

COMMUNITY



+Link

A Publication of Mount Vernon Schools

IN THIS ISSUE

FALL 2018 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.

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www.mountvernonschools.org

Welcome!

The 2018-19 school year is off to a great start in Mount Vernon Schools!

Enrollment is over our projections. The new Harriet Rowley Elementary is open and serving as the temporary home of our Madison Wildcats. Demolition of the former Madison Elementary building is complete and the new school is now under construction. This year, 70 new teachers, four new principals, and two new assistant principals are settling into their roles. Mount Vernon High School teacher, Robert Hand, has been named Washington State Teacher of the Year. We have expanded our program for highly capable learners into middle school. We have refined our strategic focus around two overriding initiatives. We have increased our communication around the importance of regular school attendance.

Along with the good news, we face some challenges. The new funding formula adopted by the state Legislature in response to the McCleary lawsuit, has created a funding challenge for our District that will require significant budget adjustments heading into the 2019-20 school year.

You will read about many of these developments in the pages that follow.

As always, if you have any questions about the information provided, please contact my office at 360-428-6181.



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 credits a range of job experiences in building a satisfying career



Amy Borg

For 1981 Mount Vernon High School graduate Amy Borg, holding different jobs that allowed her to develop new skills has led to a long-term career in the petroleum industry.

After graduating from Rice University in Houston, TX with a double major in business and political science, Borg joined Conoco, now Phillips 66, where she has spent 32 years in a range of positions.

In recalling her years at MVHS, Borg credits her career success in part to learning how to manage her time, to mentor younger student athletes and musicians, and to operate as part of a team. "Learning early how to take the

good with the bad while still making things work, and honing skills that translated to a range of jobs has helped me forge a satisfying career path", she says. Favorite MVHS teachers include Mr. Babraitis, Ms. Barker and Coaches Mr. Beasley, Mr. Pearson and Mr. delBosque.

Borg is now beginning her 18th job with Phillips 66 in a career that has spanned positions in marketing, transportation, procurement, research and development and more, in Houston, Denver, Bartlesville, Oklahoma and in foreign countries. She is currently getting up to speed with new responsibilities and meeting new colleagues. Borg says she expects to tap the people skills acquired throughout her career and a willingness to tackle difficult assignments to uncover opportunities in her new position.

That ability to expand capabilities can lead to real career opportunities according to Borg and she encourages MVHS students to begin early to build their skills and experiences. She has found travel to be particularly helpful in broadening her career and worldview. "I've been to 29 countries," she says. "When my family vacations in Hawaii this Thanksgiving, I will have visited all 50 states."

"Learning early how to take the good with the bad while still making things work, and honing skills that translated to a range of jobs has helped me forge a satisfying career path."

– Amy Borg



Our commitment to our students and community

Every year, we update the priority actions, or action plans for each of the four Key Strategies in our Strategic Commitment.

These plans were reviewed by the School Board in a work-study session in August and approved at their meeting on September 19. They are available at <https://bit.ly/2DCARbG>.

While it is easy to get lost in the detail, the priority actions for each of our four strategies are all connected to two areas of focus:

1 Building a consistent system of academic and behavioral supports for our students.

How do we know when students are falling behind academically? How do we know when they are experiencing social and/or emotional problems outside the normal range experienced by most children and youth? How do we intervene within the classroom? When should we provide supports outside the classroom? How do we measure the success of these supports and how often?

Meeting the needs of each student requires that we have identified research-based answers to these questions. Ensuring that all students have access to the same types of supports requires that we put systems in place across the district.

At the elementary level, we have consistent supports in place for students who need additional help in reading. This year, we have added Math Intervention Specialists who are working in each of our elementary schools.

We have had, and continue to have supports available at both middle schools in English Language Arts and math. However, these supports have tended to look different at each school and have changed from year to year.

At the high school level, support for students during the school day remains limited, outside of programs serving English language learners and students with disabilities.

The need for systematic supports for students experiencing social and/or emotional problems, beyond school counselors and social workers, has become increasingly pressing.

2 Identifying and eliminating or minimizing barriers to learning for each student.

Just as different students face different learning and social/emotional challenges, many also face barriers because of their culture, ethnicity, language skills, disabilities, giftedness, the financial status of their family, and/or sexual identity. Some of the practices schools put in place – even those intended to help students – end up adding to their disadvantages.

Meeting the unique needs of every student requires us to examine our practices and change those that create barriers for some students.

This year, we are continuing our work with the University of Florida to learn more about the challenges some students face and effective strategies for eliminating barriers to their success. Teachers from each school who have participated in one of our Leadership for Equity summer institutes have volunteered to lead this work in their schools, with the support of Pete Bermudez and Rebekah Cordova from the University of Florida.



Meet our 2018-19 MVHS Student Reps serving on the MVSD Board of Directors! (L-R) Matthew Jurenka, Quincy Nzokah, Liliana Cervantes.

New Faces in Leadership

This year, we welcome a total of seven new individuals to our school leadership ranks.

Dr. Terri Wattawa (MVHS), **Susan Husband** (Little Mountain Elementary), **Jennifer Harlan** (Mount Baker Middle School), and **Stephanie Jones-Flores** (Washington Elementary) were introduced in our summer edition of Community Link (<https://bit.ly/2vzjip0>).



Dr. Terri Wattawa



Susan Husband



Jennifer Harlan



Stephanie Jones-Flores

In addition, we welcome three assistant principals. **Ashleigh Moe**, former 4th grade teacher at Centennial, is serving as Assistant Principal at Little Mountain Elementary; **Evelyn Morse**, longtime Principal at Madison Elementary and Interim Principal at Mount Baker Middle School last school year, is serving part-time as Assistant Principal at Mount Vernon High School, replacing Joan Robertson-Landi, who accepted a job at Marysville Getchell High School; and **Megan Mauro**, Assistant Principal at LaVenture Middle School.



Ashleigh Moe



Evelyn Morse



Megan Mauro

New state funding model creates budget challenges

Since the State Supreme Court's 2012 ruling found the state had violated its constitution by underfunding K-12 schools, the Legislature has been working to increase funding for schools. The court concluded that the Legislature completed their work in 2018, when they passed a comprehensive change to funding for public schools.

The change in school funding has impacted the state's 295 school districts differently. Some benefited, while others did not. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction identified the Mount Vernon School District among the 22 districts across the state that had the highest combination of financial risk factors as a result of the new funding model.

"We anticipate a \$4.5 million budget gap – equivalent to over 4% of our total operating budget."

For the 2019-20 school year, we anticipate a loss of approximately \$10 million in local levy revenue. While a portion of this loss will be replaced by the state through their increase in property taxes for schools, some will not. Considering increases in operating costs, we anticipate a \$4.5 million budget gap – equivalent to over 4% of our total operating budget.

In the coming weeks, we will be asking for input from our major constituent groups including employees, families, high school students, and other community members. This input will be used to help prioritize budget reductions. If you're interested in volunteering to serve on a budget committee, please complete the brief form available at <https://bit.ly/2IzelPU>.

Committees will begin meeting in October and bring several options to the school board for consideration beginning in April.

On the Grow: Bond Project Construction Updates

Madison Elementary

Work at Madison Elementary School is progressing as planned. The old elementary school was demolished starting in July and the project team simultaneously began sitework and underground utility installations. Structural masonry block at the gym and multipurpose room will near completion towards the end of October and delivery of structural steel is expected. Upcoming activities include steel erection, continuation of sitework and underground utilities, with building dry-in anticipated by early February.



Check out the Work Zone Webcam to see daily progress: <https://bit.ly/2MusqXG>



Old Main Building

Planning for the renovation of the Old Main building on the Mount Vernon High School campus has begun. Updating and modernizing efforts will include a new roof and windows, repair of the brick and terra cotta, and upgrades for the mechanical, electrical, data and security systems. Old Main was constructed in 1922 and renovation is scheduled for completion by 2022, in time for its 100 year anniversary.



Harriet Rowley Elementary

On September 20th our community celebrated the dedication and open house for Harriet Rowley Elementary. The event drew a number of elected officials, parents, and other interested community members, along with several members of Ms. Rowley's family. Shannon Fitting, Ms. Rowley's great-granddaughter and spokesperson for the family, shared some touching remembrances of their family's matriarch. She was clearly a strong, compassionate person who was committed to education and modeled perseverance in the face of challenges.

During the 2018-19 academic year, Harriet Rowley Elementary is a temporary home for Madison Elementary students while their school is under construction. The new Madison Elementary School is scheduled to open in Fall 2019.



The Harriet Rowley ribbon cutting was celebrated by cheering students and community! A video of the dedication and open house is available for viewing online: <https://bit.ly/2PJ34F>



This holiday season, the best gift you can give your child is a good education. And the best place to get that education is in school. **All Day, Every Day!**



On-The-Road Excellence
The MVSD Transportation Department celebrates 22 years in a row of stellar Bus Inspection Reports!



February Replacement Levies

Next February, we plan to place two propositions on the ballot related to funding for Mount Vernon Schools. Both of these are intended to replace existing levies, approved by voters in February 2017, which will expire on December 31, 2019.

The Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy – renamed Educational Programs Enrichment Levy by the new school funding law – will provide funds for programs and services outside of those funded by the state as part of basic education. As required by the new law, the amount of this levy will be reduced from the current \$4.00 per \$1,000 of assessed property value to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The Replacement Technology Levy will provide funding to continue upgrades, replacement, and maintenance of classroom technology.

More information on both propositions will be included in our winter newsletter.

Robert Hand Selected as 2019 Washington State Teacher of the Year

The district is pleased to share that Robert Hand, a MVHS family and consumer sciences teacher, has been selected as the 2019 Washington State Teacher of the Year.

This recognition is the nation's oldest and most prestigious national honor program. The announcement was made in September by Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chris Reykdal, during a ceremony at the Museum of Popular Culture (MoPOP).

"Each year we celebrate excellent teaching through the Teacher of the Year program," Reykdal said. "These professionals are dedicated, hardworking, and passionate about the success and wellbeing of their students. Mr. Hand is an exceptional example of what great teaching means in Washington state."

Mr. Hand's focus on building a relationship with each student and high standards are demonstrated in his classroom. In a recent OSPI media release, a former student shared how her life was changed by his care and support, "Mr. Hand got to know my struggles and did what a lot of other teachers didn't: he actually acknowledged them. After this, he didn't lower his expectations of me because he knew I was as capable as any other student who had the privileges I didn't. With Mr. Hand's support, throughout high school I got to discover my true potential. When I enrolled in Skagit Valley College, I kept that, 'I can do anything' mindset that Mr. Hand taught me. I am about to transfer in to a 4-year university and pursue a career as an educator. None of this could have been possible without Mr. Hand always being by my side – no matter what."

During his tenure as 2019 Teacher of the Year, Mr. Hand will have opportunities to advocate for educational issues and represent Washington state at National Teacher of the Year events. He will also contend for the National Teacher of the Year Award, facilitated by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

More Teacher of the Year Resources:

OSPI Press Release

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAOSPI/bulletins/20c3e22>

OSPI Teacher of the Year Info

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/TOY/default.aspx>

OSPI 2019 Washington State Teacher of the Year

<http://www.k12.wa.us/EducationAwards/TOY/TOY2019.aspx>

Teacher's philosophy of putting students first helped him to state honor, Skagit Valley Herald

<https://bit.ly/2DDLCL2>

KING 5 clip on Robert Hand, Washington State Teacher of the Year

<https://kng5.tv/2zYW8s8>



Robert Hand, WA State Teacher of the Year

The Mount Vernon School District does not discriminate in employment, programs, or activities on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, honorably discharged veteran or military status, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability or use of a trained guide dog or service animal by a person with a disability and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. We will take steps to assure that national origin persons who lack English language skills can participate in all education programs, services and activities, including those specific to career and technical education programming. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the District's Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator, Assistant Superintendent William Nutting, brnutting@mvsd320.org or the Section 504/Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, Clint Carlton, Director of Special and Support Services, ccarlton@mvsd320.org, 124 E. Lawrence St., Mount Vernon, WA, (360) 428-6110.