

# COMMUNITY



# +Link

A Publication of Mount Vernon Schools

IN THIS ISSUE SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER Congratulations, Class of 2022!

## 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

- Superintendent Message
- School Board Message
- Retirees 2022
- NWESD Classified Employee of the Year
- Summer school opportunities

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



[mountvernonschools](https://www.instagram.com/mountvernonschools)



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### Summer Letter from the Superintendent

We happily said goodbye to the 2021-22 school year! There were many challenges thrown our way, yet we persevered because collectively, we faced these challenges head on. My deep appreciation to ALL our staff for their contributions to the betterment of our students, families, and school community during these past two years. I would like to personally thank each and every one of our staff for their encouragement and partnership during my second year as superintendent. Our staff worked hard to walk beside our students and see them through from transitional kindergarten through graduation.

This year, we celebrated graduation with 418 students from Mount Vernon High School, 17 from Skagit Academy, 25 from Aspire Academy and another 6 from NCTA. All of our students worked tirelessly to finish strong, and we are extremely proud of their accomplishments. CONGRATULATIONS seniors!

As mentioned in our Spring Community Link Newsletter, we are in the Discussion and Exploration Phase of learning about a SFBC. Our goal is to improve equitable outcomes for all students, reduce summer learning loss, and provide a school and life balance during the year for all. I am excited about this opportunity to learn together to see if a SFBC is something that could work for our Mount Vernon school community. Please keep an eye out for upcoming communications about this important topic and opportunities for your involvement and input. Please See QR Code to learn more about a Student Focused Balanced Calendar.



Another area of interest this coming school year is to assess our facility needs. I plan to work with stakeholders to review the conditions and needs of our buildings and grounds. Specifically, there has been growing interest in determining how to improve our athletic facilities. We have already begun discussions with potential partners on how we can improve and/or expand play fields for our youth and community. There will be opportunities for our community stakeholders to participate, engage, and provide input as we proceed. Please be on the lookout for more information about this important topic this coming school year!

Respectfully,

Ismael Vivanco, Superintendent

Ismael Vivanco Superintendent  
Mount Vernon School District



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# MESSAGE FROM THE MOUNT VERNON SCHOOL BOARD

Dear Mount Vernon Community,

During the last half of the school year, the budget season for the Mount Vernon School District has been demanding. Since early May, district administrators have been working with school staff to 1) understand the new funding constraints and 2) decide upon reasonable and necessary reductions to achieve a balanced budget while maintaining educational priorities and a robust support system to address behavioral challenges as a result of the impact of COVID the last couple of years.

What about the decline in Enrollment (or) Adjustments to Student Enrollment?

The Board of Directors are committed to listen to and support the district's administrative recommendations. Entering the 2022-23 budget planning process, the district was faced with the reduction of an important budget component - declining basic ed student enrollment from 6,170 at the start of the pandemic to an anticipated 5,889 in 2022-23. We speculate the restrictions required of public schools during COVID impacted a family's decision of where to provide their children with uninterrupted learning - homeschool, private school or moving out of state. The state as a whole has had a very significant number of students leave the public school system.

How has this impacted the 2022-23 budgeting process? Washington State's allocation and funding formula will only fund actual students enrolled in our schools. In addition to our projected decrease in student enrollment, bargained wage increases are significantly above those funded by the state and therefore, causing our costs to increase faster than our revenues. This is forcing the District to identify an estimated \$7m in program reductions over the next 2 school years. As a result, difficult conversations about needs and wants have consumed the final days of the school year.

Impact of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding:

School accounting and budget management is complex to say the least. Funding sources and restrictions abound. How best to use ESSER Funds is a daily review of our district priorities. The Mount Vernon School District has decided to use these funds to help "fill the gap" for this next school year. We will use \$3.3 million of the ESSER dollars to preserve programs in the 2022-23 school year. When the funds are no longer available, and unless the current state of public school funding changes and budget cuts are minimized, we will be tested each year as to how we make up these significant shortfalls.

ESSER has afforded us the opportunity to leverage resources by teaming with community partners like YMCA and Children of the Valley. Also, we've been able to provide additional behavioral interventions/supports, after school programs, and innovative summer learning through our Imagine the Possibilities activities.

We have had other amazing summer school activities through Gear Up, Migrant summer school and enrichment activities from our four visiting teachers from Mexico! Thank you staff members who worked during the summer to provide these engaging activities! We know students and families were very appreciative of staff being available to help support their continued learning and success.

Our deep appreciation for entrusting your students to us. We wish you the best this summer and look forward to welcoming students back on September 7th.

Board of Directors  
Larry Otos, President  
Rob Coffey, Vice President  
Wendy Ragusa  
Laura Cailloux  
Jessica Samora



(L to R) Laura Cailloux , Jessica Samora, Rob Coffey , Wendy Ragusa, Larry Otos

# MOUNT VERNON SCHOOL DISTRICT SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES

## Imagine the Possibilities Summer Program

This summer the district was able to provide a new and exciting program called Imagine the Possibilities. This program was much different than anything we've offered in the past, and is proving to be a great success.

The courses offered to students began with teachers submitting topics of interest that they would like to teach. We had an incredible response from our teachers.

The June program was an eight day program and offered students the opportunity to explore new interests and learn new skills. During the process they also made new friends and had a lot of fun. Courses included Art, Pickleball/Tennis, Science, Video Game Development, Fitness, Basketball, Cooking, Creative Writing, Gardening, and more.

A special thank you must go out to all the teachers and paraprofessionals who developed programs for students and captured the interest of over 200 participants. The eight days went fast and concluded with many of the classes showcasing their creations.

One highlight was the art show that gave parents the opportunity to come and see what their children created. The overall goal of this program was to engage students in learning activities that are fun. The teachers certainly accomplished this goal and more. Thank you to all who participated!

With the last session beginning early August, we hope to continue with the great success this program has had.



Students learn how to play pickleball during the June Imagine the Possibilities summer program at Jefferson Elementary

## Summer Cultural Opportunities

As the district prepared for the Migrant Program Summer School session, Superintendent Vivanco and Equity and Inclusion Director, David Rodriguez, worked on providing a truly unique experience for our students.

In collaboration with the Mexican Consulate, the district was able to have 4 international teachers join the Migrant Program Summer School team. These teachers worked with district teachers, to offer curriculum in culture and art, throughout the summer school day.

Our international teachers came from two different regions of Mexico and represented the states of Michoacán and San Luis Potosi. Giving our students an opportunity to connect with someone who has first hand knowledge of Mexican culture and art.

“Student attendance has been great, the students are excited to attend summer school” said Rodriguez. As numbers sometime decrease throughout the extent of the program, this year, they’ve seen an increase, and Rodriguez knows that the international teacher’s participation, plays a big role in that reasoning.

With daily activities ranging from the life-cycle of monarch butterflies, folklorico dancing, and cultural celebrations, students are experiencing the many things that make Mexico beautiful. Rodriguez knows the value in having teachers representative of our student population “Providing these lessons to our students was important, it is part of their culture and history” said Rodriguez.

The district hopes to be able to apply for the international teacher program next year, giving students another opportunity to experience the rich culture of Mexico. “This was such a success, giving students an opportunity to attend summer school, to continue learning, and to provide an enrichment program, that is unlike what any other local school district is doing.”



(L to R) David Rodriguez, Vianey Peregrino Sanchez, Isaias Rosas Rivera, Jose Adrian Sandate Monsivais, Cesar Gonzalez Rubio, Dr. Ismael Vivanco

# Dr. Kate O'Brien joins the MVSD administration team

Dr. Kate O'Brien is one of the newest addition to the Mount Vernon School District team, having started as the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning this July.

Kate came from a career in education, mostly based out of King County. Before receiving her doctoral and superintendent's certificate, she was a building administrator for thirteen years in the Federal Way, Renton, and Clover Park Districts.

Kate was drawn to the Mount Vernon School District because of its connection to students and the community. "I was struck by the student participation, the community involvement, the music, and the trajectory of the district and schools. All of these aspects drew me in." Much of Kate's education has been on social justice, equity, and transparency. "These all aligned well with what Mount Vernon School District stands for."



As a leader, Kate believes in human-centered practices, aiming for a relationship with staff, families, and the community. "Schools cannot have healthy and sustainable cultures without healthy and sustained support networks, and I believe that fulfilling relationships and system support are critical to the well being of a district."

Kate is excited to work with the Mount Vernon School District, and her days have been spent getting to know the staff and the community. We are excited to welcome Kate to the district. You may reach her via email at [kobrien@mvsd320.org](mailto:kobrien@mvsd320.org).

Congratulations to this year's retirees. Together they represent hundreds of years of dedicated service to students and families. We are grateful for the impact each one has had on our schools.

## Little Mountain Elementary

- Terry Boushey, Paraeducator
- Kimberly Custer, Paraeducator

## Washington Elementary

- Douglas Nelson, Teacher
- Denise Behrens, Teacher
- April DeWitt, Food Service Worker

## Jefferson Elementary School

- Krista Bieren, Teacher
- Marla Egbers, Teacher
- Deena Franklin, Teacher
- Rebecca Wietzke, Teacher

## Mount Baker Middle School

- Kenneth Obeso, Teacher
- Jeffrey Whidden, Teacher
- Lucila Ansuresz, Paraeducator

## Mount Vernon High School

- David Billings, Teacher
- Friederike Knue, Teacher
- Richard Spink, Teacher
- John Sullivan, Teacher
- David Willer, Teacher

## LaVenture Middle School

- Deanna Huddle, Teacher
- Connie Uhl, Teacher
- Reynalda DeEspinoza, Food Service

## Harriet Rowley Elementary

- Kim McGovern, Teacher
- Linda Versage, Paraeducator

## Centennial Elementary

- Roger Valentine, School Counselor
- Marta Nell, Paraeducator

## Student Support Services

- Walter Brodie, School Nurse
- Carol Annema, Paraeducator

- Georgia Willey, Teacher
- Belinda Torseth, Paraeducator
- April Knutson, Paraeducator

## Food Service

- Ruben Medrano, FS Driver and Worker

## NCTA

- Melissa Willard
- Paul Zickler, Teacher
- Leslie Cox, Paraeducator
- Margaret Fisher, Food Service
- Carmen Voth, Paraeducator
- Lynn Lennox, Paraeducator
- Kathy Anderson, Secretary

- Paul Parker, Security
- Peter Brown, Paraeducator
- Gayle LeDent-Iankovski, Paraeducator

## Transportation

- Shawn Nelles, Bus Driver

## KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION



### Requirements

- Proof of age documents include
- a birth certificate
  - a religious, hospital, or physician's certificate showing date of birth
  - a passport
  - an adoption record
  - previously verified school records
  - an affidavit from a parent; an entry in a family bible
  - any other documents permitted

### Apply Online

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

### Pick up an application

District office:  
124 E. Lawrence St.  
Mt. Vernon WA 98273

APPLY TODAY!



# Annual Green & White Open

Mount Vernon Public Schools Foundation

Friday August 19, 2022  
Avalon Golf Links

Visit [supportmvschools.org](http://supportmvschools.org) or email [MVPSFoundation@gmail.com](mailto:MVPSFoundation@gmail.com)





# FEATURED ALUMNI

Our alumni are working to change the world around us.

## Tim Friedlander-The evolution of a dream that came true



Tim (left) poses with the Duffer Brothers (creators of Stranger Things)

A successful artist in LA, MVHS alumni, Tim Friedlander, is doing what he loves...Art.

Tim began his journey of creating art as a young child. Growing up, he was surrounded by art. His father is a musician, artist, and taught drama at Skagit Valley College, creating came naturally to Tim.

Tim recalls joining the school band as soon as he was old enough to join. His passion for music continued growing. During his school career, he joined band, concert band, choir, jazz band, and selected drum major, excelling in each one.

His love for the arts branched out into radio talk show, creating and running a show at SVC for a short time. Tim graduated from MVHS in 1992 and went on to Western Washington University. After graduating from Western, Tim moved to LA where he performed and taught music. During this time, he also created an at-home recording studio. His creativity

grew into voice-over acting, and in 2016 he began doing voice-over full time.

Fast forward to today, and Tim is a successful entrepreneur, owning multiple recording studios in LA. He continues to do voice-over acting, all while running his studios full-time. Tim's voice-over work includes TV promotions, commercials, animated video gaming, and multiple TV series. Tim has been the voice of Toymakerz, the hit TV show on History Channel, for the last 4 years. As of July 2022, he is the new voice of the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) organization.

Tim's work in voice-over acting led him to create the National Association of Voice Actors (NAVA), an association that he co-founded to advocate and promote the advancement of the voice acting industry. As part of the association, participants will have access to health insurance, financial assistance, education, and inclusion. A much needed connection and benefit for voice-over actors.

Tim is a successful artist, actor, musician, voice-over actor, and entrepreneur. His love for music began young, and as a student in Mount Vernon, he recalls the many opportunities he had to pursue his dreams. "Music kept me engaged, I loved being part of our community events, and playing at football games." He knew that having access to the extracurricular activities was necessary for him. Tim has fond memories of his time in Mount Vernon, "It was a very supportive community, the teachers and students were great."

Tim has worked hard, earning his masters in Music Education from Boston University, teaching music, building his business, and now he gets to play hard. He is part of a music group called Urban Renewal Project, a sixteen-piece collective known for combining jazz, hip hop and vintage soul. His dream of creating art is in full action.

If you'd like to read more about Tim Friedlander, you can find information at [www.timfriedlandervo.com](http://www.timfriedlandervo.com).



"Music kept me engaged, I loved being part of our community events..."

– Tim Friedlander

# NWESD CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



Veronica Gonzalez, Multilingual Family Liaison at Mount Vernon High School was selected as the Northwest Educational Service District 189 (NWESD) Employee of the Year. Veronica has been part of the Mount Vernon School District for the past 27 years.

Her determination to help Latino families and students achieve their goals and succeed is something that she strives to do on a daily basis.

She is a dedicated employee, managing a large caseload of migrant 9th-12th grade students at the high school. She finds ways to connect the support services the district offers, to the individual needs of our families and students.

Dr. Ismael Vivanco, Superintendent, said, "We are so very proud to have Veronica Gonzalez represent our district as the Regional Classified Employee of the Year. This is a testament to her commitment and tireless contributions to improving the quality of life of our marginalized students and families in our community. She is always willing to do whatever it takes to help out those most in need. She truly has a servant's heart."

"Veronica does not allow students to give less than 100% to their coursework, credits, attendance, and efforts toward graduation. She has a never-ending involvement in our community," says Heath Tayon, Assistant Principal, Mount Vernon High School.

This award program recognizes the excellence of work of public school employees including paraeducators, secretaries, custodians, food service workers, and others. Veronica is one of nine regional winners who will go on to compete for the State Classified School Employee of the Year award.

Congratulations, Veronica Gonzalez!



## Dr. Colette Roche joins the High School team

Dr. Colette Roche begins her journey in Mount Vernon as the new High School Principal.

Colette's years of experience and expertise will be an asset to the district, and the high school, as she comes to us with years of experience at the secondary level. As an associate principal in Redmond, Washington, and in Oakland, California, Colette knows the importance of the high school experience and its impact on students, and their future. "One of the important things I want to focus on is allowing our school to reflect the vibrancy of our community. The community and its involvement in our students' lives, plays a large role in their success."

In her time with the district, she has already seen the culture of our schools. As a former teacher and swim coach, she sees the benefits that academics, sports, and extra curricular activities have on students. "Our goal is to graduate students with the abilities to contribute and be successful, and the district is doing this." It was evident to her that the district emphasizes the culture of belonging. "I love the intention behind Los Dogs, we all belong."

As Colette gets to know the community, staff, and students better, she encourages reaching out to her with questions. Please feel free to contact Gaby at 360-428-6100 to set up a time to chat or meet. You can also reach her at [croche@mvsd320.org](mailto:croche@mvsd320.org).



Welcome to the Mount Vernon School District, Dr. Roche!

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.