

COMMUNITY + Link



A Publication of Mount Vernon Schools

IN THIS ISSUE

SUMMER 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

- **Congratulations to the Class of 2016!**
- **2015-2016 In Review**
- **2015-17 Levy Updates**
- **Bond Planning**
- **Congratulations 2016 Retirees!**

www.mountvernonschools.org

Congratulations to the Class of 2016!



This edition of Community Link is dedicated to the Mount Vernon High School Class of 2016, which celebrated their commencement on June 12. At almost 400 students, this class is the largest graduating class in the school's history. They are headed in a variety of directions - some to jobs including apprenticeships in industry trades; most (an estimated 66%) to technical, 2-year or 4-year colleges and universities both near and far including Dartmouth, American University, University of San Diego, Boise State, Oregon State, Western Washington University, University of Wyoming, University of Washington, Washington State University, Skagit Valley College, Everett Community College, DigiPen Institute of Technology, University of Portland, and Bellingham Technical College. Together, these students were awarded a total of over \$5.3 million in community and institutional scholarships - a new school record.

Like others in recent years, this year's graduating seniors reflect diverse backgrounds. Almost 50% have grown up in homes where one of 17 languages other than English is spoken. Over 60% live with families facing economic hardship. Some are the first in their family to have graduated from high school and/or gone on to postsecondary education. Others are continuing a college-going family tradition. Regardless, their successes reflect their own perseverance and hard work, as well as the guidance and support they have received from their parents and other family members, teachers, support staff, and other caring adults in their lives. We look forward to watching their accomplishments in the years to come!

In the pages that follow, you'll find a summary of our progress this past year in each of our four strategic goal areas - early learning, quality instruction, family partnerships, and creative independence - along with an update on our capital projects planning. We have also highlighted some of the important initiatives identified for the 2016-17 school year. Best wishes for an enjoyable summer!



Carl Bruner, Superintendent
Mount Vernon School District

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FEATURED ALUMNI

Our alumni are working to change the world around us.

MVHS alum Geoff Almvig urges students to seek a balance between work and daily life.



Geoff Almvig

An early interest in technical drawing and computer graphics has led to a satisfying career in the fast-evolving field of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for Mount Vernon High School alum Geoff Almvig. The 1979 MVHS graduate credits mentors and coaches Darrell Pearson and Alan Williams, and architectural drawing instructor Chuck Noyes for helping to put him on a career path. He is also quick to acknowledge that his parents were, "the greatest teachers I ever had."

Almvig received an AA degree from Skagit Valley Community College and earned an Industrial Technology degree from Eastern Washington University. He held positions with Continental Telephone and the city of Anacortes as an associate planning engineer and as a civil engineering technician before joining Skagit County as Geographic Information Systems manager.

At 25 years and counting with Skagit country, Almvig notes that heading the GIS department has always provided fresh challenges. "On any given day, we could be developing new software or tackling a complex spatial analysis to help support community issues such as public safety and public health. In short, it's a fun job." The fun has paid off for Almvig and his team of talented and hard-working professionals. They received a Special Achievement in GIS award for their interactive crime-mapping application and Almvig has been the recipient of the Washington State "GIS Person of the Year" award.

Almvig's advice to MVHS students who will soon be entering the job market and pursuing careers is to "develop a good sense of humor, focus on goals, and try to achieve a balance between work and other areas of your lives."

"...Develop a good sense of humor, focus on goals, and try to achieve a balance between work and other areas of your lives."

– Geoff Almvig



Points of Pride

About your Mount
Vernon School District

2,500

Our popular **MVHS Science Night** drew about 2,500 attendees!



2015-2016 IN REVIEW

Mount Vernon School District

We made some important improvements during this past year towards accomplishing each of our strategic goals.

» Early Learning

Ensure that every student completes kindergarten with the skills needed to be successful in their further education.

- Implemented Jump Start programs last summer in all elementary schools, serving 142 entering kindergarten students who had not participated in preschool.
- Tracked student growth in Social-Emotional, Literacy, and Numeracy skills throughout the school year using the state WAKids assessment and reported this progress to parents.
- Began implementing guided reading strategies to better meet the varying needs of students.



» Quality Instruction

Students at all levels will develop an age-appropriate ability to:

- Formulate, represent, and solve mathematical problems, build content knowledge, comprehend and critique, value evidence.
- Use technology strategically and capably in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Teachers received training throughout the year to support their use of new math curriculum materials in grades K-8, Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2.
- Teacher use of guided reading strategies were expanded in grades 1-5.
- Instructional coaching was provided to assist teachers in implementing teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students.
- New instructional materials were selected for middle school English Language Arts classes.
- Several teachers in each elementary school began a pilot project to evaluate three different writing curricula.
- Several different language arts and math assessments were used across elementary schools to identify those that will be most helpful in guiding teaching and providing feedback to students and parents.
- A new student data reporting system was identified and piloted by several teachers across grade levels. We will be working to bring this system online next school year.



\$5.3M

Bulldog Class of 2016 was awarded approximately \$5.3 million in scholarships - **a new school record.**



» Family Partnerships

Engage families to increase their capacity to support their children's learning and educational opportunities.

- Provided a 7-week Parent Academy program for a total of 81 parents, using parent leaders as facilitators.
- Exceeded our goals for parent participation at fall conferences at both the elementary (over 94%) and middle school (71%) levels.
- Added representatives from the Latino and Slavic communities to the District's Citizens Advisory Committee.
- Held three school board work-study/listening sessions with members of the Latino and Slavic communities.
- Finalized plans to add a third neighborhood support center for students and families.
- Exceeded the statewide average in the area of Parent and Community Involvement on the Center for Educational Effectiveness Parent Survey.

» Creative Independence

Encourage and facilitate student independence, self-motivation, perseverance, and creativity, preparing our graduates for continuing education, careers, and fulfilling lives.

- Increased Advanced Placement courses.
- Increased services to highly capable students at the middle school level.
- Expanded College-in-the-High School course offerings.
- Developed a plan to enhance services to highly capable elementary students.
- Finalized a plan for a pipeline to careers in health care initiative with Skagit Valley College, Skagit Regional Health, and the Skagit County Department of Public Health.
- Increased participation in the SAT assessment by 9%.
- Increased scope of PSAT testing to include all sophomores.
- Increased the number of freshmen entering Skagit Valley College who qualify to take college level courses by 155% in math and 21% in English.
- Began piloting Career and Technical Education Precision Exams to measure career readiness.
- Several Mount Vernon High School student groups earned regional, statewide, and national recognition, including:
 - Band and Orchestra
 - Choir (placed 3rd in state overall)
 - Sports Medicine (placed 3rd in state and 5th nationally)
 - Debate (3rd and 4th in state)

Assessment scores will be made available in the Fall edition.




\$8.1M


MVSD was awarded approx. \$8.1 million in **capital funds to reduce class size** in grades K-3 through the state's K-3 Class Size Reduction (CSR) Grant initiative.


2015-17 Levy Updates



When we took our replacement levy propositions to voters in February 2014, we asked for increased funding to achieve some program enhancements. Below is a summary on progress towards our commitments to-date.

Educational Programs & Operations Levy 	
COMMITMENT	PROGRESS
Maintain reductions in kindergarten and 1st grade class sizes and decrease 2nd grade class size in all schools.	Average Class size in June 2014 K=21.2 1st=22.8 2nd=25.3 Average Class size in June 2016 K=17.8 1st=20.4 2nd=19.0
Increase funds to purchase updated teaching materials, particularly in math and science.	New math curriculum materials for grades K – 8, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry were adopted, purchased, and implemented in the 2015-16 school year. The Discovery Ed digital Textbooks for grade 6 – 8 Science and high school Biology were also adopted, purchased, and implemented in 2015-16.
Address the lack of professional learning time for teachers by adding days to the school calendar.	Five non-student days were added to the calendar in 2015-16 to create time for professional learning for teachers and other certificated staff.

Technology 	
COMMITMENT	PROGRESS
Add more mobile technology labs at all schools.	Approximately 1,200 Chrome Books have been added to improve accessibility for elementary, middle school, and high school students.
Replace aging equipment.	Over 400 outdated desktops and laptops have been replaced in classrooms across the district.
Upgrade software licenses.	Application suites such as Office, Java, Flash, Silverlight, and Chrome have been updated, as has the operating system for iPads. All district users transitioned from Outlook to Gmail and Google Calendar.
Fund IT support staff to maintain hardware and the network.	One full time IT technician was added to help support Washington and Jefferson.

Security 	
COMMITMENT	PROGRESS
Replace outdated security cameras at Mount Vernon High School.	All analog cameras have been replaced.
Add security cameras at all other schools.	Cameras are being installed at both middle schools this summer. Elementary schools will be addressed beginning next fall.
Add keyless door locks for exterior doors at all elementary and middle schools.	Work on keyless door locks will begin next school year.



Washington Elementary School Principal, Bill Nutting, was recognized as one of 18 Distinguished Elementary Principals in the state by the Association of Washington School Principals.

Bond Planning

Since voter passage of our bond proposal in February, planning efforts have been proceeding quickly to ensure we are able to deliver each project on schedule.

In February, the School Board interviewed several architectural firms and selected two to lead the planning and design work on our five projects. A partnership between HKP Architects (Mount Vernon) and Mahlum (Seattle) was hired to take the lead on the LaVenture expansion, Old Main renovation, and Agriculture building replacement. TCF Architecture (Tacoma) was selected to plan and design the new elementary school on East Division and the Madison Elementary replacement.

Shortly after architects were selected, the Board hired Suzanne Gilbert as Lead Project Manager for the bond. Suzanne has worked as an architect and project manager for many years in Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish counties, most recently serving as the Capital and Facilities Project Manager for Edmonds Community College.

During the weeks leading up to the end of the school year, our planning team met with representatives of different user groups to identify the spaces and systems for each project. Based on users' input, they are completing preliminary designs that can then be used to obtain more specific cost estimates. Those estimates will be used to refine the scope of all projects as needed.

Over the past weeks, several developments have taken place that will have a positive impact on our bond projects:

- As a result of very favorable market conditions, the amount of bonds we were able to sell in May, while remaining within the \$.28 per \$1,000 increase promised to voters, was significantly higher than we had projected. This should allow us to move up some of the work we had planned to defer.
- In June, we learned that we were one of 21 school districts in the state selected to receive construction funds for class size reduction in grades K-3. Our total allocation is approximately \$8 million. We will be able to apply these funds to the two elementary projects, increasing the capacity of both schools from 550 to 600 and lessening the impact on the bond.
- Most recently, the School Facilities department at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction notified us that we are eligible to receive more funding from the School Construction Assistance Program than originally projected.

With construction costs continuing to escalate, we are excited about these developments.

Congratulations
2016 Retirees!



Each of these individuals brought a unique set of skills and talents to their positions, and made a lasting contribution to our schools, departments and, most importantly our students, during their years of service. We'll miss them, but wish them the best in their transition to retirement.

Marsha Audette – Business Education Teacher, MVHS (42 years*)

Karen Bruno – GEAR UP Coordinator (6 years)

Linda Castleberry – Food Service Worker, Mt. Baker Commons (20 years)

Joyce Curry – Food Service Worker, Mt. Baker Commons (17 years)

Becky Goad – Speech & Language Pathologist Assistant (29 years)

Carl Hausauer – Math Teacher, LaVenture (12 years)

Tim Haussler – Head Custodian, LaVenture (20 years)

Colleen Hesselgrave – Paraeducator, Little Mountain (5 years)

Linda Hutchins – Paraeducator, Centennial (13 years)

Heather Kendregan – Education Technology Assistant (7 years)

Boni Killion – English/Journalism Teacher, MVHS (28 years)

Julie Kuhlman – Middle School Math Coach (2 years)

Elaine Leighton – Paraeducator, Little Mountain (8 years)

Debbie Moyle – Paraeducator & Volunteer Coord., Little Mt. (19 years)

Carol Pelletti – Student Services Registrar, District Office (22 years)

Marilee Shepard – 1st grade Teacher, Lincoln (19 years)

Debra Taylor – Paraeducator, Madison (23 years)

**The numbers in parentheses indicate years in the Mount Vernon School District.*

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