



OCTOBER 2020

MT. VERNON

Mainstream

SCHOOL LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC



Superintendent's Note

As we began the 2020-2021 school year, so many aspects of our return during a global pandemic caused us to rethink and plan more differently than we ever have before. Beginning in May, the Mt. Vernon teachers began preparing to teach what would undoubtedly be a student

population with the most diverse learning and emotional needs we have ever experienced. Our teachers studied, planned, collaborated, and developed content for in-person and virtual students in order to provide continuity of learning regardless of the child's learning environment. It continues to be a monumental task, but one that the teachers, supported by many other dedicated Mt. Vernon staff members, have assumed ownership in supporting the needs of their students at the highest level possible.

This has not been a change taken in stride. We have prepared well; however, to get up to this pace, on this terrain, has in my opinion been the most significant challenge educators have assumed in their entire careers. But, it is worth it. Our students began school on August 17 and while most hopped out of their car or the bus with smiles hidden behind their masks, or began virtual learning with parental support from home, we have been overjoyed to get back to school and begin working with the children of the Mt. Vernon community. Our society has always known that kids need school, and that understanding has deepened significantly during this crisis. Children need the connections that school provides. As they grow and develop

"THIS HAS BEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE EDUCATORS HAVE ASSUMED IN THEIR ENTIRE CAREERS. BUT, IT IS WORTH IT."

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Mt. Vernon Finances

SEE INSIDE ➤

A Look Inside MV During the Pandemic

MVCSK started the school year off with new protocols and staff working incredibly hard to meet all the needs of their virtual and in-person students. Mt. Vernon students and staff are rising to the occasion and doing their part to keep school doors open and extracurricular activities intact. By and large, students from preschool to grade 12 are wearing their masks and following the social distancing protocols. Although some students may not express it, it's apparent by their actions; kids need school.



One positive result from this spring's 100% virtual learning experience is it became evident that many longed for the sense of normalcy Mt. Vernon teachers provide. Our students need the relationships and daily interaction with their teachers, and that is one reason administration felt strongly about beginning the school year with an in-person option.

Continued on page 2



MT. VERNON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

"Engage, Educate & Empower Today's Students"

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“OUR SOCIETY HAS ALWAYS KNOWN THAT KIDS NEED SCHOOL, AND THAT UNDERSTANDING HAS DEEPEMED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING THIS CRISIS. ... AS THEY [OUR CHILDREN] GROW AND DEVELOP INTO THEIR FUTURE SELVES, THE INTERACTIONS WITH THEIR PEERS AND TEACHERS IN-PERSON OR VIRTUALLY PROVIDE THE NUTRIENTS THAT HELP THEM TO THRIVE AND MEET THEIR POTENTIAL.”

—DR. JACK PARKER



SUPERINTENDENT *Continued from page 1*

into their future selves, the interactions with their peers and teachers in-person or virtually provide the nutrients that help them to thrive and meet their potential.

We will all work together and strive to maintain the various curricular and extracurricular activities that help students grow. When we are through this pandemic, I am confident that we will be better educators and an even stronger community. Thank you for the support you provide to our schools. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful community to serve.

FUTURE GROWTH PLAN UPDATE

In March, the School Board approved a Future Growth Plan that was developed in concert with the Mt. Vernon Community Champions and the Mt. Vernon Community Champion Advisory Committee. At that time, we were directed to begin work planning for the impending growth in student enrollment. While our communicative efforts have been focused on school preparations, we have continued to work and hammer out details that will see a grade configuration change among our schools and the addition of a kindergarten through grade four elementary school. Our work during this time has focused on researching options for a new school building, whether it is best and most financially beneficial to renovate the existing administration building/former elementary building, or to build a new elementary school. This fall, we will share our progress and continue to study our growth during the pandemic and recession. We have always said that our construction plans will be scheduled when we are certain of the ability to fill our facilities with students. We look forward to sharing details of our Future Growth Plan very soon.

Jack

Dr. Jack Parker, Superintendent

DURING THE PANDEMIC *continued*

Although it was a difficult decision to push back the start of school and change the school calendar, it was the right choice as teacher and student relationships have started the year strong. By getting to know students' strengths, weaknesses, and personalities, teachers are now able to best help students if they become temporarily virtual. Staff, students, and parents seem more appreciative of their educational experience than ever before. The Mt. Vernon community has adjusted to the new norm and rose to the challenge of a modified school experience. Marauders are resilient, strong, and care immensely about our community.

Mt. Vernon teachers are working incredibly hard to meet the needs of all of their students. We ask you to please send them a note of gratitude and share the impact they are having on your child(ren). Although a smile and thanks from your child goes a long way, any expressions of appreciation from the parents or community also have incredible value. The MV staff are working long hours with their herculean efforts and need to feel the fruits of their heavy labor, as this year is a year like no other.

MVCSC has implemented many new protocols to provide as healthy of an environment as possible for students and staff. Here are some of those new changes:

- Students are wearing masks until a supervising staff member says they are socially distanced and may remove them.
- Schedules at Mt. Vernon Middle School have been adjusted to minimize transitions with switching to four blocks of instruction.
- Mt. Vernon High School is on a hybrid schedule to minimize the number of students that cross-contact due to their varying schedules.

THE MT. VERNON COMMUNITY HAS ADJUSTED TO THE NEW NORM, AND ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF A MODIFIED SCHOOL EXPERIENCE. MARAUDERS ARE RESILIENT, STRONG, AND CARE IMMENSELY ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY.

- Signs in hallways instruct students to maintain a one-way travel pattern, and know when/where to enter rooms.
- Hand sanitizers are in every room, in every building, as well as in entrances.
- Food service staff distribute pre-packaged food and mealtimes have been extended.
- Students use a no-touch ID card to purchase their food.
- Students eat lunch in either their classrooms or spaced apart in the cafeteria.
- Many classrooms have see-through dividers at desks when it is difficult for students to be socially distant.
- To help with contact tracing and to minimize the number of students in quarantine, assigned seats are in every classroom, bus, and car rider lines.
- Classrooms and high-touch areas are being fogged and disinfected nightly, and buses are fogged after every route.
- Teachers are regularly connecting with virtual students.
- Staff are self-screening and parents are screening their children for COVID-19 symptoms daily.
- Only essential workers/visitors are allowed into our school buildings.
- All students and staff received a Mt. Vernon mask and face shield at the beginning of the school year.
- HVAC filters were switched to ones that catch smaller particles.
- Good hygiene is being displayed, demonstrated, and practiced daily at school.
- Basic supplies are not being shared between students and additional educational supplies were provided to aid in this effort.
- Touchless water bottle filling stations were installed and are accessible to all students/staff.
- More parents are driving their child(ren) to school or carpooling, which leaves fewer students on buses.
- Centralized congregating to socialize, field trips, in-person convocations, and facility rentals were eliminated.
- Event attendance outdoors has been limited to primarily the participant's parents to sit in socially distant, marked seats.

It has taken a village to enact all of these safety and health protocols, and it speaks to the team of dedicated staff at Mt. Vernon to successfully implement and adhere to all of these changes. MVCSC has always said that the number one priority is keeping students and staff healthy and safe, and hope the actions taken have proven that.

We appreciate our partnership with our parents and community to help keep our in-person school and extracurriculars intact for all students. Mt. Vernon families' actions of staying socially distant, having good hygiene habits, speaking to your medical professional about getting a flu shot, wearing masks, and making safe/healthy decisions, are paramount to the success of keeping school and extracurriculars open.



MVCSC Finances

The MVCSC Board of Trustees will review and be asked to adopt the 2021 budget in October. By law, the Operations Fund will be able to collect a maximum of \$5,157,431 in property taxes in 2021, which is a 4.2% increase from 2020. However, as the number of property owners at their constitutionally protected property tax caps increases in our district, so does the loss in potential revenue for MVCSC, as we do not collect the tax cap loss. The tax cap loss in 2021 is estimated to be \$3.1 million.

Property owners' assessed values (AV) will likely increase substantially from 2020, as will the net AV funds due to new housing developments. State law prevents the Operations Fund from growing at the same corresponding rate. MVCSC has conservatively budgeted a 4% increase in operational expenses. Keep in mind that several large expenditures such as utilities, vehicle fuel, and liability insurance are funded through operations.

MVCSC is fortunately continuing to grow in enrollment which means our ADM funds from the state are increasing, however our operations, staff, and other expenses grow in parallel proportion with each new student.

The school corporation has been able to take advantage of additional supports to maintain our budget, such as the 10-year Increment Fund that will expire at the end of 2023 if the legislation which originally allowed for those supports is not renewed.

An additional loss of revenue exceeding one million dollars also takes effect in 2021 due to the new Vernon Township Fire Territory budget. MVCSC wholeheartedly supports the fire initiative, but the loss to operational revenue is substantial.

MVCSC is committed to a sustainable budget, however increased tax cap losses, the upcoming expiration of the Increment Fund, and the new \$1 million+ loss of revenues due to the fire territory tax have posed substantial financial challenges. MVCSC has implemented multiple strategies that will provide temporary solutions to the challenges in operating revenue. While these strategies will allow us the time to develop more permanent solutions, we are developing ideas to ensure that our Operations Fund is sustainable for many years to come.

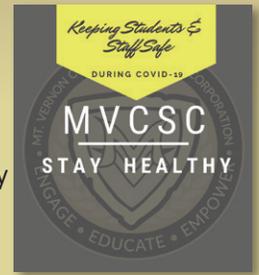
COVID-19 Updates

Check www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/COVID frequently for the most recent updates from the Indiana State Health Department and the Hancock County Health Department (HCHD).

The "MVCSC Health & Safety Plan" on this webpage is being revised frequently as MVCSC receives new guidance from the HCHD.

MVCSC will be providing ALL students free lunches for this semester, thanks to the USDA waiver. These details, as well as how virtual and hybrid students can order their meals, are linked on the "Food Service" section of the www.mvcsc.k12.in.us/COVID webpage.

The new COVID-19 symptoms are listed, and additional financial, health, and technology resources are also provided on this webpage.



Purchasing Land, Selling Land

At the August MVCSC School Board of Trustees Meeting, the board voted to move forward with purchasing 37 acres north of Mt. Vernon Middle School. This will help MVCSC manage our functionality on campus, including traffic on CR 200.

To pay for this land purchase, MVCSC is pursuing steps to sell the land we own at Mt. Comfort Road and CR 100. It has become evident that this location would not be ideal for a future school due to the industrial traffic and growth in the northern part of our district.

It is a priority for MVCSC to be transparent and good stewards of our finances for all our stakeholders, and we believe selling our property to pay for new property is being fiscally responsible. Mt. Vernon will also work with the current sellers/buyers to allow the current farmers to harvest their crops this year.



Save the Date!

MVEF Black & Gold Gala

SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 2021

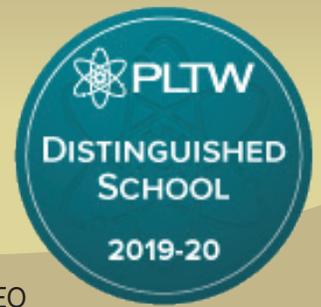
6 PM - MIDNIGHT

JW MARRIOTT INDIANAPOLIS

Support the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation while enjoying entertainment, delicious food, a silent auction, and more at this semi-formal event.

The MVEF has provided over \$400,000 through teacher requested grants that enhance students' education, providing programming, experiences and opportunities.





Project Lead the Way Distinguished Schools

Fortville, McCordsville, and Mt. Comfort Elementary have been recognized as Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished Schools for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities for students through PLTW Launch. They are three of just 404 elementary schools across the U.S. to receive this honor in 2020. PLTW is a nonprofit organization that serves millions of PreK-12 students and teachers in schools across the U.S.

PLTW is a mission-driven organization that is transforming the learning experience for millions of PreK-12 students and thousands of teachers across the U.S. This program empowers students to develop in-demand, transportable knowledge and skills through pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science. PLTW's teacher training and resources support teachers as they engage their students in real-world learning.

The PLTW Distinguished School recognition honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement, and achievement in their PLTW programs. To be eligible for the designation, McCordsville, Mt. Comfort, and Fortville Elementary Schools had to offer at least two PLTW Launch modules at each grade level and have more than 75 percent of the student body participating during the 2018-19 school year.

Studies show that students decide as early as elementary school whether they like, and think they are good at, math and science. Whether designing a car safety belt or building digital animations based on their own short stories, PLTW Launch students engage in critical and creative thinking, build teamwork skills, and develop a passion for and confidence in STEM subjects.

"It is a great honor to recognize Fortville, McCordsville, and Mt. Comfort Elementary Schools for their commitment to providing students with an excellent educational experience," said

Dr. Vince Bertram, President and CEO of PLTW. "They should be very proud of their work to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to be career ready and successful on any career path they choose."

Please congratulate all three Mt. Vernon elementary schools on this achievement. These schools "are empowering students to thrive in an evolving world and achieving exemplary results from their Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Launch programs."

McCordsville Elementary, Mt. Comfort Elementary and Fortville Elementary Schools are a part of a community of PreK-12 schools, colleges and universities, and corporate and philanthropic partners across the country united around a passion for providing students with inspiring, engaging, and empowering learning opportunities.

Congratulations to the students and staff of McCordsville Elementary, Mt. Comfort Elementary, and Fortville Elementary! For more information about PLTW's recognition program, visit pltw.org/our-programs/program-recognition.



Photo taken prior to the pandemic.



**FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL:
Mini-Marauder
Preschool Snapshot**

- Serving ages 3-5
- Special services are available to meet needs of students with disabilities
- Open 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Half day and full day options available
- Morning preschool: 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- Afternoon Preschool: 11:15 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Extended Preschool: 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- School Day Instruction: 7:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Aftercare begins at 2 p.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m.
- Accepts CCDF vouchers as a Legally Licensed Exempt Provider in the state of Indiana
- Works with Paths to Quality to ensure a high quality early learning environment for every child
- All Pre-K students have access to Waterford Early Learning software licenses, a personalized learning software that adapts to provide each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level in the areas of early literacy and math
- Outdoor playground with swings, jungle gym, merry-go-round, and sand table
- iPads are used within the classroom
- Doors are always locked or entrance monitored by receptionist or staff
- Plans for a future nature trail and outdoor learning environment
- Curriculum is aligned with developmentally appropriate best practices for young learners
- Classroom centers include: art, science, library and dramatic play
- Ten learning centers including, but not limited to, science, art, sensory and STEM
- Holiday or special theme activities for family involvement
- Baking Young learners have access to large motor activities in gym
- Interaction with cadet teachers from Mt. Vernon High School
- Cafeteria with breakfast and lunch available through Mt. Vernon food service
- Launching monthly virtual Family Resources Nights and PTO starting this spring semester

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MVCSC Mental Health Initiative – TBRI

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for everyone. While its impact on each of us is different, we have all experienced this collective trauma. Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® is not only helping educators support their students as they return to school, but also recognize how they can support each other as they navigate a new school year.

Trauma disrupts many aspects of a child's development including the brain, body, biology, beliefs, and behavior. Children who have experienced early adversities are at risk for behavioral problems and trauma symptoms.

Last year, a group of educators at Fortville Elementary School piloted the implementation of TBRI® to gain a new perspective on the impact of trauma and early adversities, attachment styles, and proactive strategies for building connections with their students. The pilot was so successful that preschool and elementary staff members across the district participated in a two-day training session in July and began their journey with TBRI®.

The number one predictor of building resiliency is building a trusting relationship with a safe adult who can be responsive to the needs of that child. Creating an environment of felt-safety



FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL McCordsville Elementary School Snapshot



allows a child to not only know he is safe, but allows him to feel he is safe. To do that, educators are meeting the internal physical needs of their students by focusing on hydration, blood sugar, and sensory needs.



Students have access to water bottles and small/regularly scheduled snacks. Teaching and modeling of self-regulation allows each individual the opportunity to practice to manage their own emotions and behaviors as challenging circumstances arise.

One of the main focal points in implementing TBRI® is the use of Proactive Strategies. These strategies are designed to teach skills when students are calm, alert, and their basic needs have been met. The use of Life Value terms, (short phrases that teach social skills), gives common language to all staff across the district.

One of the most powerful ways educators are building empathy and compassion, while teaching other essential skills, is through Nurture Groups. Nurture Groups provide opportunities for students to practice the four components of secure attachment: giving care, receiving care, negotiating one's needs with voice, and having healthy autonomy.

Those same four components are necessary to develop deep, meaningful relationships. When social skills are practiced in the context of play, it disarms fear and increases the likelihood that students will be able to maintain access to their "upstairs brain", which is the part of the brain where reasoning and decisions are made. Mt. Vernon educators are proactively leading their students in this work, building their social competencies so they are better able to access these skills when challenging situations arise.

MVCSC strives to meet the needs of the whole child, including their social-emotional wellbeing. TBRI® is helping students respond to situations and engage with one another in a healthy way, empowering them to interact with others in a manner that produces positive relationships.

- Indiana Department of Education School Grades: 2018-"A";2017-"A"
- Named a Four Star School by the Indiana Department of Education - 2019-2020
- STEM Certified by the Indiana Department of Education
- Exceeded Statewide Assessment Standards - 2018-2019
- Indiana Department of Education Four Star School - 2019-2020
- Strong Community and PTO Partnerships
- Each Student has a Touch Screen Chromebook
- Outdoor Track, Soccer/Football Field, Baseball/Softball Diamond, 2 Full Playgrounds
- 3D Printers
- Classrooms Have Whiteboards, Projectors and Apple TV's
- Resource Officer on Site Daily
- Strong Character Education Taught Throughout the School Year
- 7 Extracurricular Opportunities Available
- Multiple School Programs and Activities
- Media Center - Over 13,000 Books Organized by Reading Level
- English Language Learners (ELL) Assistance Program
- Speech/Language, Special Education, High Ability & Social Worker Programs



STEPHANIE MILLER, PRINCIPAL

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MT. VERNON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

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VIRTUAL Traveling Talks

with
Superintendent
Dr. Jack Parker

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Superintendent Dr. Jack Parker has scheduled Virtual “Traveling Talks” to keep the community connected with the school. These Virtual “Traveling Talks” are an opportunity for community members to communicate directly with Dr. Parker and share their hopes, questions, and/or concerns about Mt. Vernon schools. This casual dialogue connects the community with school leadership.

- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20 - 6:00 PM
- WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 - 12:00 PM

Sign up to attend a Virtual “Traveling Talks” and hear the latest update on the schools and future growth of MVCSC.

Visit our website at www.mvcsc.k12.in.us to sign up; you will receive an email with the Zoom link the day before the meeting.

See Inside!!
School Life During the Pandemic