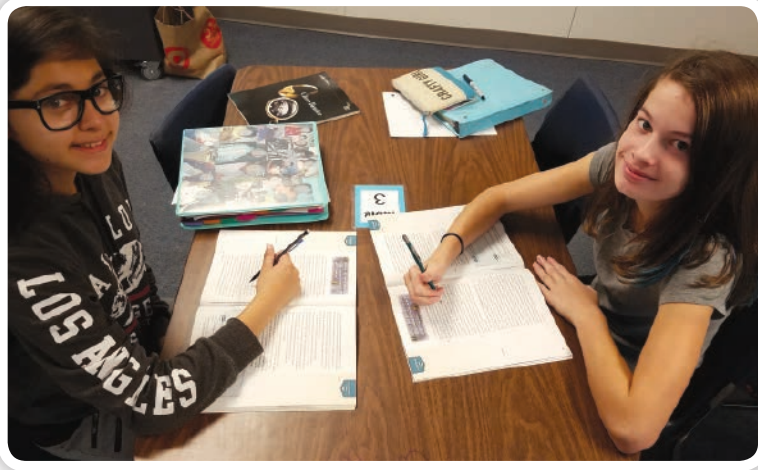
In the new **Careers in Health Care** class, MVHS students are learning about high-demand, high-paying health care jobs in their own community.

The Madison Elementary **dual-language program** is thriving and is now fully dual-language in K-3!

Hello
Hola

Levy Dollars at Work

New Middle School English Language Arts Program

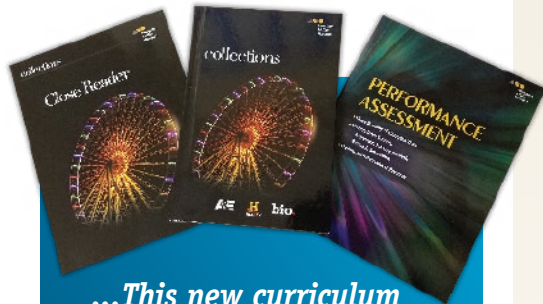


“Facing Fears”, “Bold Actions”, and “Culture and Belonging” are just three of the themes our middle school students will be writing, reading, thinking, and talking about this year in their English Language Arts classes. Thanks to the community financial support of our local Educational Programs and Operations Levy, the District was able to adopt and purchase a new and exciting English language arts program titled Collections for all middle school students across the district. Within each of the literary themed units at each grade level, students will be learning and practicing critical reading and writing skills, all intended to help them become strong readers, writers, and analytical thinkers.

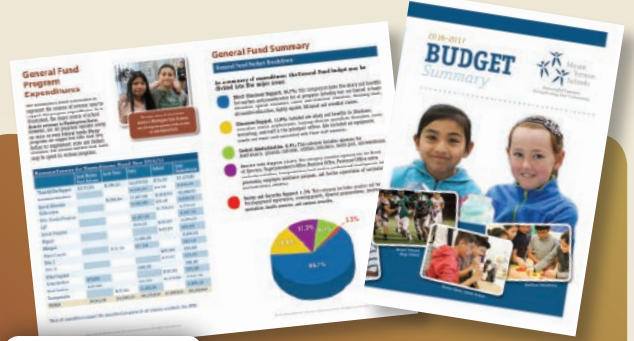
This new curriculum provides both print and electronic resources for teachers and students. Students will have access to their textbook via hard copy and digitally at www.my.hrwc.com. On the digital site, students will have the opportunity to explore their texts in greater depth, as well as view supporting texts, watch academic videos, and get assistance with essays.

In addition to purchasing a new core academic curriculum, we have also purchased digital programs to support students that can benefit from extra challenges or need additional instruction in basic reading and writing skills. One new digital program, Lexia, is designed to provide added support for strengthening numerous literary based skills built upon each student’s unique needs. Throughout the year, teachers are being provided opportunities to learn to use these new materials and plan for highly effective lessons.

Our teachers and students are excited to have these new resources available and to help each student become a strong reader, writer, and speaker as they prepare for high school and beyond.



...This new curriculum provides both print and electronic resources for teachers and students.



Our 2016-17 Budget Summary is now available online at: <http://bit.ly/2e08vKx>

School Board Welcomes Tony Cook



Tony Cook

In August, the School Board appointed Tony Cook to replace T.J. Larrick, who resigned from his position as Director for District 3. Tony is a Senior Manager for the accounting firm, Larson Gross. He and his wife, Amelia, are parents of three children. The oldest is a 2nd grader at Madison Elementary.

Use of School Facilities

The Mount Vernon School Board subscribes to the belief that our schools are owned and operated by and for our patrons. In compliance with Washington State law, our school facilities are available for use by the community under fee and usage schedules as long as proposed uses will not interfere with school activities or pose a high risk of damage to facilities.

A United States Supreme Court decision in 2001 made clear that the right to use district facilities outside of the school day or week extend to religious organizations. In its ruling, the Court went on to state that school districts were not allowed to discriminate against any organization based on their political or religious views. Groups that are interested in renting space in one or more of our schools should contact our facilities office at (360) 428-6145.

In order to reduce classroom disruptions and clarify the difference between those activities that are and are not sponsored by the school district, we are no longer distributing event flyers to elementary students in their classrooms. All flyers advertising events not sponsored by the school district will be placed in a central location in each school. Students and parent will be able to pick them up at their discretion.