

COMMUNITY + Link



WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

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Superintendent's message

The 2023 year is off to a great start, and I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the Mount Vernon community. As we reflect on 2022, we can see that this was another year of growth and learning for our district.

We continue to explore and learn about the Student Focused Balance Calendar (SFBC) and how this might benefit our students, families, and staff. Our SFBC Planning team and SFBC Stakeholder Steering Committee have been learning about the potential benefits of a Student Focused Balanced Calendar. As this school year progresses, we plan to have further conversations with students, staff and families. Our goal is to begin hosting community forums with our stakeholders so we can continue to explore and learn together. **The earliest we would make any potential changes to our school calendar would be in the 2024-2025 school year.** We hope you'll come alongside us to gain a better understanding of this concept and how it might benefit our school community. Please be on the lookout for publications and other communications regarding upcoming forum dates and times.

As a district, our mission is to expect, encourage, and facilitate the pursuit of excellence and life-long learning for future success and happiness. We will continue to do just that, in order to see our students become the most successful individuals they can be.

Please stay healthy and safe.
Warm regards,

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



Featured Articles

- Superintendent's Message
- Message from the board
- Construction Update
- Parent Academy

Featured Alumni Oscar Jimenez

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.mountvernonsschools.org



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Larry Otos,
President



Wendy Ragusa,
Vice-President



Dr. Laura Flores-Cailloux,
Legislative Representative



Marissa Guerrero,
Board Member



Griffin Uchida,
Board Member

Board of Distinction

The Mount Vernon School Board has been selected as a 2022 WSSDA Board of Distinction! WSSDA said of the board “Congratulations on your district's accomplishments this year in closing opportunity gaps and your board's success in applying the Washington School Board Standards to accomplishing their goals while working together as an effective and cohesive team.” School Board president, Larry Otos, said this about the board, “The work and policy development along with timely review from our board make this award possible. Thanks so much for the board's work and dedication to the district.” We know the board has worked diligently to earn this prestigious award. Congratulations and thank you to each of our board members, Larry Otos, Wendy Ragusa, Dr. Laura Flores-Cailloux, Marissa Guerrero, and Griffin Uchida, for their outstanding contributions to our district.

Message from the School Board

STUDENT-FOCUSED BALANCE CALENDAR

Why are we exploring a Student Focused Balanced Calendar?

Significant learning loss can occur for many students over a lengthy summer break. There is research that suggests that with a more balanced calendar, students tend to have increased academic success. We are also interested in exploring if a modified calendar can lead to providing students, families and staff with an improved school and life balance.

PROCESS

The board has been interested in exploring this initiative for the past few years. Our commitment to this exploration initiative includes receiving feedback from many stakeholder groups – students, staff, families, coaches, and community partners. A major calendar decision can affect all of these constituencies. **There are no plans to make any major changes to the school calendar for the 2023-2024 school year.**

The district began surveying staff in Fall 2022 and early winter 2023. Results from the initial survey have provided the Stakeholder Steering committee with valuable discussion points including further exploration around the potential impacts on student learning, job opportunities, childcare, athletics, and vacations. Early survey data indicates that there is strong interest to continue exploring this SFBC concept. We are committed to a data informed, transparent process that involves all stakeholders.

COMMITMENT

We are committed to explore our calendar through an open process to determine if potential modifications may lead to improved student learning. We are also committed to understanding the implications that any calendar modifications may have on our students, families, staff and the community.

Principles that are guiding our work are:

- Decisions are supported by research and data,
- Potential outcomes are tailored to best meet the needs of our community, and would benefit the majority of our students and stakeholders
- Any outcomes would be financially sustainable, and
- Possible changes to the calendar would be implemented in a timely manner with clear communication and designed with minimal disruption for our stakeholders

TIMELINE

Committees are working diligently to connect with stakeholders, draft potential calendar ideas, plan community forums, and ensure that all areas of concern are explored and addressed.

The Student Focused Balanced Calendar Committee aims to make any agreed-upon recommendations for future calendars by January, 2024. As we learn more from other districts, this might lead to a recommendation to not change a thing with our existing calendar. Recommendations for slight modifications of a few days are also a possibility. Options could also be as little as a 1 week change to our summer break to larger scale changes. We are committed to keeping an open mind and listening to our stakeholders as we explore this idea. There are many possible variations and options.

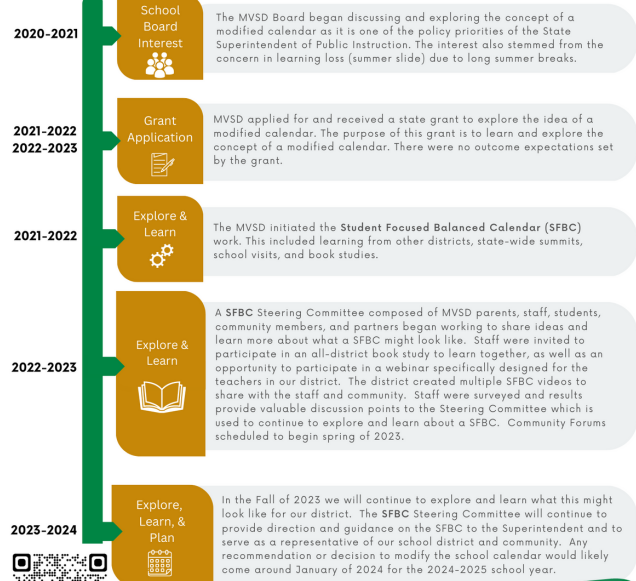
If you would like more information or to engage in the process, please visit www.mountvernonschools.org or call the district office at (360) 428-6110. There are many opportunities to support the exploration of a Student Focused Balanced Calendar. Please watch for updates on the the district website and our social media pages.

- Larry Otos, Board President
- Wendy Ragusa, Board Vice President
- Dr. Laura Flores Cailloux, Board Legislative Representative
- Marissa Guerrero, Board Member
- Griffin Uchida, Board Member

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.



STUDENT FOCUSED BALANCED CALENDAR



EXPLORE WITH US Mount Vernon School District

www.mountvernonschools.org/student-focused-balanced-calendar



David Pacheco

THANK YOU!

Thank you Student Board for your continued dedication to our school district, and your peers.



Mel Fuimaono

Student board representatives serve as liaisons for the board and the MVHS student population.



Santiago Calderon III



Construction Update

The Mount Vernon School District facilities bond, passed by voters in 2016, included additional space at LaVenture Middle School. This construction work is scheduled to begin in April 2023 and be completed by November 2023. The new space will be added to the Southwest wing of the current LaVenture building. The 2016 bond included building Rowley Elementary, the demolition and rebuild of Madison Elementary, multiple facility improvements on the campus of Mount Vernon High School and this LaVenture addition. Our goal is to keep our neighbors informed of construction work and maintain a dialogue to address any questions or concerns. We will be vigilant about minimizing impact on the neighborhood. We appreciate your support of our schools and strive to be good neighbors.

If you have questions or concerns please contact Bill Nutting at bnutting@mvsd320.org or 360-428-6110.



MUSIC EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

MVHS Teacher, Ramon Rivera was recently selected as this year's Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA/WMEA) Music Educator of the Year for Washington State. This distinguished award highlights music educators who have great impacts on student endeavors that extend past classroom work.

Ramon was also nominated for the regional and national level awards, administered by the National Federation of High Schools NFHS Network for National Music Teacher of the year!



Ramon was recently interviewed by King 5 for a story on the Music Educator of the Year award. It was great to watch Ramon working with students, and showcasing their talents. Ramon has helped create amazing programs that are offered in our schools. You can watch the video [HERE](#).

Parent Academy

The district has been hosting the Parent Academy program for the past 8 years, and we've seen them evolve over time. In years past, buildings each hosted their own individual parent academy sessions, ending with a culminating celebration event for all. This year, the team decided on a one-day event with breakout sessions that were tailored to our families. And what a great decision, because we had over 200 parents in attendance.

Breakout sessions included topics such as: accessing skyward, student attendance, academics and mental health, and parent engagement . We also invited outside agencies to provide breakout sessions, and had organizations such as the Mexican Consulate who's staff provided resources, and answers to common questions, to Public Skagit Health who offered free vaccines to students and parents in need.

The district has had great success in the Parent Academy sessions, largely due to the peer-to-peer aspect of its design. "Parents are hearing topics from other parents. We heard such great feedback about this." said Gear Up Coordinator, Manny Espinoza. "We have a diverse group of families, at all different levels, helping each other."

Families were able to attend breakout sessions in their language of comfort, as we provided sessions in Spanish, Russian, and Mixtec. Young children who attended had a full day of childcare readily available, a time for them to play games, do fun activities, and then reunited with their parents for the resource fair.

The resource fair hosted over 30 local resource vendors, from Children of the Valley (COV), MV Public Library, to the Mount Vernon Police Department, families and students, who had an opportunity to see the valuable resources available in our community. "Our Parent Academy program is successful because of our staff and parent volunteers. They do such a great job of creating a program that reaches our community." said Equity and Inclusion Director David Rodriguez.



Parents discuss attendance during breakout sessions



MVSD Special Services team members connect with families



Families visit the resource fair

If you are interested in being part of our next Parent Academy, please reach out to your building liaisons for more information.

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



Aspire Online

Aspire Academy
360-428-6216

Aspire Online
360-428-6216

Featured Alumni

Our Alumni are working to change the world around us

Oscar Jimenez

Circling Back to his roots

Growing up, Mount Vernon High School's 2008 alumni, Oscar Jimenez, remembers the joy of childhood soccer games played with friends in his neighborhood. Fast forward to today, and you will find Oscar about to enter into his 7th season with the Louisville City FC soccer team.

Oscar's trek to becoming part of the Louisville City FC soccer team was not always smooth sailing. He would eventually have a career in the sport he loved, but it came with hard work and dedication. His journey to becoming pro was a dream that sparked in him when he was a teenager. "As a young child playing soccer for the YMCA, it was about enjoying time with friends and just having fun, it wasn't until I was about 16 when I began to see the potential of what could be." Oscar had a successful high school soccer career, and was even named "Soccer Player of the Year" two years in a row by [Skagit Valley Herald](#).

Oscar ran cross country in high school, and has fond memories of being a student at Mount Vernon High School. He recalls his favorite English teacher, Mr. Clark, and is thankful for the interesting conversations they had in class. Oscar also loved the challenge that math provided, saying "I love math, there is always an answer, I enjoyed the process of working through and figuring it out."

After graduating high school, Oscar attended Western Washington University where he played for the Vikings. He had a very successful college career there from 2008-2011. Oscar graduated in 2012 with a BA in Communication and a BA in Spanish Language and Literature. In working his way to pro, Oscar took a job at Mount Vernon High School as a bilingual instructor and professional educational translator. Oscar spent this time working with high school students who were English language learners. "I enjoyed working there, being able to see students grasp the concepts and content that I was translating was rewarding." Oscar had an opportunity to see how far the district had come since his time as a student. "I was surprised at how many Spanish speaking staff were there. And now, the dual language schools Mount Vernon has for students, those are great opportunities."

After graduating college, Oscar went on to play for the Seattle Sounders, Tulsa Roughnecks, and Mississippi Brilla before scoring a spot with Louisville City. And as he enters his 7th season with Louisville City, he takes time to reflect on his journey. "I read something on twitter about these really successful companies that were started by people later in their life. We live in a world where everyone wants to rush, we feel like if we don't do it "now" then all hope is lost. Be patient. Your path might be a little longer, but be patient, learn to adapt, change the way you look at your situation, and don't give up."

Oscar is soon to become a WWU Athletics Hall of Fame inductee. The honorary ceremony, which is open to the public and free of charge, is set to take place on [February 11, 2023 @ 1pm](#) at Western Washington University.



"Your path might be a little longer, but be patient, learn to adapt, change the way you look at your situation, and don't give up."

Oscar Jimenez