



DISTRICT NEWS

Students Are The Priority

Summer 2021

Congratulations to the MIHS Class of 2021!



For the first time in its history, Mercer Island High School held its commencement ceremony in Islander Stadium on June 10, awarding diplomas to 361 seniors in the class of 2021. The valedictorians were Nathanael Cadicamo, Caden Gradek, Jacob Grosf, Wesley Ho, Justin Lesko, Ethan Preston, Annika Vanderspek and Emily Yang. The faculty speaker was English and journalism teacher Chris Twombly and Noah Hendelman was the senior class speaker.

Schools plan for full, in-person return for fall

As we look forward to a full return to in-person school, we want to recognize and thank our Island community for your support over the past 18 months. Together, we helped our children and each other navigate the many changes and challenges brought by the pandemic.

The District and Mercer Island Education Association (MIEA) are committed to beginning the 2021-22 school year with a full, five day-a-week in-person schedule beginning Sept. 1 for grades 1-12 and Sept. 3 for kindergarten. We will continue to work side-by-side to prepare for the challenges and new opportunities that come with a return to full in-person schooling this fall. There will continue to be a district-wide focus on social-emotional support for students and emphasis on essential learning necessary to prepare students for their future- near and far.

The District will continue to follow the guidance of the Governor's Office, OSPI and state and local health authorities as we work to keep students, staff and visitors safe and healthy as we return to full in-person school this fall. This includes mask wearing, physical distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation. DOH and OSPI have been clear that social distancing requirements cannot and will not prevent any or all student(s) from attending all day in person.



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THE MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Mercer Island School District Board of Directors are elected to four-year terms. Responsibilities include goal setting; employing the superintendent; setting district policy; adopting an operating budget; placing levies and bonds before voters; approving the instructional program; and ratifying contracts. Learn more at: www.mercerislandschools.org/board

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Mercer Island community,

Thank you for your support in this year of the pandemic. What a joyful time it was to watch our Mercer Island High School Class of 2021 graduate in our own stadium for the first time ever!

The past 18 months have been full of changes to the way we have delivered education, but we have kept to our core value that students are the priority. Our District's mission, vision, and values expects each of us to promote and model life-long learning, thinking, equity, inclusion, safety, collaboration, and the whole child.

Most importantly, thanks to you and our staff, we kept our students safe. To date there have been no known COVID-19 cases traced to inside our schools and Mercer Island continues to lead King County in vaccination rates. We look forward to returning to school full time, five days a week. We can't thank you enough for your incredible patience as we dealt with frequent changes in guidance from the state and the Department of Health.

As we move forward and this pandemic begins to be seen in the rear-view mirror, we need to continue to reflect on lessons learned during this year of constant change. We need to question what have been the "silver linings" in this crisis and how they will impact our work moving forward. As our students return to their classrooms full time, we must meet them where they are. They will not all be in the same place, either academically or socially or emotionally. The District created an Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan that is required to access funding to support students. The MISD plan addresses equity and inclusion, students' learning recovery, and mental health support.

Have a wonderful rest of the summer, and we look forward to the first day of school for grades 1 to 12 on Wednesday, Sept. 1, and for kindergarten on Friday, Sept. 3.

Innovation Learning is partnering with the MISD to provide before and after-school child care at elementary schools

Innovation Learning is an extended learning provider, offering before- and after-school programs at the four elementary schools that help children develop skills in a safe, fun, and academically focused setting.



It provides a quality connected learning program that complements your child's school experience. By integrating STEAM education, project-based learning, play-based discovery, and academic support, they engage students in using problem-solving skills, cultivating creativity, and building their capacity for innovation. Enroll today at innovationlearning.com

Enrichment, cap/tech levies up for renewal in 2022

The District is expected to seek renewal of two levies in February 2022. The School Board will decide on placing the levies on the February 2022 ballot later this year. Levies require a simple majority for approval.

Each school district in Washington can access three types of levies:

- Enrichment: 2-4 years (last election was Feb. 2018)
- Capital/Technology: 6 years (last election was Feb. 2016)
- Transportation Vehicle: 6 years (last election was Feb. 2016)

The enrichment levies allow for additional programming and expanded services beyond basic education.

The Capital Projects and Technology (Cap/Tech) levy covers two areas:

- Facility improvements and updates that are beyond a general repair or regular maintenance but fall short of bond-level funding needs.
- Instructional technology and related staffing, professional development and technology infrastructure.

Transportation Vehicle levies are only for the purchase of buses. The District does not plan to seek a bus levy in 2022.

What can be locally funded under Enrichment Levies?

- Programs, activities and staffing beyond the basic state apportionment that are funded through local efforts, which includes the levy, the Foundation, PTAs and other grants, donations and contributions;
- Courses beyond state minimum graduation requirements;
- Additional staffing and program components to fund class-size reduction;
- Funding for components beyond state funding, including visual arts and music;
- Professional development for teachers and staff;
- Extracurricular activities, including athletics;



Infrastructure projects such as the new roof at Lakeridge Elementary are funded by the capital/tech levy.



The enrichment levy funds fine arts across the district. The combined school orchestras created this virtual performance.

- Extended school day/year;
- Early learning program;
- Program administration and extracurricular stipends.

What has MISD accomplished with local funds?

- Class-size reduction across all grades;
- 7-period-day at HS and expanded electives;
- 37% of special education funding comes from the local levy;
- Ongoing professional development;
- Instructional coaches at all levels;
- Classified staff support that is almost twice what is funded by the state;
- Stipends for staff to offer additional opportunities for student clubs, activities, and supporting athletics;
- Elementary staffing to support Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for students;
- Staff to support students in the online learning program;
- Smaller class sizes for "focus" sections for struggling students.



Promethean boards used by teachers in the classroom are funded by the capital/tech levy.

POINTS OF PRIDE

Over the past year, British composer Barnaby Martin has been working with MIHS music students on an extraordinary journey to create a new piece of music for the wind ensemble. The project, underwritten in part by a grant from the Mercer Island Schools Foundation, started with Martin writing the music for them to record individually, which would then be put together for the final audio. But as Martin notes, it very quickly turned into a huge collaborative effort, and Martin ended up working remotely very closely with the students in developing the piece "Circles and Paths." Martin talked with the students about what it means to be a musician in 2021, after so many people were forced to stop playing in 2020. Then he asked them -- what does being a musician mean to you? For Martin and the students, this is what this composition is about - not only the project itself, but also about what it means to make music after a global pandemic. To access the project, visit youtube.com/listeningin.



Seventeen MIHS student athletes were honored this spring in a ceremony as they signed letters to continue their athletic careers at colleges and universities nationwide. They are Annabelle Gersch, Leah Stednick, Jack Mattox, Alec Willett, Derek Osman, Nathan Buchan, Keiran Watson, Sean Ronaldson, Dan Gao, Jack DeDonato, Jenin Obeidat, Collin Ralston, Josh Chang, Gihoe Seo, Michael Lee, Evan Dickstein and Mason Gronewold.

The Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR) at Mercer Island High School received the Student Leadership Award during the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) recognition event. Mercer Island Parent Edge received the Community Leadership Award.

SGORR aims to uplift minority voices and address racism, micro-aggressions, and more in their high school.

Mercer Island Parent Edge is a team of engaged parents that has brought national speakers to the Mercer Island/Seattle/Eastside parent community on a variety of topics for many years. With the pandemic, Parent Edge quickly pivoted to present an important Parent Support Series on Zoom in connection with Mercer Island Youth and Family Services.



POINTS OF PRIDE



Mercer Island Police Officer Art Munoz was recognized by the School Board as he completed his tenure as the school resource officer in partnership with MISD and will be returning to patrol. Munoz will be succeeded by Officer Kristina Lum. Thank you Officer Munoz for your many years of dedicated service to our students and families and welcome Officer Lum!

Six Mercer Island students have received awards in the 2020-21 Washington State PTA Reflections program, including two that have been recognized at the National PTA level of the competition. The students are Arianna Zhao, Ava Zhang, Nathan Paek, Hee-ro Lim (his artwork is pictured at right), Alana Yang and Sri Vadlamannati.



Reflections is a National PTA arts recognition program that helps students explore their own thoughts, feelings and ideas and develop artistic literacy.

Students in pre-K through grade 12 create original works of art in response to a theme. The theme for the 2020-2021 program year is "I Matter Because..."

Students submitted their completed works of art in one, or all, of the available arts categories: Dance Choreography, Film Production, Literature, Music Composition, Photography and Visual Arts.

ADL Pacific Northwest presented Mercer Island High School with a "No Place for Hate" school designation in recognition of its work this year to promote respect and inclusion.

No Place for Hate is a self-directed program helping all stakeholders take the lead on improving and maintaining a school climate where all students can thrive.

To be designated No Place for Hate, a school must complete an assessment, form a No Place for Hate committee, sign the No Place for Hate Pledge, and design and complete at least one school-wide activity with the committee.



Mercer Island High School is ranked among the top two percent of high schools in the country in the 2021 Best High Schools rankings released by U.S. News & World Report.

MIHS is ranked 7th among Washington state high schools, and 392nd nationally out of nearly 18,000 high schools in the United States that were ranked this year, as MIHS moved up 135 spots in this year's rankings.

EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

Teachers of the Year

Whitney Swope, Islander Middle School

In all her years at IMS, Whitney has established herself as a master curriculum and lesson designer—always rooted in empathy and equity; a leader among her colleagues—eager to collaborate and share new and innovative ideas; and above all else, a champion of students—seeing the whole child and empowering leaders within and beyond the classroom.



Christine Kenyon, Mercer Island High School

Christy Kenyon is a tireless advocate for students with disabilities. When passing by her classroom you will often hear students laughing and dancing. She is a strong, caring and passionate educator who always puts the needs of her students first.



Christy leads highly individualized teaching and organized a staff to serve students under her care. She did so with care, skill, and dedication to every personal and academic need of each student.

Lisa Pepple, Lakeridge Elementary

Lisa Pepple is an outstanding educator who has a unique ability to see every student's potential and who they are and then tailor her caring, kindness, instruction and support to guide students in realizing their true and best potential.



Students find academic success, social-emotional wellness and calm, authentic, genuine connection with her on their team. Families express their heartfelt gratitude regularly and often every school year. Her colleagues genuinely admire, trust and seek her advice and she reciprocates the same to her colleagues. She is a life-long lead learner in service to students, staff, families and the art of teaching.

Classified Employees of the Year

Cindy Cole, Islander Middle School paraprofessional

A co-worker said in nominating Cindy, "She never fails to show up and provide a positive and student centered learning environment. She had created and implemented a crazy amount of material this year to support her students' needs/wants. Beyond her extreme dedication to our students, she motivates everyone around her to be a better version of themselves. She is constantly working with our team to find the best ways to educate the whole child. She is, by far, one of the most determined, dedicated, honest and caring co-workers I've had the honor of working with."



Joe Gonzalez, Maintenance and Operations

Joe has been a true professional teacher and custodian in our schools for well over 30 years. He anticipates and looks for problems to solve even before they arise. A custodian is defined as someone who tends to and looks after something. Joe does this across the district and his dedication goes beyond serving as a custodian for the schools. He not only tends to and looks after our facilities, he takes ownership of and treats them like his own.



Lynn Lawrence, administrative assistant, West Mercer Elementary

Lynn is always willing to help students, families, staff, teachers, new employees - everyone! She is the face (and voice!) of West Mercer and her presence there is significant. She is sensitive to the needs of others, has an amazing sense of humor and grace in her job.



This year has been a challenge for everyone and Lynn has shown herself to be an outstanding employee in spite of the challenges. She was one of the first staff members who came in person regularly this year, she has helped to safely manage the many in-person expansions, and she is an important voice on the team.

COVID-19 Leadership Award

Karla Rimmer, RN, Islander Middle School

Karla has worked incredibly hard this year to make sure that all members of the MISD community have stayed safe as we have experienced remote, return of small groups, and finally full hybrid. She has spent countless hours with the bargaining team, advocating for all the mitigation necessary to not follow politics, media hype or rumors, but to make sure the District followed the science and used common sense.



Karla's work and dedication to IMS and the entire District was instrumental in returning students to the classroom. Throughout this work, Karla kept a smile on her face and educated us all on COVID-19 protocol.

Karla has diligently spent time and effort in making sure that all district staff, students and families are able to work, learn and teach in a safe environment. She has gone beyond the typical role of a school nurse to implement safety procedures and communicate information in a year like no other. Karla's work impacts not just one group of students, but the school community as a whole.

2021 RETIREES

The School Board honored the District's 2021 retirees at a meeting in May. These employees gave a combined 300 years of service to the District and the students of Mercer Island.

Certificated employees:

Carole Azose, Northwood SLP
Cathy Dugovich, Lakeridge teacher
Diana Low, Island Park teacher
Ellis Reyes, Islander Middle School teacher
Debbie Urman, Lakeridge teacher
Carol Best, West Mercer principal

Classified employees:

Rick Haney, Transportation
Denise Hopkins, Island Park
Virginia Imani, Lakeridge
Kay Johnson, Islander Middle School
Miguel Guerra-Kerrigan, Transportation
Steve Kiner, West Mercer
Mike Lein, Infrastructure Engineer
Mary Newcomer, Learning Services
Barb Shephard, MIHS
Kendall Taylor, Superintendent Services

*Thank
You*

to our generous Mercer Island community
for investing in our students! YOU are the
reason our schools are able to provide a
world-class education.



School is out but you can still give -
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**WELCOME
NEW FAMILIES**

**Please register
your children
for school now!**

**[mercerislandschools.org/
NewStudents](https://mercerislandschools.org/NewStudents)**



**Mercer Island
School District**



**NONDISCRIMINATION
NOTIFICATION**

The Mercer Island School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal, and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

**Harassment, Intimidation and
Bullying (HIB) Coordinator:**

Erin Battersby, Executive Director
206-230-6227
erin.battersby@mercerislandschools.org

Title IX Compliance Coordinator:

Erin Battersby, Executive Director
206-230-6227
erin.battersby@mercerislandschools.org

Section 504 & ADA Coordinator:

Nova Williams, Assistant Director
(206) 236-4510
nova.williams@mercerislandschools.org

Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator:

Erin Battersby, Executive Director
206-230-6227
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