



NEWS

Mercer Island School District

Volume 9 Issue #3, Summer 2008

This is the third issue of District NEWS for 2007-2008, designed to present information on district and school improvement planning, Student Ends, and other programs. Please continue to check the district web site for the most current information. www.misd.k12.wa.us

Superintendent's Message

I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked along side of you as I completed my first year as your Superintendent.

Thanks to strong community partnerships, a hard-working School Board and committed staff, we are truly a "professional learning organization" where each member is focused on student learning both in and outside the classroom. This year our School Board, staff and community have continued to work on improving instruction and learning in our district so that all students graduate "prepared to thrive in life, progress academically, intellectually and personally, to compete and succeed in post-secondary education and work, and be inspired to contribute to society." I am pleased to provide more details about this work in the articles that follow.



At no other time do we see the results of our work together more clearly than during our annual graduation ceremonies. On June 6 we said goodbye to the nearly 380 seniors who graduated from Mercer Island High School. Our graduates are attending colleges and universities all over the country and the world. I know they will be outstanding representatives of the Mercer Island School District! I was particularly struck by a comment made by Tony Nugent at the Senior Breakfast. Nugent, a member of the class of 1958 and the MIHS's new "Golden Grads" alumni association, who is now a professor of religion at Seattle University. He said, "In my opinion, education's purpose is not for telling students what to think, but how to think." Listening to the articulate and passionate speeches of our graduating seniors and the amazing musical performances, I know we have done just that. Congratulations to these students and to their families and teachers who have supported them so well during their school years.

Looking ahead to next year, I plan to focus attention on three critical areas.

Three-point Plan for 2008-2009

1. Provide the necessary instructional and learning support to ensure that our students are able to think critically, innovate, invent, collaborate and be prepared for life in the 21st Century.
2. Ensure the financial stability of the Mercer Island School District.
3. Take the necessary steps to renovate, rebuild, or restore our schools to state of the art places of learning.

This Three-point Plan requires an on-going commitment to understanding the learning needs of each student, awareness and understanding of the budget issues in our schools and preparation to undertake the necessary facilities improvements to preserve and maintain our buildings for the future.

This coming year, you will see several new and on-going efforts to address these issues: District Instructional Improvement Plan for 2008-09, the Mercer Island School's Foundation Really Big Idea, addressing our declining enrollment trend and bond planning for facilities maintenance and replacement. Also in the fall you will see new and familiar faces in leadership positions throughout the district. In the central office, Michael Schiehser will serve as the interim Director of Instruction and Assessment. In the schools, Dr. Nancy Loorem has been appointed principal of Island Park Elementary and Richard Mellish joins the staff as principal of West Mercer. We are looking forward to a rewarding year with the addition of these outstanding administrators! Please read on and feel free to contact me with your questions and comments. Thanks for all you do and enjoy your summer.

Sincerely,
Dr. Gary Plano

Instruction and Learning Support

New classes and programs for 2008-2009:

- State-of-the-art K-5 Social Studies curriculum and new materials aligned with state standards
- Coordinated Learning Support for elementary students in reading
- A new 9th grade Global History course. *This is the last year Pacific Northwest History will be offered at the high school. It is now a 7th grade course.*
- Redesigned middle school science program focused on environmental and global issues.
- Integrating Science and Writing through “notebooking.” Students develop hypothesis and conduct their own experiments.
- Addition of an 8th grade Gifted Program. We now offer a grade 3-8 gifted education continuum.
- 6th grade Health Class (State requirement). New IMS trimester system to include 6th grade health for all students.
- AP Economics re-designed as a social studies credit to study how economics impacts world decisions and current events
- New Precalculus textbooks that include more strategies for differentiated instruction.
- K-5 Standards-Based Reporting system that focuses on assessment for learning
- A focus on explicit teaching that integrates technology in the the curriculum in all schools.

The Really Big idea

The School Board has launched an effort to develop a Really Big Idea or vision that will guide our educational programs and shape Mercer Island Schools

into 21st century learning communities. Our strong partnership with the Mercer Island Schools Foundation will help realize this vision through a capital campaign slated for sometime next year. Watch for more news of this work in the fall.

2008-2009 District Improvement Planning Highlights

Next year, District Improvement Planning will be focused on K-12 math, 11th and 12th grade science, K-5 Social Studies curriculum guides, on-going work on the Standards-based Report card, K-5 Learning Support Model and the 8th grade gifted program. A review of Citizenship and Personal Development programs in our schools will be conducted. The district would like to thank members of the community who served as advisors to the Secondary Science Curriculum Review Team and to those people who have already agreed to assist with the K-12 Math Review. Both of these efforts are closely aligned with the state’s work on improving math and science instruction for all students.

National Board Certification Program continues to grow

Eleven district teachers have completed the National Board Certification program and 19 more are signed up to complete the program next year. This very rigorous program represents the highest level of certification available and speaks volumes about the quality and commitment of teachers in the Mercer Island School District. Our district provides support to teachers through a National Board support teacher funded by the Mercer Island Schools Foundation.

Teacher of the Year



Cathy Dugovich, first grade teacher at Lakeridge Elementary has been selected by her peers as Mercer Island Teacher of the Year. In a presentation to the School Board in May, Patti Weber, former Director of Curriculum and Instruction said, “Cathy served on the district’s Math Team, Literacy Team and Technology Team. She attended the Mel Levine training, the Columbia Writing training, peer

coaching, autism training and most recently served as grade level lead on the Standards-Based Report Card.” Lakeridge principal Ralph Allen said, “Cathy has helped her colleagues across the district focus on assessment for learning. Her first grade students can explain what they are learning and why. Cathy gets it, and so do her students. She is an incredible teacher and individual.”

"Her first grade students can explain what they are learning and why."

Ensuring the financial stability of the district

Capital Levy supports student learning and major maintenance projects

On March 11, 2008, our community passed the 4-year capital projects levy to implement the District's Facilities and Maintenance and Replacement Plan and Technology Plan by a 60% Yes vote. Thanks to your support we will complete several improvement projects over the summer including interior and exterior painting of school buildings, the North Mercer Campus roof resurfacing and much more. In addition, capital resources provide Technology Integration Teachers (Teachers on Special Assignment), classroom presentation tools and the necessary network upgrades and equipment to fully utilize technology as a tool for learning.

Q/A

District opens enrollment for off-island students

1. Why is the district opening enrollment to non-resident students?

This District is projecting a budget deficit of \$830,000 for next year. Open Enrollment is a way of balancing the budget using the generation of additional revenue in lieu of cutting program to completely address the deficit.

2. How many students is the district planning to accept and will class size increase?

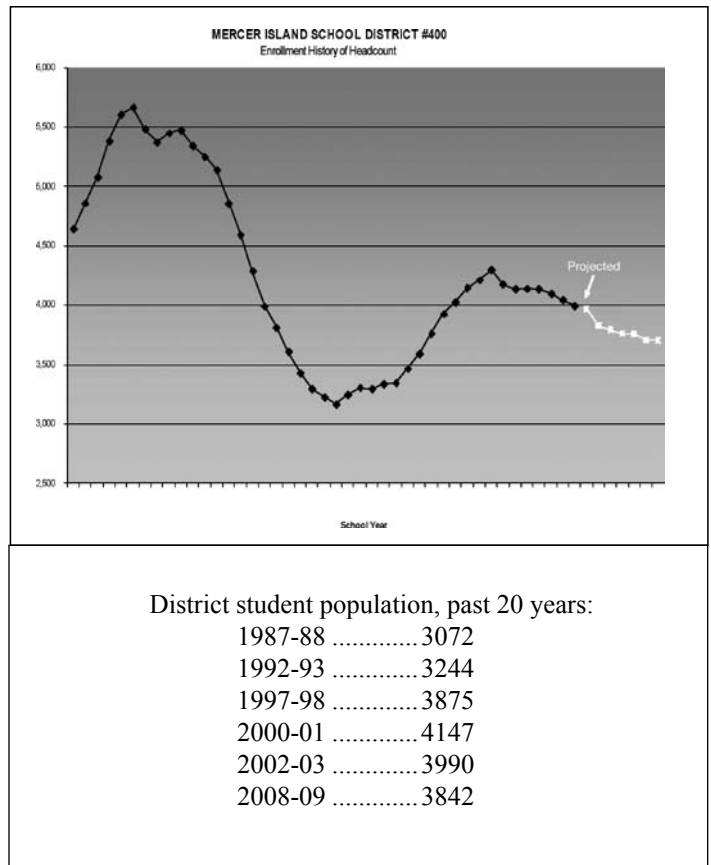
For the 2008-2009 school year, the district is projecting a loss of approximately 100 students. The district opened enrollment to student application this spring, 2008. We have received over 200 applications. From those applications, approximately 100 students will be accepted in accordance with our district's policy on open enrollment. Class sizes will not increase over current levels with the acceptance of non-resident students.

3. Does open enrollment solve the district's projected deficit for 2008-2009?

Not entirely. Open enrollment will generate approximately \$400,000 in revenue. The additional \$430,000 is due to increase operating costs such as but not limited to: paying teacher salaries beyond what the state funds; increased costs in heating and utilities; underfunded pension costs passed on to local school districts this year, etc.

4. How has MISD Enrollment ebbed and flowed over the years? Is the shrinking enrollment new?

The Mercer Island School District's student population has ebbed and flowed over the past twenty years. In the late 1980's the district had a low student population of 3200 students and reached a high point of enrollment in 2000 with 4147 students.



Bond Planning for Capital Improvement

MISD is working on four phases of planning for facilities maintenance and replacement for a possible bond on the ballot in 2009. Phase I, coordinated by Associate Superintendent Kathy Morrison and building principals, is a program assessment to identify needs and provide justification for current and future program expansion. Phase II is a demographic analysis, Phase III is expert consultation and Phase IV involves a Citizens Facilities Advisory Committee that will make recommendations to the School Board. Community members who are interested in serving on this committee are encouraged to apply. More information and an application form is now posted on the district web site at www.k12.misd.wa.us

Title IX Compliance Review – Ensuring gender equity in student sports

Title IX is a federal law requiring school districts to provide girls and boys with equal athletic opportunities. This winter the MISD undertook a voluntary review of athletic programs to fully examine equity in our programs. The review shows that the population of students participating in the athletic program is 55% boys and 46% girls. 18 community members and staff are currently serving on a Steering Committee to create a multi-year implementation plan to address compliance issues. The committee will present the implementation plan to the School Board in late August.

In Grateful Appreciation

Please join us in thanking the following retiring district staff for their years of service to our children:

- Pat Blix, Principal of West Mercer Elementary
- Pete Domingo, Maintenance & Operations
- Nancy Frost, 4th grade teacher at West Mercer
- Holly Pratt, Paraprofessional at Island Park Elementary
- Sharon Gillaspie, former principal of Islander Middle School and Interim Director of Testing and Evaluation
- Carrie Sparlin, Spanish teacher at Mercer Island High School
- Patti Weber, Director of Curriculum and Staff Development
- Bill McGlasson, Supervision Specialist at Islander Middle School



Pictured: Pete Domingo, Nancy Frost, Sharon Gillaspie, Carrie Sparlin and Pat Blix

Important Dates

The entire 2008-09 calendar is available on the district web site

September 2

1st day of school

October 10th

No school K-12
(Learning Improvement Day)

November 10th

No school for elementary and middle school students only

November 11th

Veteran's Day – No school K-12

November 27 & 28

Thanksgiving holiday

December 22 – January 2

Winter break

Mercer Island School District
4160 86th Avenue SE
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit # 19
Mercer Island, WA

ECRWSS

Residential Customer