

Things you may observe in an *Investigations* classroom

- ✦ Students are actively involved in all aspects of the lesson
- ✦ Students use manipulative objects as a natural part of instruction
- ✦ Students solve problems as their primary purpose in math class
- ✦ Students work fewer computations, but more problems that require higher-order thinking
- ✦ Students use calculators as a tool, as called for in the class sessions
- ✦ Students engage in activities that help develop spatial and number sense
- ✦ Students participate in individual, small group and whole class learning experiences
- ✦ Students record and reflect their thinking in math journals/logs/ recording papers
- ✦ Students' estimation skills are incorporated in routines and investigations
- ✦ Students learn math facts through repeated work in activities and games
- ✦ Students use Shapes/LogoPaths software for computer work in geometry
- ✦ Students demonstrate and explain their strategies for the teacher to notate and display
- ✦ Students are assessed with formal and informal assessment
- ✦ Students work on extended problems
- ✦ Students study an algorithm to analyze and compare to strategies they know and understand

Investigations offers a deeper understanding of math

The Mount Vernon School District has adopted *TERC Investigations* as a new math curriculum for the 2008-09 school year. *Investigations* was listed as one of the top three recommended curriculum materials in the preliminary evaluation by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Investigations in Number, Data, and Space® is a K-5 mathematics curriculum designed to engage students in making sense of mathematical ideas. It has just been revised by the TERC authors through a National Science Foundation Grant. The second edition curriculum is designed to:

- ✦ Support students to make sense of mathematics and learn that they can be mathematical thinkers
- ✦ Focus on computational fluency with whole numbers as a major goal of the elementary grades
- ✦ Provide work in important areas of mathematics—rational numbers, geometry, measurement, data and early algebra—and connections among them
- ✦ Emphasize reasoning about mathematical ideas
- ✦ Engage a wide range of learners in understanding mathematics

Underlying these goals is a guiding principle for the *Investigations* authors as they approached students as agents of their own learning: students have mathematical ideas.



Little Mountain students **Andres Segovia** and **Ivan Garduno** find the volume of of 3-D objects.

Students come to school with ideas about numbers, shapes and measurements, patterns, and data. If given the opportunity to learn in an environment that stresses making sense of mathematics, students build on the ideas they already have and learn about new mathematics they have never encountered. The investigations are carefully designed to invite all students into mathematics—girls and boys; members of diverse cultural, ethnic, and language groups; and students with a wide variety of strengths, needs, and interests. Little Mountain's fifth-grade instructor, **Laurie Newall**, believes that the curriculum of hands-on activities and guided instruction is making a difference. "The students are owning their learning as they discover math concepts," she notes. "I am thrilled at the level of competency they have shown since September."



Fifth-graders **Tatum Kenn** and **Brianna Garcia** use manipulative objects to solve math problems.



Fall 2008

inside this issue

Welcome our new staff

The 2008-09 school year is off to a great start with the addition of 50 new staff members who are already adding value to our educational effort.

Featured Alumni

You will find our alumni working in every field imaginable, changing the world around us every day. Check out what two of our alumni are doing today.

Investigations: a new K-5 math curriculum

Investigations is designed to help students have a better understanding of numbers and number relationships.



Students engage in activities that help develop their spatial and number sense.

COMMUNITY + Link

A PUBLICATION OF MOUNT VERNON SCHOOLS

Charting a Road Map for District Improvement

By Dr. Carl Bruner

Welcome to our first publication of *Community Link* for the 2008-09 school year! In this edition, we highlight some of the important aspects of the current year in an effort to keep you informed about your public schools. I think you'll find the information that follows interesting and I encourage you to read the articles provided.

We have some exciting plans this year which we believe will help improve our educational organization for the benefit of all students. While the summary below is not intended to include all that we are working towards, it will give you a glimpse of our major areas of focus.

Road Map Focus Area #1: Teaching, Learning, Curriculum and Assessment

Highlighted Annual Priorities

- Implement the *Investigations in Number, Data, and Space* math program in grades K-5
- Improve instructional programs

for struggling readers in grades 5-10

- Enhance classroom support for English language learners in grades K-6
- Expand options for highly capable learners in grades 7-12
- Investigate ways to improve student attendance

"In challenging economic times, our mission requires focus, creativity, and persistence."

See *Road Map*, Page 2



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www.MountVernonSchools.org

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ROAD MAP: Creating a Plan for Improvement

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Road Map Focus Area #2: Leadership and Governance

Highlighted Annual Priorities

- Implement year-long budget planning process that involves staff and community
- Finalize and implement the first phase of a district policy and procedure designed to strengthen student accountability

Road Map Focus Area #3: Technology and Facilities

Highlighted Annual Priorities

- Finalize and implement Phase I of school technology upgrades, using funds from the voter-approved technology levy
- Work through state Department of General Administration Energy Performance Contracting to upgrade heating, ventilation, and lighting systems
- Complete major maintenance projects at Madison and the Mount Vernon High School gymnasium
- Continue to evaluate the timing for a capital bond measure to address elementary and other facility needs
- Explore the feasibility of partnering with the Skagit Family YMCA and Skagit Valley Hospital to build a shared health and fitness facility on the Mount Vernon High School campus without relying on increased tax dollars

Road Map Focus Area #4: Parents and Community

Highlighted Annual Priorities

- Hold quarterly breakfast/lunch meetings with small groups of Key Communicators
- Work with the Mount Vernon Chamber to expand the Business-Education Partnership initiative
- Improve the scope and quality of district communications through the community-wide Mount Vernon Campaign
- Enhance outreach to the Latino parent community through a newly-hired parent and community liaison

In challenging economic times, our mission requires focus, creativity, and persistence. We are fortunate to be governed by a School Board of five elected community members whose commitment and passion for guaranteeing Mount Vernon students receive a quality education is second to none. Their courage and support allows our talented and dedicated teachers, administrators, and support staff to do the best possible job of ensuring progress, one student at a time.



Dr. Carl Bruner has served as MVSD superintendent since July 2004. For questions or comments, please contact the superintendent's office at (360) 428-6181.

Community Link is a quarterly publication. To receive the latest news and information on what's happening in Mount Vernon Schools, please visit our Web site at www.MountVernonSchools.org.

District welcomes 50 new teachers

Fifty new certificated staff members joined our district in September and are already adding value to our educational efforts in Mount Vernon. These new staff members are working as classroom teachers, counselor, English language learner teachers, reading coach and special education teachers.

This group of new staff members has come to Mount Vernon from a variety of places including Texas, California and Idaho, as well as from Clallam Bay, Othello, Spokane and Ellensburg. Twenty of our new hires come to us from Western Washington University, and members of the group also attended in-state colleges and universities such as the University of Washington, Washington State University, Seattle Pacific University, Eastern Washington University and Central Washington University. Additionally, we have graduates from Marquette, the University of Texas, Oklahoma State and more. Fifteen of our new teachers have already earned their Master's Degrees.

There are two local twists with this group. Eight of our new teachers attended school in the Mount Vernon School District and have now returned as teachers. These teachers are Ali Skjei, Krissa Collins, Richard Spink, Kandace Martinez, Dana Finch, Sara Duncan, Brenda Warren and Alyssa Willey. The second local twist consists of four former Mount Vernon School district paraeducators who completed their teacher certification program through City University while working for the district and have now been hired as classroom teachers. These teachers are Wilma Millenaar, Dana Finch, Susan Kruckenberg and Kandace Martinez.

The 2008-09 school year is off to a great start and with the addition of these fantastic new staff members we expect to have another great year of learning in the Mount Vernon School District.

FEATURED ALUMNI

Catching up with MVHS graduates



PATSY MARTIN

Growing up attending Mount Vernon schools, Patsy Martin was always taught that she could be whatever she wanted to be. Along with encouragement to shoot high, she was given the support to go on to higher education and continue her career path.

Now, as executive director of the Port of Skagit County, Martin advises students to continue their education as far as they can. "Your education will be an asset that will carry you through the rest of your life. It will also make you a much more rounded individual to be a positive contributor to society overall."

The 1979 MVHS graduate earned her bachelor's degree in earth and physical science from Western Washington University in 1984 and went on to work for Evanite Fiber in Corvallis, Oregon as a chemist in its research and development lab. Her love of Skagit Valley and the water lured Martin and her husband back to the area in 1987 when she began working for the Port of Anacortes as its property manager.

Martin continued her education by receiving her master's degree in political science and environmental studies in 1993 from Western Washington University.

Martin's career with the Port of Skagit County began in 1995 when she came to work as its environmental manager and planner, moving on to property/development manager in 2004.

These days, Martin, who became the Port's executive director in 2007, says that it is both satisfying and challenging to serve the public. "I am honored to be able to live and work in such an amazing place, to help provide jobs, and to protect the tremendous quality of life that we enjoy in Skagit County today."

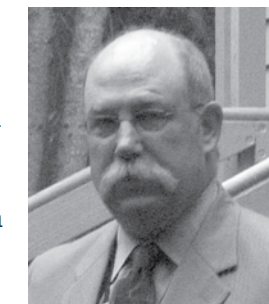
A 1977 graduate of Mount Vernon High School, Whatcom County Superior Court Commissioner Tom Verge says there are all kinds of opportunities to choose a path in life if you just look for them. "I chose law as a career because it has always been a passion for me and MVHS allowed me to realize that passion."

Verge went on to attend the University of Washington for two years and graduated from Western Washington University in 1985 with a degree (*cum laude*) in business administration. In 1988, he received his law degree (*cum laude*) from the University of Puget Sound School of Law.

After graduation, Verge became a partner in the law firm of Weyrich and Verge for ten years. He also worked for the Skagit County Public Defenders Office and worked as the prosecutor for the City of Mount Vernon. In 1998, he was elected as Skagit County's Prosecutor and served one term.

In his current position as Whatcom County Superior Court Commissioner, where he hears all Juvenile Court cases, Verge finds gratification in what he does on a daily basis. "My job is very satisfying because it often has instant results; the whole point is to teach and develop the concept that you are responsible for your choices, for your actions and inactions as well."

Verge challenges students to find a passion. "Find a trade, find out what you are good at and what you like to do and then develop a path that will get you there."



TOM VERGE

MVHS Principal named 2008 Golden Apple Award winner

KCTS 9, PEMCO Insurance and the School Employees Credit Union of Washington announced the winners of the 17th annual Golden Apple Awards on

October 24. Eight individuals and two programs making a positive difference in Washington state education in grades K-12 were named. Among the winners was Mount Vernon High School Principal **Dave Anderson**, who will be honored in ceremonies to be held in January 2009 in Seattle.

The 2008 winners were selected from over 200 nominees by a panel including educators from around the state. Principal Anderson will receive a "Golden Apple" statuette and a \$250 prize. PEMCO Insurance will also award Anderson a \$1,500 grant to support Mount Vernon High School.

During his eight years as principal at MVHS, Dave has faced many challenges unique to his school, yet has served to transform the culture for students and staff to promote success.

Among the significant changes has been school governance, which has allowed MVHS to grow and dramatically improve its ability to meet the needs of all students. The new model includes students from every grade level, as well as parents, involving them in a transparent decision-making process. The primary focus is on student achievement, with the results going beyond test scores—budgets are balanced and the school has become a model for others.

Dave is described by his colleagues as "one in a million." He is student-centered, resilient, personable and has genuine pride in the school that he has helped to improve so much.



Dave Anderson