

COMMUNITY Link



Summer 2023 NEWSLETTER

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Superintendent's message

We are immeasurably grateful to our extraordinary staff, whose unwavering commitment to our students, families, and school community have been nothing short of awe-inspiring. Through their dynamic engagement, we witnessed the creation of powerful connections that played a pivotal role in ensuring the triumph of each and every student's educational journey! Together, as a spirited team, we proudly celebrated the graduation of 495 remarkable individuals from Mount Vernon High School, Skagit Academy, Aspire Academy/Aspire Online, and NCTA Open Doors! Congratulations, seniors! This incredible milestone is a testament to the boundless dedication of our exceptional staff and the limitless potential of our incredible students. Get ready to conquer the world!

Moving forward, we continue exploring the idea of a SFBC (Student Focused Balanced Calendar) and its potential to improve learning outcomes, reduce summer learning loss, and promote a healthy school-life balance for all. This spring, we hosted four Community Forums that gave us an opportunity to hear from families, students, and community. In the fall of 2023, we will continue to explore, discuss, and engage our students to share ideas about a SFBC. We also plan to host more Community Forums and circle back to our staff. If you'd like to learn more about a SFBC, you can find more information on our website at www.mountvernonschools.com.

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Featured Articles

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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.

www.mountvernonschools.org

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. Inquiries regarding compliance and/or grievance procedures may be directed to the District's Title IX/Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator, Jon Ronngren, Director, 124 E. Lawrence Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273 (360)428-6110; Section 504/ADA Coordinator, Clint Carlton, Director of Special and Support Services, 920 S. Second Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273, (360)428-6141.



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Superintendent's message cont.

As you read through this newsletter, you will hear about the exciting opportunities that have happened in our buildings the last few months. You will hear from our featured alumni, and about summer school opportunities for our students. As always, you can see these stories and more on our website.

Thank you again for your continued support as we strive to provide the best educational experience for all our students.

Please stay healthy and safe.

Warm regards,



Ismael Vivanco, Ed.D
Superintendent, Mount Vernon School District



STUDENTS DELIGHT GOVERNOR INSLEE WITH A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE



In a heartwarming demonstration of support for the arts and education, Governor Jay Inslee made a special visit to Mount Vernon High School. Gov. Inslee, recognized for his commitment to fostering creativity and cultural appreciation, joined the school's talented students for an unforgettable experience that left a lasting impact on all involved.

Under the guidance of music teacher, Mr. Rivera, talented students from his folklorico and Mariachi classes took the stage performing various dances and songs. Donning traditional folklorico and mariachi attire, the students gracefully executed intricate choreography, showcasing the cultural heritage of the region.

Governor Inslee took a moment to congratulate Mr. Ramon Rivera, as he was recently named Washington's Music Teacher of the Year. He also addressed the students, emphasizing the significance of the arts in education.

The impact of Governor Inslee's visit will forever be etched in the memories of the students, reinforcing the idea that their creative pursuits are valued and championed. We want to thank Gov. Inslee for taking time to visit the Mount Vernon School District.

There are more than 2.8 million classified education support employees in our nation's public schools, colleges, and universities and they make up one-third of the public education workforce. They keep students fed, emotionally and physically healthy and safe, engaged and connected to the larger school community, and provide instruction and support that leads to academic success. This year, the United Classified School Employees (UCSE) presented two of our staff with the RISE award. The award is presented by UCSE, a coalition of classified school employee unions from across the nation that work together to advocate on behalf of their members and the students they serve. The coalition recognizes individuals from across the country who are doing extraordinary and inspirational things in their schools and communities to promote quality education, foster positive learning environments, and ensure student success. Rosa Juarez Soria Mondragon and Veronica Gonzalez were honored as two of five 2023 UCSE Recognizing Inspiring School Employees (RISE) Award winners.

Veronica Gonzalez

Veronica Gonzalez embarked on her journey in the Mount Vernon School District in 1995, dedicating the past 28 years to education. As a liaison for the district, Veronica's primary focus lies in working with students, engaging them academically, and bridging the gap between school and parents.

Collaborating with organizations like MECHA, Veronica also arranges tours to technical schools, colleges, post-secondary workshops, and connections with organizations that give our students an opportunity to connect with people of similar backgrounds. Catering to students from 9th to 12th grade, Veronica manages a caseload of 350 students, ensuring they stay on track for graduation.

Passionate about her work, Veronica's dedication is fueled by the stories she hears from her students. She helps them see their full potential, and her mission is to guide them and show them just how much they can achieve. Understanding the challenges faced by parents who are often occupied with life's necessities, Veronica steps in as a voice of encouragement, supporting both students and their families. In fact, she even has parents who were once her own students, and this longstanding connection allows her to work effectively with them year after year.



Rosa Juarez Soria Mondragon

Rosa Juarez Soria Mondragon is a Migrant Graduation Specialist at Mount Baker Middle School. Rosa's work in the district began in 2016 and for the past 7 years has dedicated her time to supporting migrant students in our district.

She provides vital support to migrant students, addressing their needs and creating enriching experiences. Rosa established four clubs, namely Migrant Leaders, LUCHA, Folklorico, and Mixteco, at various schools, each catering to the unique interests and backgrounds of the students.

Rosa's commitment extends beyond the academic, as she continually looks for opportunities to draw families in, and provide a place for students to be themselves. Her genuine interest in helping them navigate challenges is evident, and she remains committed to finding solutions that benefit the entire community.

Rosa's dedication to promoting cultural awareness goes beyond the realm of Mixteco. She has also secured a Heritage grant to support programs focused on Russian and Ukrainian heritages, demonstrating her commitment to inclusivity and celebrating the diverse backgrounds within the community.



Message from the School Board

Dear Community Members,

We hope this message finds you well. As members of the School Board, we want to communicate with you directly about the current state of our school district's budget and the challenges we face. We also want to share our vision for the future and the reasons to remain hopeful. Over the past year, our school district, like many others across the country, has been confronted with a range of economic challenges. Changes in funding allocations and rising operational costs put the District in a \$10.8 million deficit.

As a result, in working with the District's administrative team, we were forced to make difficult decisions. To ensure the long-term stability and success of our educational programs, recommendations regarding workforce and program reductions are certainly the toughest to consider and enact. Despite these challenges, we want to emphasize that we remain committed to provide the best possible education for every student in our district. We firmly believe that education is the foundation upon which our community's future is built.

While we continue to navigate these budget constraints, it is crucial to highlight the measures we have taken to mitigate the impact on our students and staff. We have implemented a strategic budgetary review process that prioritizes educational excellence and student well-being. By carefully evaluating each expenditure and seeking efficiencies, we aim to minimize any negative effects on the quality of education.

In its ongoing work, District leadership seeks opportunities to secure additional funding through grants, partnerships, and community engagement. We are grateful for the support and dedication of local organizations, businesses, and individuals who have joined us to find creative solutions to sustain and enhance our programs.

Looking ahead, we want to share our optimistic outlook for the future. We believe that with the collective efforts of our community, we can overcome these challenges and emerge stronger. Our district has always been characterized by resilience, innovation, and a shared commitment to excellence. These qualities will continue to guide us as we face the future together.

We ask you for input and involvement as we make decisions that will shape our district's future. Your voices matter, and we encourage you to participate in public forums and to attend School Board meetings to share your ideas and concerns. Together, we can create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable educational system that prepares our students for success in an ever-changing world.

We understand that these times may be uncertain and challenging, and we must remember that it is in the face of adversity that we find our greatest strength. We remain resolute in our commitment to your children's education and to provide them with a nurturing environment for their growth and development.

Thank you for your continued support and trust. Together, we will navigate these challenging times and build a brighter future for our MVSD community.

Sincerely,

Larry, Wendy, Laura, Marissa and Griffin



Happening this summer

Director of Equity and Inclusion, David Rodriguez, went above and beyond to provide a truly unique and enriching experience for students in the district's Migrant Program Summer School again this year. Through collaboration with the Mexican Consulate, the district welcomed five international teachers from different regions of Mexico to join the summer school team. Their presence adds a valuable perspective and firsthand knowledge of Mexican culture and art to the curriculum which will add to this year's already amazing summer program.

Working alongside district teachers, these educators are bringing specialized curriculum focusing on Mexican culture and art throughout the summer school day. The international teachers provide students with a unique opportunity to connect with individuals who possess an authentic understanding of Mexican heritage.

Last year the district hosted four international teachers, helping make the migrant summer school program a success. The engagement and enthusiasm displayed by students, coupled with the distinctiveness of the enrichment program, set it apart from similar initiatives in other local school districts. The impact was evident in increased student attendance, engagement, and a profound appreciation for the traditions that make Mexico beautiful. "By continuing to offer exceptional educational opportunities and fostering cross-cultural exchange, the district aims to broaden students' horizons and create a deeper appreciation for diversity and global perspectives." said David Rodriguez.

The Migrant Summer School program is one of many offered by the school this year. The opportunities that we are providing to students will give our community an avenue that best fits their needs. From online credit retrieval, Boys & Girls Club, to the Migrant Summer School program, there is something for many of our students.

MVSD FREE SUMMER MEALS!

- Skagit Valley College 2405 E. College Way, Cardinal Center- Cafeteria
July 10th - Aug 10th;
Breakfast is served 8:50 to 10:10 AM
Lunch is served 11:50 AM to 1:00 pm
Monday - Thursday, Closed Fridays
- Mount Vernon High School
1075 E Fulton St
June 26th to August 3th;
Breakfast is served 8:00 - 8:30AM
Lunch is served 11 :20 AM - 12:20 PM
Monday- Thursday Closed July 4th

ALL MEALS MUST BE EATEN ON SITE. NO PICK UP'S OR TO-GO'S

ALL CHILDREN 18 AND UNDER EAT FREE!

MVSD Bookmobile

July 10- August 10
Monday through Thursday

Mondays:
FAE at Skagit Valley college - 10-12
Edgewater Park- 12:30-2:30

Tuesdays:
Migrant Summer School (MVHS) -10-12
Boys & Girls Club- 12:30-2:30

Wednesdays:
FAE (SVC) - 10-12
Triumph Life Teen Center- 12:30-2:30

Thursdays:
Kiwanis Park -10-12
The Y @ Hoag Rd- 12:30-2:30

Lets stay connected!



Jefferson Elementary
360-428-6128



Centennial Elementary
360-428-6138



Skagit Academy
360-428-6206



Madison Elementary
360-428-6131



Little Mountain Elementary
360-428-6125



NCTA
360-848-0706



Harriet Rowley Elementary
360-428-6199



Mount Baker Middle School
360-428-6127



Mount Vernon High School
360-428-6100



Washington Elementary
360-428-6122



LaVenture Middle School
360-428-6116



Mount Vernon Virtual Learning

Aspire Academy
360-428-6216

MVVL
360-428-6216

Featured Alumni—Michael Baughn

Our Alumni are working to change the world around us

Michael Baughn's path in the field of ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) research is a testament to his passion, dedication, scientific acumen, and mentorship. Starting from his early education in Mount Vernon, Baughn's journey took him through prestigious institutions like the University of Washington and University of California, San Diego (UCSD), culminating in his current position as a successful scientist in the field. This article retraces Baughn's educational and professional milestones, shedding light on his significant contributions to ALS research.



Michael's academic journey began in Jefferson Elementary, Washington Elementary, and LaVenture Middle School before he graduated from Mount Vernon High School in 2005. Following his high school graduation, Baughn pursued a Bachelor of Science degree in Cell, Molecular and Developmental Biology with a Genome Science Focus at the University of Washington. It was during his undergraduate years that he had the opportunity to work with renowned scientist Dr. Albert LaSpada, M.D., Ph.D., and Dr. John M. Ravits, M.D. who sparked his interest in ALS research. With Dr. Ravits, his work focused on preserving and analyzing brain and spinal cord samples from ALS patients, to uncover the molecular signatures and mechanisms underlying the disease in affected motor neuron cells with laser-capture microdissection and RNA sequence analysis.

Working with Dr. Ravits led Baughn to UCSD, where he delved deeper into ALS research through their collaborations with Dr. Don W. Cleveland, Ph.D, Dr. Clotilde Lagier-Tourenne, MD, PhD, and Ionis Pharmaceuticals. Together, working with patient samples and cell lines this work led to a research program targeting the most common genetic cause of ALS and frontotemporal dementia (FTD), a repeat expansion in the gene C9ORF72 that Baughn worked on for three years before publishing his results and applying to PhD training programs..

For his graduate training Baughn then joined the laboratory of the world-renowned and highly distinguished Professor Dr. Don W. Cleveland, where he worked with Dr. Ze'ev Melamed and Dr. Jone Lopez-Erauskin on groundbreaking work, which highlighted the significance of a specific gene called stathmin-2 in ALS. Together, with studies published in the journals Nature Neuroscience and Science they demonstrated how stathmin-2, a protein required for neurons to regenerate after damage and maintain their connection to muscles, is lost in ~97% of ALS, then determined the underlying mechanisms, and demonstrated therapeutic approaches for corrective human clinical..

Throughout his journey, Baughn's love for science and the joy of research have been the driving forces behind his accomplishments. He recalls his early days as a student, taking advantage of opportunities to explore every scientific course offered at MVHS. Baughn's academic counselor helped foster his scientific curiosity, allowing him to waive physical education credits in exchange for immersing himself in science courses (accepting his >1,000 hours of volunteer search and rescue time with the local Sheriff's department as a substitute). This diverse exposure laid the foundation for his eventual specialization and career in molecular biology.

Baughn acknowledges the immense challenges that come with scientific research. Working on groundbreaking projects, publishing papers, and collaborating with pharmaceutical companies require unwavering dedication and perseverance. However, for Baughn, the rewards far outweigh the difficulties. The ability to contribute as part of a scientific team to a greater understanding of ALS and the potential to develop therapies that could alleviate the suffering of patients is the best part of his job.

Michael Baughn's remarkable journey from a high school graduate to a respected scientist in ALS research showcases the power of passion, perseverance, and scientific inquiry. Through his education and work at renowned institutions, and with renowned mentors, Baughn has made significant contributions to our understanding of ALS, bringing us closer to effective treatments for this devastating disease.

Taking advantage of the chance to visit his family and friends in the Skagit Valley, Baughn makes a point to stop by his old high school to catch up with the teachers who supported him throughout his academic journey. Among his favorite memories are the classes taught by Lisa and Craig Harpel, Paul Hope, John Sullivan, and Brian Hanrahan.



Mount
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STUDENT FOCUSED BALANCED CALENDAR

This year we continued our work on exploring the concepts of a Balance Calendar. Our goal was to continue learning about this idea, gain insight, and hear from our community.

As we move forward with our exploration of the Student Focused Balance Calendar, we are excited to build on the progress we've made so far. Our team's collaboration has been vital throughout the process, and we look forward to continuing to work together to learn and share insights.

Our focus for next school year (2023-2024) will be on deepening our understanding of a Balanced Calendar and to determine what type of calendar might better serve our school community. To achieve this, we will hold additional Community Forum events beginning in the fall, engage with students to hear their voices, and once again, connect with our staff.

Stay tuned for fall 2023 Community Forum dates as we'd love to hear from you!



SFBC

2022-2023 updates



Team collaboration



Website featuring
SFBC content and
resources



Continue learning
through book
studies



Organized several
Community
Forums



Gathered
valuable insight