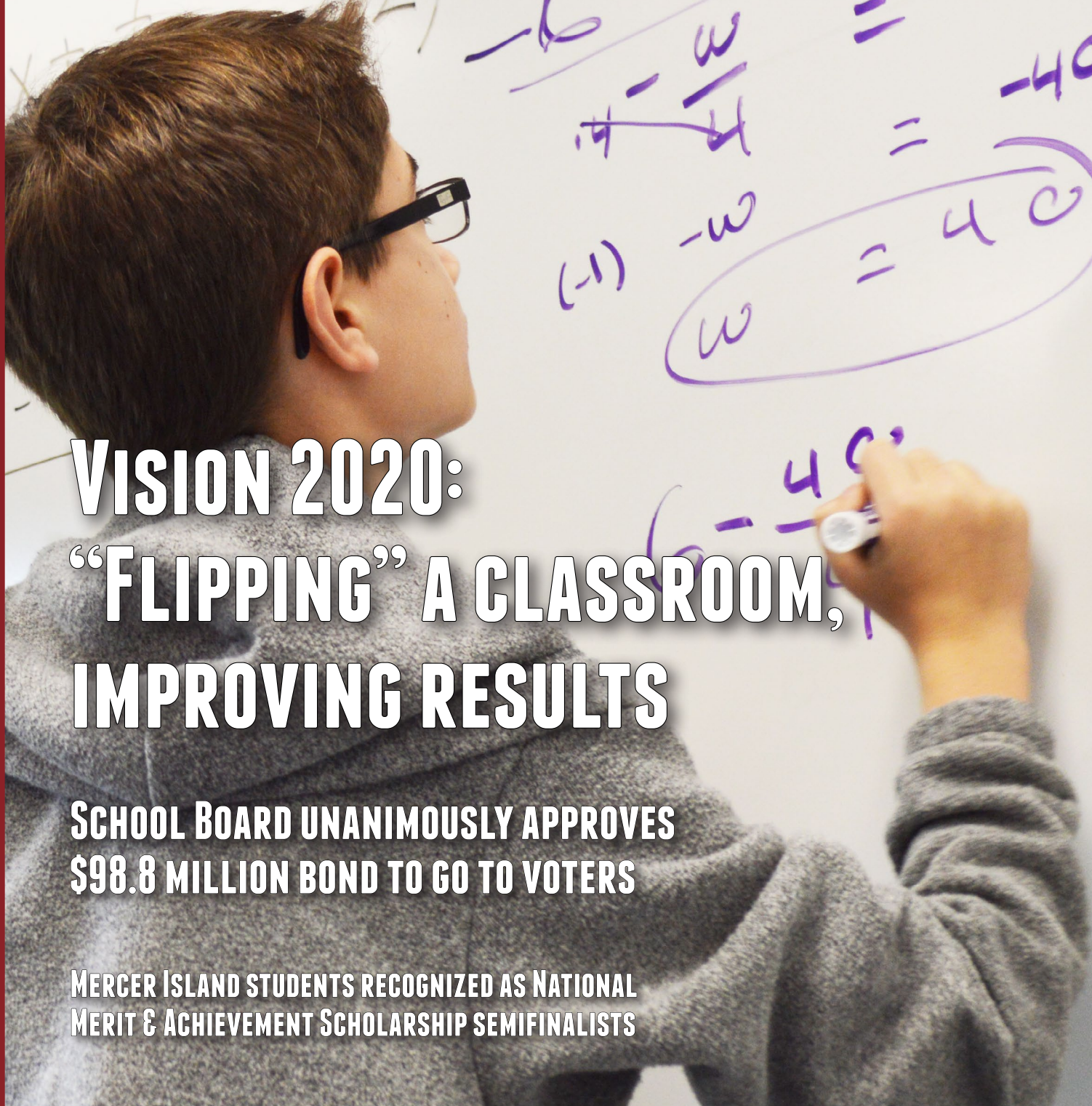




# NEWS

VOLUME 15 ISSUE #1 FALL 2013

MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER



**VISION 2020:  
"FLIPPING" A CLASSROOM,  
IMPROVING RESULTS**

**SCHOOL BOARD UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES  
\$98.8 MILLION BOND TO GO TO VOTERS**

**MERCER ISLAND STUDENTS RECOGNIZED AS NATIONAL  
MERIT & ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP SEMIFINALISTS**

# Addressing the overcrowding problem

## Providing Mercer Island students with the schools they need



In September the Mercer Island School Board unanimously approved a new \$98.8 million bond proposal to be put before Mercer Island voters in February 2014. The total package is worth \$102.6 million, though \$3.8 million will come through matching funds from the state of Washington. The bond would authorize three projects to address overcrowding issues in our schools.

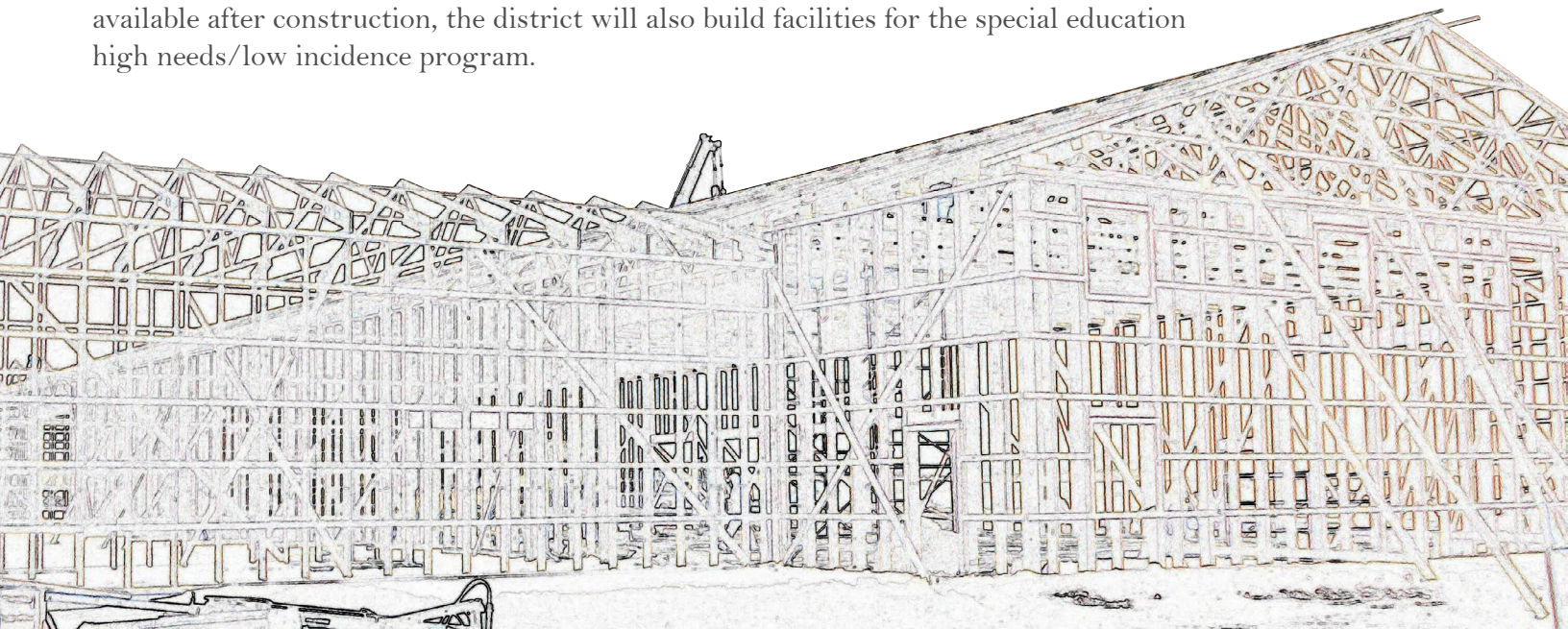
There are currently more than 4,120 full-time equivalent students in the district's three elementary schools, middle school, high school and alternative program. According to figures from Triangle Associates two years ago and adjusting for enrollment increases, the district is now over design capacity by 746 students. The district uses 34 portable classrooms to help accommodate the current number of students.

After months of public discussions, meetings and work by the Mercer Island community, school board and district, a bond proposal was approved by the school board to be sent to Mercer Island voters to fund the following three new facilities projects.

### 1. Build a fourth elementary school on the North Mercer campus

**Cost: \$42.7 million**

The largest enrollment increases come from the elementary schools. This bond would provide funds to demolish the older buildings currently sited at the district-owned North Mercer campus, then construct and equip a new elementary school. If sufficient funds are available after construction, the district will also build facilities for the special education high needs/low incidence program.



## 2. Expand Islander Middle School, including 14 classrooms and lab spaces, commons and cafeteria, gymnasiums, music rooms, and administrative space

**Cost: \$48.8 million**

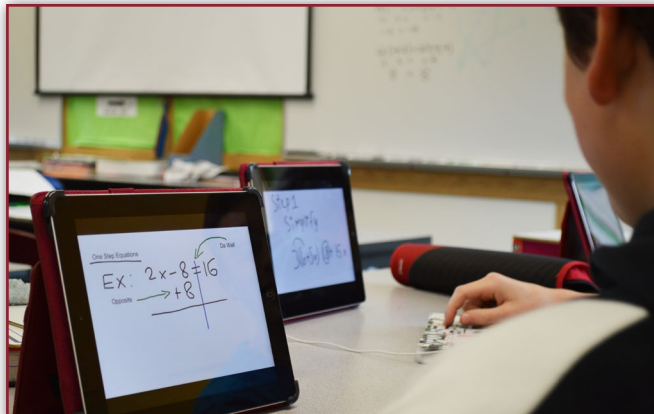
Islander Middle School uses nine portable classrooms to handle current enrollment levels. The school is 218 students over design capacity. This bond would provide funds to demolish, rebuild and modernize a portion of Islander Middle School to provide 14 new classrooms and lab spaces, commons and cafeteria, gymnasiums, music rooms, library and administrative space to support the learning needs of our middle school students.



## 3. At Mercer Island High School make additions, improvements, modernizations and renovations to provide four new labs and six new classrooms

**Cost: \$11.1 million**

Mercer Island High School is already more than 100 students over design capacity. The greatest increases in enrollment have come from students at elementary schools and the middle school, but those students are headed for the high school next. Facility additions, improvements, modernizations and renovations supported by this bond will provide 10 additional classroom spaces - four labs and six general education classrooms.



## “Flipping” classes to increase individualized learning

It’s a Wednesday afternoon and students are seated in Donna Johnston’s 8th grade math class at Islander Middle School, but they aren’t listening to her give a lecture on finding square roots of numbers, classifying geometric figures or looking for trends in data. In fact, they will not be listening to any lecture at all in class today.

Why not? They already watched her give the lecture while they were at home on Tuesday night. Johnston has “flipped” her math class.

Johnston “flipped” her class as a pilot project during the second semester of the 2012-13 academic year. She asked to try it after reading an article about the possibilities of the format. The metrics for success included a parent survey and the grades of students in the class. After a successful semester, three IMS math teachers have now “flipped” their classrooms.



Islander Middle School math teacher Donna Johnston works directly with two students on applying concepts from one of her video lectures

lecture at home. Then students have the opportunity to post questions about the lecture they have listened to or bring questions to class, where they work through the application of the concepts, or what would have been the homework.

By watching the lecture on video, students are able to pause, rewind or re-watch any part of the lecture they need to. The lecture itself becomes self-paced.

This model gives students an opportunity to work with Johnston more during class time.

In a traditional classroom, about 90 percent of classroom time is spent on the daily lecture and review of content, leaving only 10 percent for application and questions that arise during that application. That is a short period of time when there are 20-30 or more students who need help with application of the concepts they have been taught.

“Flipping” also allows Johnston to focus on different learners in a way not previously possible. Typically a teacher is targeting instruction to the middle core of

**Here’s the concept:** rather than students listening to a lecture during classroom time and then doing homework in the kitchen or a bedroom at home, they watch a recorded



the group, leaving several students behind and leaving several students ahead but unable to progress.

“I see the value in using this as a tool to help everyone in class reach their potential,” said Johnston.

“I know from a teaching standpoint that creating videos for the students takes time and I am more conscious of what I say and do to get my point across.”

Struggling students are now able to get enough remediation and advanced students can work with Johnston on other concepts. It allows her enough time to focus on the needs of each of those learning groups.

“I am constantly trying to figure out ways to apply and connect our learning to the world around my students. This ultimately benefits the kids because they are getting the practice they need and they are seeing “Why” we are learning this material,” says Johnston.

“We have a very collaborative environment where everyone supports each other in class to further our comprehension of the material being presented.”

**“I am constantly trying to figure out ways to apply and connect our learning to the world around my students. This ultimately benefits the kids because they are getting the practice they need and they are seeing “Why” we are learning this material.”**

*Donna Johnston, 8th grade math teacher*

During class time students are all engaged and challenged while Johnston is able to give students time and individualized instruction to ensure their success and readiness for a cognitive, global and digital world. ■

Last fall a number of principals and central-office staff developed a framework for instruction based on the Mercer Island School Board’s Vision 2020 for teaching our students to thrive in a cognitive, global and digital world. The model is based in part on the “Gradual Release of Responsibility Model.”

More and more teachers are requiring their students to share in the responsibility for learning. Personalized and student-centered learning are the overarching elements of Vision 2020 from which all of the vision fundamentals are hinged.

Teaching strategies are designed to be responsive to students’ strengths, abilities, passions and learning styles, while instructional technology is used to enable teachers to better personalize learning.



**Dr. Gary Plano**  
Superintendent  
Mercer Island School District

## Islanders named National Merit and National Achievement Scholarship semifinalists

In September the Mercer Island School District and National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) announced the selection of 11 Mercer Island High School students as National Merit Scholarship Program (NMSP) semifinalists and one as a National Achievement Scholarship Program (NASP) semifinalist.

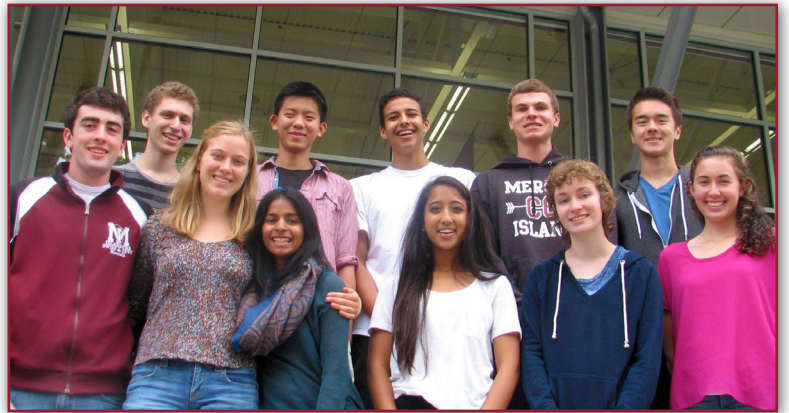
The 2014 National Merit semifinalists from the Mercer Island School District are:

Mark Anderson	Katherine Bell
Nathan Cummings	Isaac Diamond
Ken Ho	Sumedhaa-Priya Kothari
Devina Kumar	Ryan Newell
Eric Schulz	Rachel Van Gelder
Mary Wingerson	

“I am so proud of each and every one of these students for their academic accomplishments. They are among the best of the best students academically at Mercer Island High School,” said Mercer Island High School Principal Vicki Puckett. “It is so amazing when you hear of the accomplishments of these students.”

While most of the students haven’t decided where they will attend college next fall, several have some ideas. “I am looking into several engineering schools,” said Ken Ho. He is hoping to become a civil engineer. Sumedhaa-Priya Kothari says, “My dream

school would be Columbia University in New York.” She hopes to become “a traveling journalist, documenting hardships in Syria and the Middle East.”



Anderson is currently considering University of California, Berkeley for college. “I attended a debate camp there a few years ago and I really loved the people,” he said. While he doesn’t know if he will land in California, he does have a career goal “to make the world a better place for children.” Anderson qualified as both a NMSP and NASP semifinalist.

Several students credit the district’s use of technology in the classroom for helping to prepare them for college and a cognitive, global and digital world. “The technological opportunities my education has afforded me have expanded my worldview and helped me pursue many of my biggest interests, such as literature,” said Nathan Cummings. Kothari added,

“The technological opportunities my education has afforded me have expanded my worldview and helped me pursue many of my biggest interests, such as literature.”

Nathan Cummings, National Merit semifinalist

“The integration of technology in our classes as well as the wide breadth of electives and clubs offered, such as microeconomics and mock trial, have prepared me for the global, digital economy.”

“My teachers through all my years at the high school have challenged me, supported me, and given me everything I needed to succeed,” said Mary Winger-son. “I am extremely grateful to have such selfless and knowledgeable mentors.”

“We’re incredibly proud of these students and what

they have achieved,” said Mercer Island School Dis-trict Superintendent Dr. Gary Plano. “I was thrilled to recognize all of these outstanding scholastic achievers before the school board on October 10.”

These 11 National Merit semifinalists are among about 16,000 selected nationally from approximately 1.5 million entrants. Semifinalists represent the top one percent of entrants from each state on the Prelimi-nary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Anderson is one of about 1,600 semifinalists qualifying for a National Achievement scholarship. ■

## Islander Stadium debuts new press box and concession stand for Homecoming



Islander Stadium’s new press box and concession stand debuted as Mercer Island beat Lake Washing-ton 34-3 in their 2013 Homecoming football game.

The bottom floor includes new space for the conces-sion stand and the second floor will now house coach-ing staff, game announcers and scorekeepers, videogra-phemers and the high school radio station.

The press box, approved for construction by the school board in the spring, was built by district staff to reduce cost.

“The new concession area will be fast and efficient,” said the district’s Chief Financial/Operations Officer



Tony Kuhn, Director of Maintenance and Operations, demonstrates the view from the new Islander Stadium press box

Dean Mack. “We’ve talked to the coaches and boosters, who are very excited. They think they can quadruple sales.”

“We have built a modern facility to replace one that was more than 40 years old, inefficiently sited and unable to handle the current demands.” said Tony Kuhn, the Director of Maintenance and Operations for the district. “We’ve also converted the old press box location into special handicapped seating for events, something Islander Stadium didn’t have previously.” ■

## DISTRICT NEWS

### Mercer Island School District

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## MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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Notice of Nondiscrimination & Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB). The district shall provide equal educational opportunity and treatment for all students in all aspects of the academic and activities program without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sex, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, religion, age, veteran or military status, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability or non-program-related physical, sensory or mental disabilities. District programs and activities shall be free from sexual harassment and unlawful discrimination. In addition, the District provides equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. The district is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students, employees, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and patrons that is free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

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