



Mount  
Vernon  
Schools

# COMMUNITY + Link

A Publication of Mount Vernon Schools



## IN THIS ISSUE

## FALL 2015 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 »

- *Welcome to the 2015-16 school year*
- *Key Strategies*
- *Our commitment to our students and community!*
- *School Calendar*
- *Math Adoption*
- *Facilities Planning*
- *New Faces*

## Welcome to the 2015-16 school year!

For the past year, we have been exploring ways to make our District's strategic road map more accessible to parents, guardians, and other community members. Our aim has been to find a way to communicate why we are "in business," (i.e., our vision), how we strive to achieve our purpose (i.e., our mission), what immediate strategies comprise our focus (i.e., our goals), and those beliefs that underlie all that we do. Through this process, we realized that these elements of our plan are best described as our commitment to our students and our community. We are pleased to present the Mount Vernon Schools' Commitment on page 4.

This fall edition of our community newsletter also includes information on our areas of focus for 2015-16, our operating budget, new teachers and certified support staff, our new calendar, and our facility planning efforts.

Thanks to the work of MVHS teacher, Mr. Hornbacher, and his 2015 student photographers, we have an excellent section of school photos we can use throughout the year. Enjoy them in this and other district publications.

Throughout the academic year, our student athletes, musicians, and thespians offer a variety of affordable entertainment for community members of all ages. Be sure to check our web site regularly for dates, times, and locations. Annual athletic passes are available at the Bulldogs Athletic office, located in the Mount Vernon High School gymnasium or by calling 428-6191.

Thanks for your interest in our schools. It's going to be an exciting year!



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

[www.mountvernonschools.org](http://www.mountvernonschools.org)

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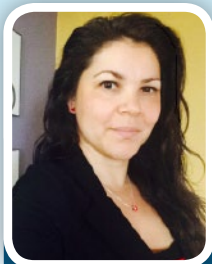




# FEATURED ALUMNI

Our alumni are working to change the world around us.

## MVHS grad seeks to “be the change” in her community...



Claudia Palomero

Mount Vernon High School alumna Claudia Avendaño Palomera overcame challenges in her teenage years to earn the education and professional credentials which allow her to counsel those undergoing similar struggles. Today she serves as director of the YMCA Oasis Teen Shelter and Daylight Center in Mount Vernon and serves as an adjunct faculty member at Skagit Valley College and Eastern Washington University.

Avendaño Palomera graduated from MVHS in 1994 and went on to earn a B.A. degree from Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA and a Master of Social Work degree from Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA. She later worked for 13 years within the juvenile justice system of Skagit County and seven years with the child protection agency of the State of Washington.

Avendaño Palomera, who lost her mother to cancer at age 16 and later became a teen mother, credits several MVHS teachers for going above and beyond in their support of her. She recalls that Mrs. Root offered counsel, while Mr. Juan Espinoza, Mr. Stromer, Dr. Fox, Mr. Knue, Mr. Meldahl and Mr. Terenzi helped her develop interpersonal communications and leadership skills, deal positively with change and, when she most needed it, made her smile.

A dedicated social worker even before she became one, Avendaño Palomera says she draws on her own experiences and 20 years of dedicated networking to help teens and families during their most vulnerable times. Bilingual (English and Spanish), she promotes multiculturalism, finding common ground and a strong commitment to community.

Avendaño Palomera encourages MVHS students to choose a job they love and strive to be facilitators of positive change in their communities.

*Palomero, who lost her mother to cancer at age 16 and later became a teen mother, credits several MVHS teachers for going above and beyond in their support of her.*



### Damian DiNitto

*LaVenture Middle School – Special Education-Life Skills*

- Masters of Education, K-12 Special Education, University of Montana
- Bachelors of Arts, Art Education, University of Montana

*Interesting Fact » Was married on a drift boat he built himself.*



### Laura Schonberg

*Director – Highly Capable Program*

- Masters of Education, University of Washington
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, University of Washington
- Post-Baccalaureate – Special Education and English
- P-12 Administrative Certificate, Western Washington University

*Interesting Fact » Lives on a farm where she assists in horse rescue and trains service dogs.*





## Goal 1: Early Learning

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

### Key Strategies:

- Provide a 3-week Jump Start program in August for in-coming kindergarten children who have not had preschool
- Train new kindergarten and 1st grade teachers in common literacy strategies
- Develop a Kindergarten Guide for the district
- Arrange for teacher-exchanges between kindergarten and community preschool providers
- Host quarterly meetings with the district's 34 community preschool partners



## Goal 2: Effective Instruction

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

- Formulate, represent, and solve mathematical problems
- Build content knowledge; comprehend and critique; value evidence; and use technology strategically and capably in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

### Key Strategies:

- Implement new math curricula in grades K-8, Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry
- Support teachers' use of research-based teaching strategies with all students
- Identify updated curriculum materials for middle school Language Arts, which are aligned with state standards
- Support teachers' use of classroom-based assessment strategies to measure student progress

**2015 Spring Smarter Balanced Assessment results are available online:**

<http://bit.ly/1L7x2CJ>

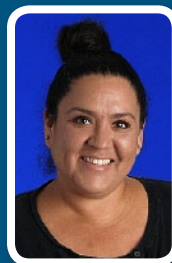


### Lawrence Lewis

*Mount Vernon High School – Science*

- Masters of Education, Western Washington University
- Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Western Washington University

*Interesting Fact » Recently climbed Mount St. Helens.*



### Angelica Garcia

*Mount Vernon High School – AVID Program*

- Bachelor of Arts in Human Services, Western Washington University
- Bachelor of Arts in Education-English Language Learner endorsement, Western Washington University

*Interesting Fact » Worked in the district as a paraeducator and athletic coach before returning to school to earn her teaching degree.*



## Goal 3: Parent Engagement

*Engage families to provide encouragement and support to students, ensuring that students' needs are met and their educational opportunities are enhanced.*

### Key Strategies:

- Develop Parent Academies for the purpose of helping parents support their students' academic success and engagement in school
- Continue to build parent engagement in decision making, through involvement in district committees and school site leadership teams
- Work with community partners to establish one additional neighborhood classroom for student and parent support
- Support partnerships with community agencies to provide evening ESL classes in schools

## Goal 4: Creative Independence

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

### Key Strategies:

- Expand opportunities for students to earn college credit in high school
- Implement systems to regularly check high school students' status toward graduation and provide support when needed
- Provide the opportunity for high school students to earn a Seal of Biliteracy
- Provide opportunities for high school students to earn Career Skills Certificates
- Increase services and program options for highly capable middle school students



***Our commitment to our students and community!***

View the poster online at:  
<http://bit.ly/1LfcEU>

# Our commitment to our students and community!



## Our Vision

To graduate inspired and critical thinkers who embrace diversity and are committed to the betterment of their own lives and the lives of others.

## Our Mission

To expect, encourage, and facilitate the pursuit of excellence in our students for whom life-long learning is critical for success and happiness.

## Our Goals

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

**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; and use technology strategically and capably in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

**Family Partnerships.** Engage families to provide encouragement and support to students, ensuring that student needs are met and their educational opportunities are enhanced.

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



## What we Believe

1

Open, effective, and reciprocal communication

2

Responsible stewardship, assuring the responsive and productive management of district resources

3

School climates that emphasize student safety; a healthy lifestyle, and respect for faculty and peers

4

Professional collaboration focused on increasing learning for all students

5

A broad curriculum that includes the arts and provides opportunities for students to explore a wide range of interests



# School Calendar

For some time, the District and the union representing teachers and other certified staff have worked to identify ways to increase time for teacher collaboration, planning, and professional learning during the school year, without reducing instructional time for students.



The need has been particularly glaring at the elementary level where teachers are responsible for teaching all core content areas. Until now, we have relied on 2-hour early release days placed throughout the school year and substitutes to release teachers to attend professional development.

Thanks in part, to additional revenue provided by the legislature, we have been able to arrive at a comprehensive solution to our calendar challenges.

As we did not reach agreement until late August, the new calendar model will be phased in over two years to give families time to prepare and the district time to work out transportation, arrange for after school programs, and communicate with childcare providers in the community.

## In 2015-16, the following changes will occur:

1. Five (5) non-student days have been scheduled throughout the school year to be used for teacher collaboration, planning, and professional learning. All of these days are scheduled on a Friday to create greater consistency and predictability for families. The calendar is structured so that the 180 instructional days for students will not be reduced. These days will reduce the number of times classroom teachers are out of their classrooms for professional development.
2. Early release days for middle school and high school will be limited to conferences, the day before Thanksgiving, and the last day of school.
3. 1-hour early release days for elementary are scheduled each Friday (except those used for non-student days) for teacher collaboration, beginning 2nd semester.

## Beginning with the 2016-17 school year:

1. The elementary school day will be increased by 15 minutes.
2. Early release Fridays for elementary will be in effect all year.
3. Early release days for middle school and high school will continue to be limited to conferences, the day before Thanksgiving, and the last day of school.

These changes will increase instructional time for students in grades 6-12 by 14 hours beginning this school year. In 2016-17, elementary students will receive an increase of 42 hours of instructional time.

***We recognize that schedule changes are difficult. However we're glad to have finally settled on a calendar that will:***

- Increase instructional time for students
- Provide needed, additional time for teacher planning, collaboration, and learning
- Increase consistency for students, families, and staff.



### Estevan Vivanco Meza

*Madison Elementary School – Librarian*

- Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, Western Washington University
- Bachelor of Arts in Education, Western Washington University

***Interesting Fact » Estevan is the youngest of nine children and knows how to juggle.***



### Bethany Kelley

*Speech – Language Pathologist*

- Masters of Education, Washington State University
- Post-Bachelor, Communication Disorders, Eastern Washington University
- Bachelor of Arts in History, Gonzaga University
- Mount Vernon High School Graduate

***Interesting Fact » Lived in Florence, Italy her junior year of college.***

# Math Adoption

Last spring, the School Board approved adoption of new math materials for students in grades K-8, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry.

The approved materials were recommended by a committee of teachers, administrators, and community members after an exhaustive, year-long review, which included classroom pilots.

## Beginning this school year, the following curricula are being implemented across the district:

- Elementary: Bridges in Mathematics (<http://bit.ly/1LYxQzw>)
- Middle School: Glencoe Math (<http://bit.ly/1hEVu6Z>)
- High School: Big Ideas Math (<http://bit.ly/1JRgTEU>)

Teachers received training in the new materials over the summer. Continued support for middle and high school math teachers will be supported by their instructional coaches throughout the year. We are contracting with the publisher of Bridges in Mathematics to provide support for our elementary teachers.

We are excited to be able to provide teachers with the tools they need to teach to the Washington State K-12 Learning Standards in Math.

# Facilities Planning



At their meeting on August 19, the School Board adopted a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan, detailing our facility needs for the next 5-10 years.

The plan incorporates the work of our Facilities Advisory Committees dating back to 2005 and outlines priority needs to address increasing enrollment pressures and aging facilities:

- Rebuilding Madison Elementary
- Building a new elementary school on East Division Street
- Expanding permanent classroom, library, and lunch room space at LaVenture
- Modernizing Old Main at Mount Vernon High School
- Replacing the current agriculture building at Mount Vernon High School with a larger building to accommodate agriculture, engineering, and science classrooms and lab spaces

Also included is a recommendation to re-purpose Lincoln Elementary for non-student purposes, to allow the state matching funds generated by this school to cover part of the cost of a new elementary.

During the coming weeks, we will be meeting with a variety of community members to learn their priorities. We plan to survey the community again early this fall to find out their thoughts, questions, and concerns related to these projects.

*The Board hopes to make a final decision on a bond proposal toward the end of October.*

# New Faces

This school year, we welcome 60 certified teachers and support specialists to our team.

They come to us from Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New York, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Canada, and represent an impressive collection of knowledge, skills, and professional and life experiences.

Here's a snapshot of our new hires by the numbers:

<b>Number of teachers:</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Elementary:</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Middle School:</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>High School:</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Northwest Career and Technical Academy:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Skagit Family Learning Center:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Number of support specialists:</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Number with a Master's degree or higher:</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Number who are new to the profession:</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Number who are bilingual:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Number of Mount Vernon High School Alumni:</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Number of former Mount Vernon School District classified employees:</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Number in education as a second career:</b>	<b>3</b>

