

# COMMUNITY



Mount  
Vernon  
Schools



# +Link

A Publication of Mount Vernon Schools

## IN THIS ISSUE

## SUMMER 2017 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 2017!**
- **Updating our Strategic Commitment**
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[www.mountvernonschools.org](http://www.mountvernonschools.org)

### This edition of Community Link is dedicated to the Mount Vernon High School Class of 2017, who celebrated their commencement on June 9.

This year's graduating class, numbered at approximately 320, is headed in a variety of directions. Valedictorian, Kaleb Lovingier, is headed to Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California to study engineering. Our Salutatorian, Matthew Giles, is joining his brother at Harvard. Others are attending Skagit Valley College, Dartmouth, Washington State University, Western Washington University, University of Washington, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle University, Whitworth, Whitman, Pacific Lutheran University, George Fox, University of Portland, Portland State, and St. Martin's University. Still others are enlisting in the military or going directly into a career field. Together, these students were awarded a total of over \$6 million in community and institutional scholarships - a new school record.

As in recent years, this year's graduating class is comprised of students from 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 with plans to go on to postsecondary education. Others are continuing a college-going family tradition. Still others face one of a wide range of physical, intellectual, and/or social/emotional disabilities and challenges. As a group, their successes reflect the goal of public education in America - that no matter their advantages or disadvantages, all students are provided with what they need to graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in post-secondary education, careers, and life.

As Nikole Hannah-Jones noted in a February article in the New York Times Magazine, "Achieving this has never been an easy feat." It requires student effort and perseverance as well as the guidance and support from their family, teachers, support staff, and other caring adults in their lives. Thanks to each of you who have played a role in the success of the members of our Class of 2017. We look forward to hearing about their accomplishments in the years to come!

We also congratulate those students who graduated from our alternative learning providers, Emerson High School and Skagit Open Doors, a new program opened this year in partnership with Skagit Valley College.

**Carl Bruner**, Superintendent  
Mount Vernon School District

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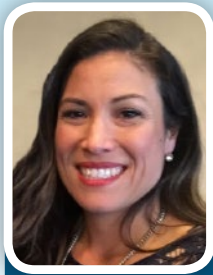
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# FEATURED ALUMNI

Our alumni are working to change the world around us.

## MVHS alum Flora Lucatero gives back to her community through advocacy.



Flora Lucatero

An advocate for children and a local businesswoman who coaches those attempting to reach their potential, Flora Lucatero has become a voice in the community for those who struggle to be heard and valued.

A 1997 graduate of Mount Vernon High School, Lucatero earned a degree from Western Washington University and began her career as a director of the College Assistance Migrant Program (C.A.M.P) at Central Washington University. After returning to the Skagit Valley, she established the non-profit Children of the Valley After School Program and became an independent distributor with a health and wellness company called AdvoCare, coaching others in their health and wellness goals.

Working with at-risk youth from low-income families has long been an abiding passion for Lucatero whose family, with its roots in farm work, has developed strong ties to that population in our community. Her mother, Maria Perez, has taught in local schools and now is a counselor at MVHS. "Both of my parents have always stressed the importance of serving others and giving back to the community," says Lucatero.

Those family values were underlined in high school where Lucatero's favorite subject was American History with Mrs. Zappone. She also enjoyed classes taught by Mr. Pearson and Mr. Fox and credits her work with the Best SELF program in high school and college with sparking her interest in helping at-risk children. "I believe so many people, no matter what their age, need a positive influence and mentor in their life, but especially those who come from low-income families," says Lucatero. "I love helping and empowering youth find their purpose, recognize their dreams and develop a plan to execute them."

In addition to her work with Children of the Valley After School Program and AdvoCare, Lucatero is the mother of four boys, ages 21 months to ten years old. Her career advice to students is to follow their hearts and passions and never give up. "If you don't create the life you love, then it will be hard to love the life you live."

*"...I believe so many people, no matter what their age, need a positive influence and mentor in their life, but especially those who come from low-income families."*

– Flora Lucatero





# Updating our Strategic Commitment

During April and May, we met with a total of 239 parents and other community members, students, and staff within 17 focus groups to ask for input on the 4 Key Strategies and 5 Foundational Beliefs that comprise the largest components of our strategic Commitment. First developed 5 years ago, the School Board was interested in gathering feedback from our constituents on whether these statements remain clear, important, and relevant.

**On July 19, the Board took action to adopt the following:**



## Key Strategies to reach our 100% graduation goal:

- 1. Early Learning.** Promote school readiness for kindergarten and foster successful transitions throughout grades K-3, ensuring students meet grade level standards in reading and math by 3rd grade.
- 2. Powerful Teaching & Learning.** Inspire every student to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills through high expectations and instruction that is engaging, research-based, and relevant.
- 3. Family & Community Engagement.** Embrace the strengths of the District's various communities and organizations. Work together with families and other partners to provide students with powerful learning experiences that lead to their success.
- 4. Individual Determination and Creativity.** Encourage, develop, and strengthen student independence, perseverance, creativity, and a willingness to take risks and embrace new ideas, laying the foundation for continuous learning.

## Foundational Beliefs:

- Providing every student what they need to be successful in post-secondary education, careers, and life.
- School cultures that emphasize student safety, health and well-being, and respect for all members of the school community.
- Professional collaboration that is focused on increasing performance at all levels of the district.
- Communication that is open, timely, and reciprocal.
- Responsible stewardship that ensures the careful and responsive management of district resources.

Over the course of the summer, we will work to develop plans for our Key Strategies, which outline our priorities for action in each area. These will be summarized and included in the fall 2017 edition of Community Link.

*Thanks to all of those who were able to participate in one of our focus groups.*



# \$6.0M

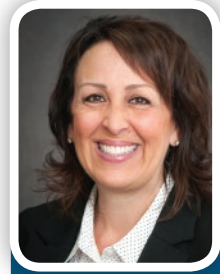
MVHS Class of 2017 were awarded over \$6 million dollars in scholarships, **the highest amount ever awarded a MVHS graduating class!**

# Administrative Transitions

For the 2017-18 school year, we will welcome the following administrators into our District or into new positions:

- **Madison Elementary: Former Assistant Principal, Juan Gaona**, is assuming the principal role at Madison. **Melissa Van Straten** has been hired as Assistant Principal. Currently employed as an Instructor at Western Washington University, Melissa has served as both a teacher and instructional coach in dual language programs in Wisconsin. She is literate and fluent in Spanish.
- **Retired Principal, Marsha Hanson**, has been hired to serve as Interim Principal for Washington Elementary during the 2017-18 school year. Ms. Hanson worked for many years as Principal of Manson Middle and High School and Principal of LaConner Middle and High School. She recently served as Interim Principal of Allen Elementary in the Burlington-Edison School District.
- **Mount Baker Middle School: Former Madison Elementary Principal, Evelyn Morse**, is assuming the role of Interim Principal for one year at Mount Baker, replacing Jeff Ingram. **LeAnne Plumly**, former Assistant Principal at Little Mountain Elementary, will transfer into the role of Assistant Principal at Mount Baker, replacing Russ Wilsterman. **Susan Husband**, Instructional Support Specialist, will assume the role of Assistant Principal at Little Mountain, replacing Ms. Plumly.
- **César Bernal will be joining the Mount Vernon High School administrative team** as Assistant Principal. Mr. Bernal comes to Mount Vernon from North Kitsap High School where he served as a teacher and graduation specialist. He replaces **Clint Carlton**, who is assuming the role of Director of Special Programs & Services. Jean Champagne, who has held that position for the past 12 years, has retired.

# Newest School Board Director



Wendy Ragusa

On June 21, the School Board welcomed Wendy Ragusa as she assumed her role as School Director for District 4. Ms. Ragusa replaces LuAnne Burkhart, who resigned her seat after almost 12 years of service. She was selected from a pool of five highly qualified applicants.

The parent of two Mount Vernon Bulldog graduates, she works as Development Coordinator for the Skagit Valley Hospital Foundation.

# Attendance Boundary Review Committee

In preparation for the opening of the new Madison Elementary in the fall of 2019 and completion of the LaVenture Middle School addition, we are planning to begin a process to review options and recommend new elementary and middle school attendance boundaries. The committee charged with this task will be comprised of staff, administrators, and parents/guardians. Meetings will begin next fall. If you are interested in being involved in this process, please contact Carol Ledin in the Superintendent's office at 360-428-6181 or, by email at [cledin@mvsd320.org](mailto:cledin@mvsd320.org).




**100% of MVHS choir ensembles earned Superior ratings** at the Washington State Solo & Ensemble competition this spring.


**MVHS Sports Medicine team placed 9th out of 47 schools** at the state competition sponsored by the Washington Career and Technical Sports Medicine Association.

# Progress on Levy Commitments



Being responsible stewards of taxpayer resources includes delivering on our levy promises. Our progress on our levy commitments is outlined below.

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 2017 K=17 1st=20 2nd=19
	Average Class size in June 2016 K=18 1st=20 2nd=19
	Average Class size in June 2014 K=21 1st=23 2nd=25
Increase funds to purchase updated teaching materials, particularly in math and science.	2015-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New math curriculum materials for grades K – 8, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry implemented</li> <li>New science materials for grades 6 – 8 and high school Biology implemented</li> </ul>
	2016-17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle school Social Studies curriculum adopted</li> <li>High school Pre-calculus curriculum adopted</li> <li>Elementary writing curriculum adopted.</li> </ul>
Address the lack of professional learning time for teachers by adding days to the school calendar.	2015-16 Five non-student days were added to the calendar in 2015-16 to create time for professional learning for teachers and other certificated staff.
	2016-17 Five non-student days continued to allow for professional learning opportunities for staff.

Technology & Security Levy 	
COMMITMENT	PROGRESS
Add more mobile technology labs at all schools.	2015-16 Approximately 1,200 Chrome Books have been added to improve accessibility for elementary, middle school, and high school students.
	2016-17 Over 34 mobile Chrome Book labs, each containing 30 units, have been added to improve student and staff computer accessibility.
Replace aging hardware.	2015-16 Over 400 older desktops and laptops have been replaced in classrooms across the district.
	2016-17 Moving toward mobile computer solutions, replacing desk tops with Chrome Book laptops.
Upgrade software licenses.	2015-16 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.
	2016-17 Updated all district and school websites. Continue to expand use of Google apps for education.
Fund IT support staff to maintain hardware and the network.	2015-16 One full time IT technician was added to help support Washington and Jefferson.
	2016-17 A half time secretary was hired to provide administrative support.
Replace outdated security cameras at Mount Vernon High School.	2015-16 All analog cameras have been replaced.
	2016-17 Security cameras have been installed this summer at both middle schools.
Add security cameras at elementary schools.	Installation of elementary school security cameras is ongoing. To be completed by December 2017
Add keyless door locks for exterior doors at all elementary and middle schools.	To be completed by December 2017





# Update on Bond Projects

## New Elementary School on East Division

If you have driven east on Division Street just past the entrance to Skagit Highlands recently you've noticed that our contractors are well underway clearing a road that will lead to our new elementary school site. Given the number of sensitive or critical areas on this site, our construction team has had to work closely with the City of Mount Vernon's Community & Economic Development Department to ensure we comply with state and local regulations. While we have delayed our groundbreaking ceremony originally scheduled for June 20 until August 24, the project remains on schedule for completion in time for the start of the 2018-19 school year. The process to identify a name for this school will begin in August.



## Madison Elementary

Planning for the new Madison Elementary project is well underway. Unlike the East Division project, the Madison project is challenged by the school's location in a developed neighborhood, off a major east-west arterial, Fir Street. TCF Architects and Lydig Construction are collaborating with District staff on a master planning process for the Madison campus.

## Mount Vernon High School – Old Main

While work on the high school campus will begin after completion of Madison Elementary, our team has already begun to evaluate the status of the original high school building, Old Main. Built in 1921, remodeling this building brings with it the greatest risk of potential cost over runs. However, an initial evaluation has indicated that Old Main is structurally sound. Program planning for this and other high school projects will continue next school year.

# Congratulations 2017 Retirees!



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

**Candice Bentz** – Reading Intervention Teacher, Jefferson (13 years)\*

**Cecelia Gardner** – Paraeducator, Little Mountain (21 years)\*

**Karen Sue Wend** – Special Education Teacher, Little Mountain (28 years)\*

**Marilyn Nilsson** – 3rd Grade Teacher, Madison (27 years)\*

**Evelyn Morse** – Principal, Madison (15 years)\*

**Dale Fournier** – Librarian, Washington (19 years)\*

**Anita Kyte** – Kindergarten Teacher, Washington (31 years)\*

**Kimberly Rex** – Special Education Teacher, Mount Baker (19 years)\*

**Sally Burt** – Custodian, Mount Vernon High School (10 years)\*

**John Fortier** – Head Custodian, Mount Vernon High School (17 years)\*

**Susan Bengtson** – Speech & Language Pathologist, Centennial (28 years)\*

**Lori Hauser** – School Psychologist, Centennial (28 years)\*

**Ann McCune** – Nurse, Centennial and Lincoln (11 years)\*

**Jean Champagne** – Director, Special Programs & Services (15 years)\*

**Ken McLeod** – Warehouse & Inventory (22 years)\*

**Susie Gaudette** – Administrative Secretary, District Office (18 years)\*

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

# Annual Green & White Open

Sponsored by Williams & Nulle, PLLC

Friday, Aug. 4, 2017  
Eaglemont Golf Course

Registration & Details: Larry Otos  
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