



NEWS

Mercer Island School District

Volume 13 Issue #1, Fall 2011



The district is facing growing enrollment and aging schools.

The public conversation about facilities has begun...

21st Century Facilities: Balancing what is right for our community today as well as tomorrow

On September 26, 2011, the *21st Century Facilities Planning Committee* presented their recommendation for a Master Facilities Plan to the Mercer Island School Board. The 18-page document represents over 120 hours of work during 50 meetings, site visits and six feedback sessions with school principals, current and past school volunteers, current mega-block tenants, and the general public. The MISD school board will hold public hearings and provide numerous opportunities to engage the community in this extremely important discussion about the future of our schools. The earliest that any bonds might be presented to the public for approval is sometime in 2012 or 2013. The earliest that any school improvements might be completed would be 2014-2016. The full report is available on the district web site at www.misd.k12.wa.us/departments/facilities/21cfpc/21cfpc.html or in the Superintendent's office.

The world is changing, faster than we know.

In the 20th century, technology changed the fabric of our lives. For our students today, it will no doubt grow exponentially, connecting the world in ways we cannot even imagine. By 2020 many of our students will be working at jobs that don't yet exist.

Superintendent's Message



Our school buildings and our curriculum, instruction, and technology are all factors in preparing students to think and succeed globally while using technology as an inherent part of everyday life. We have one of the most talented teaching staffs in the country, and our community has demonstrated over and over that they are willing to go the extra mile to support our schools. Our *21st Century Facilities Planning Committee (21CFPC)* noted this fact in their recommendations to the School Board: *"In our schools, the Committee saw the 2020 Vision alive: teachers creative in the way they organized their classrooms; project-based learning; personalized learning in hallways; partitions in place to create small group learning environments."* They also saw the facility-related challenges that our principals are facing today.

I am proud of the great teaching and learning we see in all of our schools everyday, despite our schools' challenges, and I'm immensely grateful to the *21st Century Facilities Planning Committee* for their time and expertise in helping to shape the future of learning for our students!

The 21st Century Facilities Planning Committee (21CFPC) Recommendation

The committee based their recommendations on a thorough analysis of each of the following areas:

- Growing Enrollment and Facility Capacity
- Best-Practice Schools
- School Configuration
- Balancing Short and Long-Term Requirements
- Cost and Bonding
- Other Mega-Block Issues

Best-Practice Schools

The 21CFPC recommends incorporating the powerful best-practice school design concepts that support our District's 2020 Vision as quickly as possible. These best-practice concepts, already found in many of our neighboring school districts, include: flexible learning areas that support lecture; independent study; team collaboration; one-on-one learning and project-based learning; space to learn through art, science, technology and design; and the concept of small learning communities. These are all shown to increase the social components, intimacy and a sense of community in best-practice schools.

School Configuration

The committee recommends keeping the K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 grade band configuration and rebuilding our three elementary schools and middle school into two-story structures in the short term to accommodate growth. The high school would be rebuilt in the next 25-30 years – hence a 3-1-1 configuration. The committee recognizes that a fourth elementary school would be optimal (4-1-1), but presently no land is available. Therefore, the committee recommends either three elementary schools, one middle and one high school (3-1-1), or four elementary schools, one middle and one high school (4-1-1) with the fourth elementary school on an acquired property.

Balancing Short and Long-Term Requirements

While no dates have been set, the committee believes that the school district should begin working towards plans to rebuild the three existing elementary schools and the middle school on their current sites without further delay. They recommend that the School Board look at the task with both short and long-term perspective—balancing what is right for our community today as well as tomorrow. The committee recommends the School Board build some or all of its new schools to the higher standard required for a true emergency shelter, and work with the city to equip them for community use in a catastrophic emergency.

Cost & Bonding

A majority of the committee recommends a single bond issue to be sold in increments within promised tax rate goals. The bonds will fund the required elementary schools and the middle school. A minority recommends a more phased approach with a first bond funding a single elementary school and the middle school or just funding the three elementary schools.

Other Mega-Block Issues

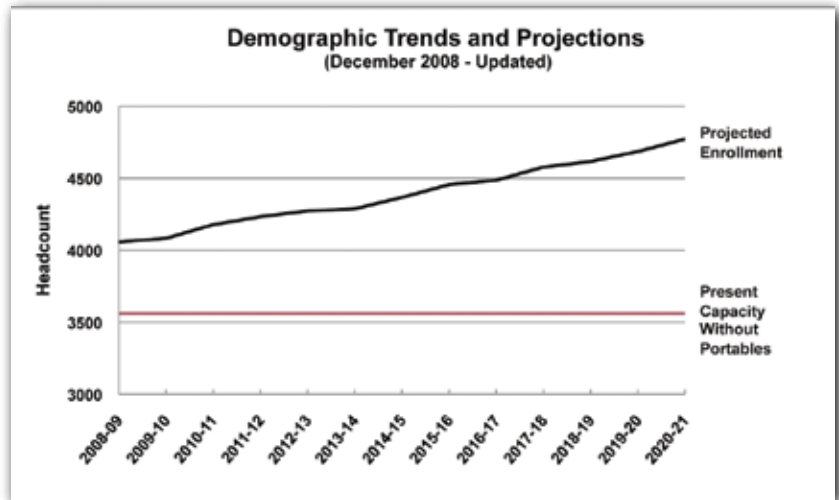
The committee strongly believes that the services provided at the North Mercer campus are critical community assets.

They recommend providing space for pre-schools and before-care/after-care services and envision potential partnerships with current tenants to provide those services.

They recommend the Board consider Youth Theater Northwest in future plans which may involve the addition of a theater expansion at the high school. The committee believes that the North Mercer buildings will need to be demolished in the near future for safety reasons. Further, they recommend that a structural engineer be hired to assess safety and make recommendations as to when those buildings should be demolished.

Growing Enrollment and Facility Capacity

The 21CFPC unanimously agrees that there is an urgent need to address the current and projected capacity issues. Today there are 600 students housed in elementary portables, enough for a whole new school. The middle school exceeds capacity by 187 students. The committee recommends increasing the capacity of the elementary and middle school learning spaces by 45% and public spaces for those schools by 60%.



Comparable tax rates for surrounding areas:

Bellevue.....	\$2.73
Federal Way	5.35
Issaquah	4.85
Kent	5.37
Lake Washington ..	2.98
Mercer Island	2.52
Northshore.....	4.60
Renton	4.06
Riverview	4.10
Seattle	2.34
Shoreline	5.36
Snoqualmie.....	3.87
Tacoma.....	6.38
Tahoma.....	5.20

Bond Rate Assumptions

The committee utilized experts to get an understanding of the current combined tax rates for Mercer Island schools, comparable tax rates for surrounding areas, and the tax implications of various bond sizes. The committee found that the Mercer Island school tax rate, including the cost of the Maintenance & Operations levy, the capital levy, the transportation levy, and debt service is significantly lower than most surrounding districts. Those cities with comparable rates such as Bellevue and Seattle have large business centers that support the schools and effectively lower tax rates. In addition, the current debt will be paid off over the next few years.

Tax Rate Goal implications of borrowing:

\$100M for 15 years:	Increase to 3.21
\$150M for 20 years:	Increase to 3.38
\$200M for 25 years:	Increase to 3.47

50-Year

MISD Facilities Recommendation Plan

These are the results of the 21st Century Planning Committee recommendation – either three elementary schools, one middle and one high school (3-1-1) – or four elementary schools, one middle and one high school (4-1-1).



Mega-Block

Mercer Island High School

Maintain current use until new multi-story high school is built on west side of property to accommodate student transition in 25-30 years. Likely to require the relocation of the stadium on the campus, and relocations of bus lot, administration building and Crest. Once the high school is rebuilt, this site offers flexibility for new fields, services or even a school. Potential to save part of old MIHS for administrative use and/or use as an expanded community theater.

Crest

Current use, then transitioning into new high school or off-campus when MIHS is rebuilt.

Pool

Relocated or renovated as prudent or required. The site potentially may be repurposed as a new aquatic center, stadium, and/or fields.

Youth Theatre

Once a new high school is built, Youth Theatre may be relocated at the current high school theatre.

Stadium

Updated or likely to be relocated to another mega-block location when new high school is built.

Fields

Current use. Over time optimized or expanded as facility footprints are reduced.

Boys & Girls Club

Current use.

Administration Building

Current use until new high school is built, then transitioning to another mega-block location or off-campus. Could be located in part of MIHS once the new high school is built.

Maintenance, Operations, Transportation & Bus Lot

Current use, then transitioning to another mega-block location or off campus over time, but before the high school is rebuilt.

Campus Parking & Access

Current use. As facility footprints are reduced, opportunities exist to improve campus access through parking and interior road reconfiguration.

Island Park Campus

Island Park Elementary

Would be replaced with a new, two-story K-5 facility (650-725 students in a 3-1-1 configuration, 500-550 students in a 4-1-1 configuration). Additional field spaces will become available as school is re-sited and footprint is reduced. Parking and traffic is optimized by moving the school back on the property.

South Mercer Campus

Lakeridge Elementary

Would be replaced with a new, two-story K-5 facility (650-725 students in a 3-1-1 configuration, 500-550 students in a 4-1-1 configuration). Additional field spaces will become available as footprint is reduced.

21CFPC members

Kris Kelsay, Facilitator
Hilary Benson
Dick Benster
Amanda Clark
Michael Finn
Carrie George
Carol Gullstad
Megan Hand
Einer Handeland
Bill Hochberg
Bert Loosmore
Frank Morrison
Walt Ritchie
Greg Steinhauer
Toby Suhm

City Council representative:
Bruce Bassett

School Board representatives:
Brian Emanuels
Janet Frohnmayer

Three student representatives:
Kaya, Jason and Maxwell

District representatives:
Dean Mack
Tony Kuhn
Liz LeRoy

Thirteen island organizations were represented on the committee!

South Mercer Playfields

Existing configuration.

Islander Middle School

Would be replaced with a new two-story sixth-eighth grade facility (1100-1200 students). Additional field space becomes available as footprint is reduced.

IMS Track & Field

May be affected in the short term as IMS is rebuilt depending on design and approach.

West Mercer Campus

West Mercer Elementary

Would be replaced with a new, two-story K-5 facility (650-725 students in a 3-1-1 configuration, 500-550 students in a 4-1-1 configuration). Additional field spaces will become available as footprint is reduced.



Mercer Island School District's 2020 VISION Fundamentals

*Cross-discipline thinking,
creativity and innovation
using technology*

Teachers explore new ideas for teaching and learning at MISD's Technology Institute

Teachers and support staff explored new ideas for teaching and learning at the District Technology Institute held on August 25, 2011 at Mercer Island High School. An annual event, this all-day program was designed to present an array of classes and workshops for teachers to learn the latest advances in technology as a tool for learning.

In his opening remarks to staff, Dr. Gary Plano said, "Our 2020 Vision asks students to be academic risk-takers, to try new ways of learning without fear that it may not work the first time. This Institute provides you with the opportunity to explore new ways of teaching and learning, so you can be models for your students."

Jennifer Wright, Executive Director of Learning and Technology, reminded staff that students' experiences are different than ours. Members of the current *millennium generation* "wonder why we keep those big useless phone books in our homes; think of Amazon first as a place to shop and then as a river in South America; and never knew a time when you couldn't listen to music via free downloads." Technology is often the bridge to these students, the tool that will help them make sense of their learning.

Wright cited several examples in the district where teachers have "taken leaps" in the use of technology in the classroom:

- Islander Middle School teacher Nova Williams used *Schoology* to connect with teachers in Poland to engage students in online conversations about the Holocaust, and the experience of touring Auschwitz today.
- Lakeridge third grade teachers expanded their traditional Culture Project with an online project with four countries where students engaged in conversations about their different cultures.
- Mercer Island High School teacher Jeff Randolph discovered that the E-Reader is effective for all levels of readers.
- Fifth grade teacher Stephanie John-Lewis led her colleagues in exploring applications such as Solar Walk and Pocket Universe on the iPod and iPad.

During the technology event, teachers were offered over 25 different workshops ranging from *Schoology* (Social Networking for Students), to a document

camera refresher, to iMovie, GarageBand for digital storytelling, Flip videos and educational uses for iTunes.

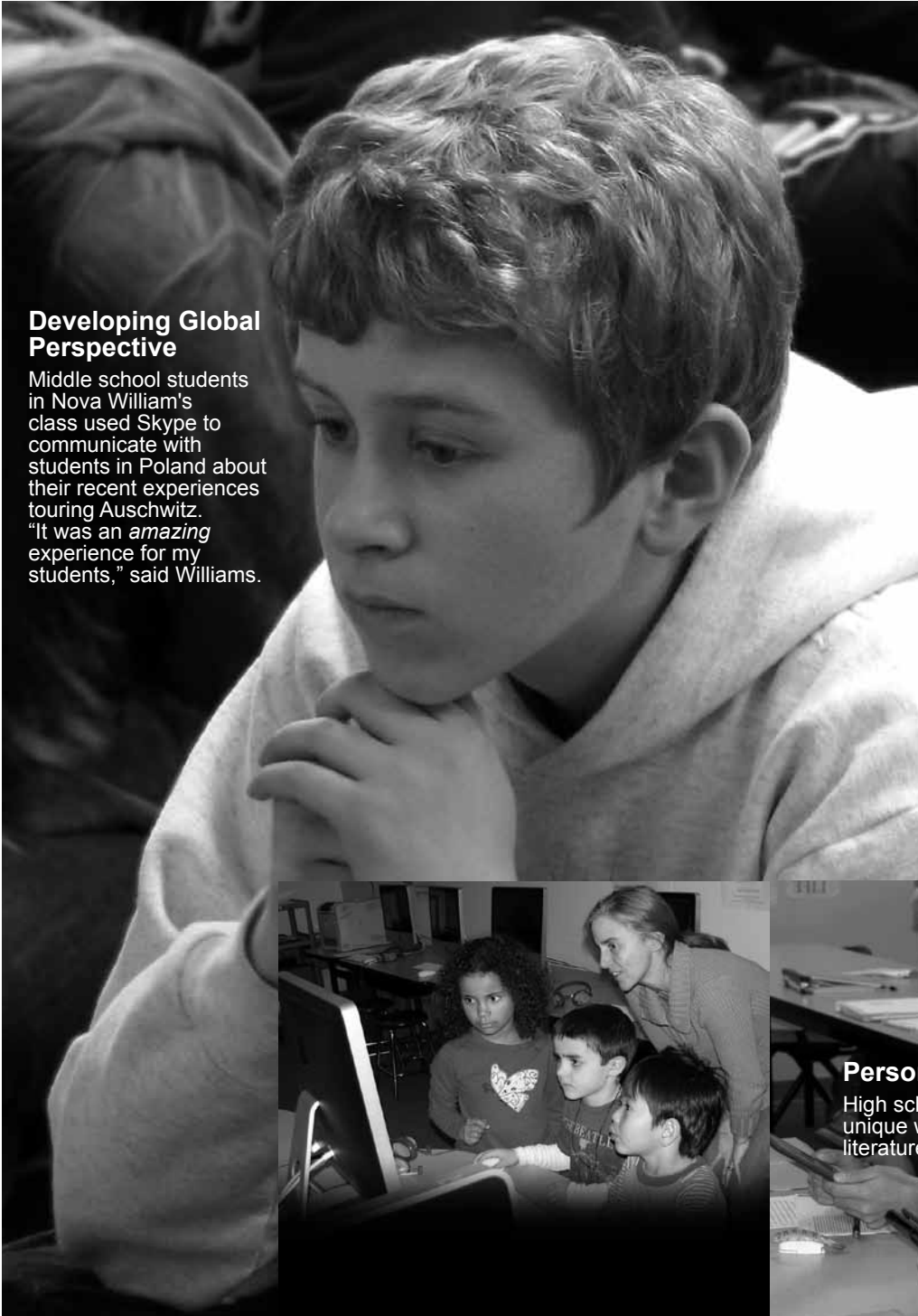
MISD's team of Technology Integration Specialists Julie Hovind, Kara Millsap, Sarah Olson and Clay Laughary, as well as other district teachers taught many of the courses.

This year, the entire district is especially excited about the new fiber optic cable that connects all schools. "We now have enough bandwidth for the increased digital communication among schools," said Jennifer Wright. In addition, the district has acquired 450 new desktops and laptops through levy funds and retired the old, obsolete equipment.

According to Dr. Plano, "Thanks to our community's passage of the capital projects levy in 2010, and the energy and commitment of our teachers, we are well positioned to continue moving forward using the powerful tools of technology to educate our students for the cognitive, global and digital age. I am looking forward to sharing many of these school and classroom stories with you in the year ahead."

How is technology helping to prepare our students for the 21st century?

Here are a few examples



Developing Global Perspective

Middle school students in Nova William's class used Skype to communicate with students in Poland about their recent experiences touring Auschwitz. "It was an *amazing* experience for my students," said Williams.



Passion for Learning

The iPad provides enhanced learning opportunities for students.



Collaboration

Middle school students work together to film video segments for Gatorvision, the school's in-house video network.



Personalized Learning

High school students find unique ways of appreciating literature using E-Readers.

Mercer Island School District celebrates 70 years

The Mercer Island School District #400 was officially established in 1941, 62 years after the first students started attending East Seattle School at what is now the old Boys and Girls Club. Thanks to a special supplement of the Mercer Island Reporter published in February 1998, the district's history is presented in a timeline from

“How many kids get to take a boat to high school?”

1879 to 1996, the year that work began on the renovation of Mercer Island High School. The supplement includes thoughts from community members and teachers like this one by Island resident Marian Poirier, one of many school children who traveled by ferry boat to get to high school in Seattle in the 1940's, years before Mercer Island built a high school. “It was fun,” she said. “How many kids get to take a boat to high school?”

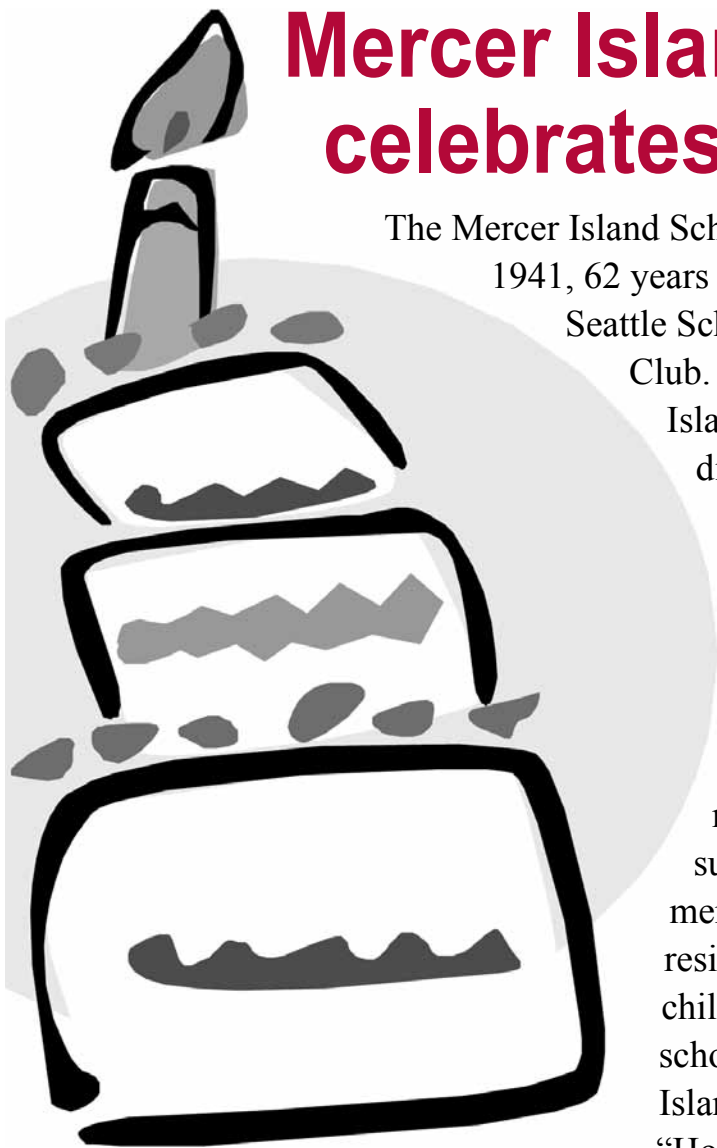
A special commemoration of the district's 70 years of outstanding service to young people will be held on **November 10, 2011** where former school board members are invited to share in the memories of an island institution that has become known as one of the top public school districts in the country. Happy Birthday MISD! The recognition will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room at the Administration Building.

More district history, courtesy of the Mercer Island Reporter —

In 1891, the average monthly teacher's salary was \$50. Eleven pupils were enrolled; school was taught only 78 days per year.

When Sharry Broman was teaching at Island Park Elementary in the late '50's and early '60's, going to school was more like visiting a bucolic farm than attending a class. “We had a peacock, a rooster and a wounded fawn,” she said. “People even came to school on their horses. It was very rural and charming.”

Before Mercer Island High School was built in 1955, Island students went to high school in Bellevue, or commuted to Garfield High School via the steamer “Dawn.”



MISD welcomes new and returning teachers

This fall twenty teachers have joined the MISD staff. Some are new to the district, while others have returned after time away to be with family. We invited *selected* teachers to offer their perspectives on coming to work on Mercer Island. Here are some of their comments:

Heather Sadler, Fourth Grade at Island Park Elementary:

“I previously taught in the Lake Oswego District in Oregon. I moved up to Seattle this summer and settled in the Ballard area with my husband. It has been a pleasure to join the Mercer Island District and Island Park staff. The dedicated teachers here are phenomenal to work with and the students are eager to learn. I'm looking forward to a fantastic year.”

Emily Haines, First Grade at Lakeridge Elementary:

“I grew up on Bainbridge Island and received my degree in elementary education from the University of Vermont. I taught for five years in the Highline School District at both first and second grade and am thrilled to be teaching first grade at Lakeridge this year.”

Monica Bond, First Grade at Island Park Elementary:

“Over the past six years, I taught kindergarten in an all-day program through the Archdiocese of Seattle. In addition, I worked for Highline School District as a Title I instructor. I have also worked for Sylvan Learning Center. I am excited to be joining the first grade team at Island Park Elementary!”

Lauren Gibson, Music Teacher at West Mercer Elementary:

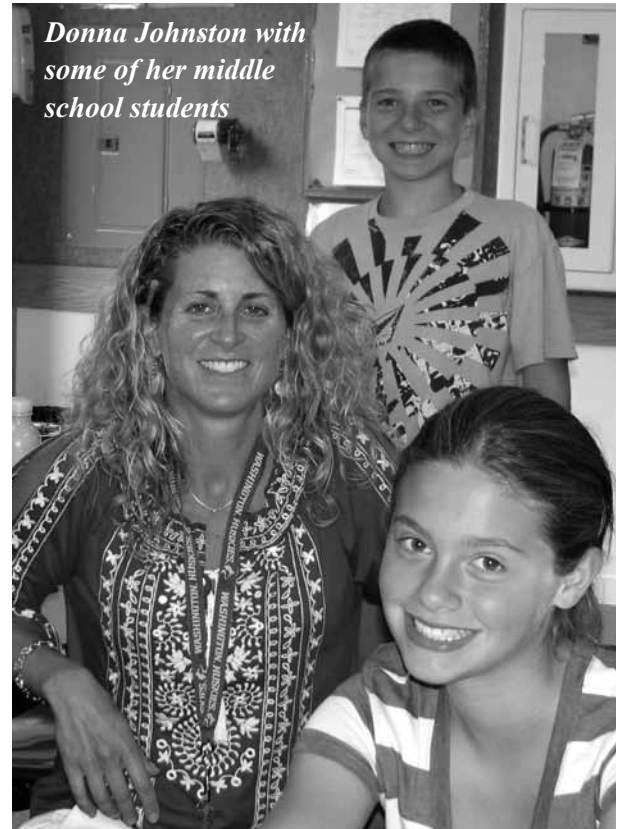
“I moved to Mercer Island for fifth grade and loved attending middle school and high school in this outstanding district. I recently graduated from the University of Montana in Music Education and Flute Performance and am excited to return to Mercer Island!”

Donna Johnston, Eighth Grade Math at Islander Middle School:

“I taught math at Islander Middle School for over eight years, but have had a wonderful time the last six years spending time with my two children at home. Now I am teaching math again at Islander and love being back with everyone! It is so nice to be surrounded by people, young and experienced, who enjoy learning and helping one another!”

Rebecca Lewis, Spanish, Mercer Island High School:

“I am a Washington native returning to the state after living in the Portland (OR) area the past ten years. While there I taught Spanish at Beaverton High School. I'm excited to be a part of a smaller district. I really like the ‘you get to know everybody’ feel.”



Daniela Melgar, Drama/English Teacher, Theatre Manager at Mercer Island High School:

“I went to undergrad at UCSD with a major in theatre and minor in English literature. I received an M.F.A in Acting from the California Institute of the Arts. I moved to Seattle in March 2006, working as an English teacher and yearbook advisor at Eastside Catholic High School from 2006-2011. I am super excited to be here and to be teaching drama. The community has been incredibly friendly and welcoming.”

Emily Temple, First Grade at Lakeridge Elementary:

“I moved from the Washington DC area to Washington State two years ago. I taught elementary school for 15 years in Maryland, Virginia, and DC before moving out west. I taught in the Issaquah School District last year. I love teaching first grade at Lakeridge. It's a friendly supportive community here.”

Mercer Island School District
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Congratulations are in order!

- To Mercer Island School District students for continuing to place in the top tier of students passing the Measurement of Student Progress tests (MSP) and the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE).
- To Mercer Island High School's National Merit Semifinalists, Commended Scholars and National Hispanic Award recipient.

Important Dates

- **November 7 and 8**
Mercer Island Schools Foundation Phone-a-Thon
6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. at Crest Learning Center
- **November 10**
MISD 70th Birthday
Celebration for all former school board members, 6:30 p.m. at the MISD Board Room

MISD Board of Directors

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Brian Emanuels, brian_emanuels@misd.wednet.edu • **Janet Frohmayer**, janet_frohmayer@misd.wednet.edu • **Dave Myerson**, dave_myerson@misd.wednet.edu