



Mount Vernon schools were full of activity in the past year as scholars learned, had fun and continued to grow into the adults they will soon become. From reading, arithmetic and writing, to career and technical education, arts and STEAM, students pursued their interests with the full support of the Mount Vernon City School District behind them. Read through the following pages of this year at a glance and see how the school district, its schools and its students have grown in the 2023 calendar year. Always check the district's website and social media for up-to-date events and announcements.



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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTED AT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

Dr. Smith began holding student presentations at most regular Board of Education meetings. She made it a priority to highlight the students and their many accomplishments for the whole community to see. This included Culinary Arts students presenting their food, the Edward Williams School Choir and Rayanu Adam, the student trustee who received the Gates Scholarship.

WRITER CHERYL DAVIS INDUCTED INTO MVHS HALL OF FAME

Cheryl Davis was inducted into the Mount Vernon High School Hall of Fame. Ms. Davis is a television writer and a lawyer. She has written for "Law and Order" and "Days of Our Lives." She also represents fellow writers as a lawyer to help them navigate the entertainment industry and not lose rights to their work.



MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL EARNS STATE DESIGNATION FROM NEW YORK STATE AS A SCHOOL IN GOOD STANDING

On Wednesday, December 20, 2023, Dr. Pauline Pearce, Principal at Mount Vernon High School, announced to staff that the school has been taken off of New York State's Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) list and is now designated as Local Support and Improvement (LSI) or also commonly known as a school in good standing with the state.

Dr. Pearce expressed her excitement about the status change to the staff at MVHS.

"It stuck with me that the state said to me that they have many schools that were on CSI status, there were a few schools that moved, but they moved from CSI to ATSI or to TSI. They have never seen such a huge jump," she said. Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement are levels between Local Support and Improvement (LSI, or good standing) and CSI.

MVHS took many steps to move their status from CSI to good standing, such as consistently receiving feedback from students and staff on how the school can improve. MVHS focused on changing the climate and culture of the environment to one that is welcoming and nurturing for all. The school created additional safe spaces to mediate issues that arise amongst students and hired additional security guards, among other things. These actions allowed the narrative of MVHS to change to one that empowers their students and supports their success.

"This is amazing, this was long overdue," said Superintendent Dr. K. Veronica Smith. "I am so proud of each and every one of you. This is the new Mount Vernon High School. It has changed immensely, things have really changed. Each one of you plays a major role in that happening."



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER - ONE MOUNT VERNON

A weekly newsletter was released on Fridays highlighting events in the district throughout the past week. Dr. Smith also released a message in the newsletter to provide a personal touch to readers. The newsletter was also used as a vehicle to promote future events and keep the community informed of developments in the district.





ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPATES IN KNIGHT TANK EVENT

Mount Vernon High School partnered with Iona University to complete an entrepreneurial project with students at Iona. The project culminated with a business pitch to MVHS Principal Dr. Pauline Pearce, Congressman Jamaal Bowman and Mount Vernon Board of Education members. The presentation on April 21 was modeled after the show "Shark Tank" and called "Knight Tank." Following the presentation, Iona presented the class with a check with funds they raised to go toward the CTE department. Students also visited Hynes Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the entrepreneurial school at Iona. This gave them valuable college experience and allowed them to collaborate with college students with similar interests.



CONVERSATIONS WITH DR. KIM VIDEO SERIES

Dr. Smith invited guests from around the district to highlight the many great developments in Mount Vernon schools. The first guests were Dr. Marie Gaboton Swift, acting assistant superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services; Dr. Marguerita Circello, director of ENL and World Languages; and Dr. Gayle White-Wallace, director of Pre-K, Gifted and Talented and special projects to discuss registration. Noel Campbell, director of Career and Technical Education was also a guest and discussed developments in his department. Ken Silver, assistant superintendent of business, was the second guest and discussed the budget. The third episode featured Dr. Jamal Doggett, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, to discuss the developments in the curriculum in the past year. The final episode featured a student. Rayanu Adam, student trustee, talked about his accomplishments, the Gates Scholarship, his future plans and his experience in the Mount Vernon City School District.



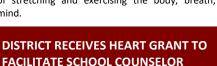
ANNUAL HEALTH FAIR HELD TO SHARE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Mount Vernon City School District held its annual health fair on June 3, 2023. Several community organizations came to share the resources available to Mount Vernon residents. There was also a food pantry available for all in attendance. Dr. Smith explained how health is so important to her and that the district cares about the health and safety of all its students and employees.



YOGA SESSIONS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS OFFERED DURING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month staff yoga sessions were hosted at Edward Williams School, Hamilton School, Mount Vernon Honor Academy, and the Education Center throughout the month. Family yoga was held at the Mount Vernon STEAM Academy in the Parent Resource Center on Saturday, May 20, 2023. Parents came with their children for a relaxing session of stretching and exercising the body, breath, and mind.



TRAINING

Through their connection with Mercy College and the SMART Scholar Program, the Mount Vernon City School obtained The Helping Evidence-Based Advocates with Responsive Training (HEART) Grant. The HEART Grant will provide training to school counselors and allow second year college counseling students to intern and train in school. This includes mental health training, so students will be able to receive mental health counseling at school. They will also receive multicultural counseling training and attend the American School Counselor Association conference.



ALL SCHOOLS DESIGNATED NO PLACE FOR HATE

All 16 Mount Vernon City School District schools were presented with No Place for Hate (NPFH) Banners at the NPFH Banner Ceremony on Thursday, May 25, 2023. The district became the largest school district in Westchester County to have all of its schools designated as No Place for Hate. They are among the 239 NPFH schools in downstate New York.



AFTER SCHOOL ROBOTICS PROGRAM INTRODUCED

The district teamed up with the Mount Vernon Educational Foundation to begin the Robotics program at Benjamin Turner Middle School. This program will improve students' access to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning. This will also improve student performance on NYSED grade 6-8 science and math assessments and increase enrollment into Mount Vernon STEAM Academy.

ONLINE HR - APPLICANT TRACK INTRODUCED TO STREAMLINE HIRING

All hiring processes were switched to an online portal. Applicants can view job postings by visiting the LHRIC website, which is linked on the district website.

CERTIFICATES OF OCCUPANCY FOR ALL BUILDINGS ACQUIRED

All 16 schools, the Education Center, and Mount Vernon High School garage received certificates of occupancy.





DR. K. VERONICA SMITH VISITS ALBANY TO REPRESENT THE DISTRICT

Lobbied in Albany to receive \$5 million that was needed to balance the budget. She also met with NY Education Commissioner Betsy Rosa to continue advocating for Mount Vernon scholars.



AVIATION STUDENTS AT MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL LAUNCH HOT AIR BALLOONS

Miniature hot air balloons, crafted by students in classes earlier in the week, rushed to the ceiling of the little gym at Mount Vernon High School, as Aviation students tested their homemade hot air balloons on Thursday, November 2, 2023.



SCHOLARS IN MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT WEAR BLUE FOR WORLD DAY OF BULLYING PREVENTION

A sea of blue entered schools as children and staff wore blue to commemorate the start of National Bullying Prevention Month and World Day of Bullying Prevention on October 2, 2023. The District's No Place for Hate (NPFH) coordinators planned this event to raise awareness about bullying and to take a stand against hate, bias, bullying, and unkind acts of intolerance.



CTE FAIR SHOWCASES OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Over 40 organizations visited Mount Vernon High School to discuss job opportunities with the students. CTE students went from station to station, learning about careers that they have been training for in their classes



NORTHEAST STEM STARTER ACADEMY PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH FREE STEM LEARNING

Congressman Jamaal Bowman visited Pennington School to sit in on a class at the Northeast STEM Starter Academy (NSSA) on Monday, July 31, 2023. The NSSA is a STEM summer program available to students in grades three through ten in Mount Vernon. Over 200 students participated in the program, which is free.



MOUNT VERNON SECURITY MONITOR PRAISED FOR HIS ACTIONS PREVENTING A POTENTIAL INCIDENT

Winston Johnson, a Mount Vernon City School District security monitor, was honored at the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, November 7, 2023. He was recognized for protecting Mount Vernon students and staff during summer school by stopping a student from entering Mount Vernon High School with a weapon.

CONSOLIDATION OF REBECCA TURNER ELEMENTARY AND BENJAMIN TURNER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dr. Smith led the charge to restructure Rebecca Turner Elementary School as Rebecca Turner Academy, an alternative high school for students attending the Sundown Program to have their own space. Benjamin Turner Middle School was converted into a K-8 school, and all students from RTES, besides pre-K, transferred there. Furthermore, a security substation is being installed at Rebecca Turner Academy, and the alternative high school program is being built to best serve overage and under-credited students.

SCHOOL SAFETY

The district retained Dennis Fagan as Director of Security and continues to ensure that all security posts are constantly manned. There was also a command center installed in the Education Center that is linked to every camera in the district. There is also a security sub-station at Rebecca Turner Academy.

CSEA NEGOTIATION COMPLETED

The district negotiated a new contract for CSEA staff this past year which includes custodians, cleaners, secretaries, nurses, and other support staff.

KNIGHTS BASKETBALL TEAM VISITS GHANA

The Mount Vernon Knights made a trip to Ghana where they were able to immerse themselves in the experience of an African culture.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PTA

The first special education PTA in the Mount Vernon City School District was established. As a result, special education students will have more representation with the SEPTA advocating for them.



THREE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS RECEIVE STATE APPROVAL

Administrators, trustees, staff and students assembled at the Mount Vernon Board of Education on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, for the announcement of three more Career and Technical Education (CTE) program approvals at Mount Vernon High School. The school will now offer students a total of seven approved CTE graduation pathways.





MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH MICROSOFT TEALS PROGRAM

Microsoft Philanthropies is bringing its Technology Education and Learning Support (TEALS) Program to Mount Vernon High School for the 2023-24 school year.

The program was first introduced to Mount Vernon by Marvin Church and Dr. Diana Williams, co-Founders of the non-profit Environmental Leaders of Color (ELOC). Bruce Jackson, Managing Director for Strategic Partnerships out of the office of the president of Microsoft, is also a board member of ELOC. His connection with both organizations and Mount Vernon helped bring the program to the Mount Vernon City School District.



MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT HOSTS CTE COMMUNITY CAREER FAIR

Over a dozen community organizations and companies filled the Mount Vernon High School cafeteria with their tables as they promoted their job openings. The Mount Vernon City School District held a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Community Career Fair at MVHS on Thursday, October 12, 2023. Opportunities within the MVCSD and the community were shared with students and Mount Vernon residents.



DAME DASH SCREENS MOVIE TRAILER AT DWSA AND ANNOUNCES YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL

Students filled the Phylicia Rashad Auditorium at Denzel Washington School of the Arts in anticipation of a visit from music and film mogul Dame Dash, who visited to screen the trailer of his new film "Prince of Detroit," on Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

He also announced a youth film festival that he is bringing to Denzel Washington School of the Arts. Students at DWSA will compete with other high school students by creating a 10-to-15- minute short film. The winner will be chosen at the end of the year and will have their film streamed on Dash's streaming service.



STUDENTS BUILT TOWERS AND CATAPULTS DURING STEAM LESSON AT NELSON MANDELA/DR. HOSEA ZOLLICOFFER SCHOOL

Third and fourth grade students at Nelson Mandela/Dr. Hosea Zollicoffer School worked together to make pumpkin catapults, slime, and towers using nothing but toothpicks and marshmallows on Monday, November 27, 2023. Laurie Tucci, the teacher at NMHZ who led the students in their STEAM lesson, is planning to continue teaching lessons around engineering and science.

MVHS HOSTS EVENING OF H.E.R.

Mount Vernon High School celebrated a night of Helping Everyone Rise (H.E.R.) on Friday, March 31, 2023. The event's focus was on empowering all women.



MOUNT VERNON STEAM ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL HEROES TEACH AT NELSON MANDELA/DR. HOSEA ZOLLICOFFER SCHOOL

Nelson Mandela/Dr. Hosea Zollicoffer School students sat down in their classrooms for a unique lesson taught by high school students on Thursday, November 30, 2023. Junior Achievement High School Heroes students from Mount Vernon STEAM Academy visited the school and delivered lessons to elementary school students.



BENJAMIN TURNER ACADEMY STUDENTS DEMONSTATE EXPERIEMENTS

Benjamin Turner Academy (BTA) students gathered in the gymnasium for a fun science lesson, hosted by Mad Science, involving physics, chemistry and other scientific concepts. John "The Proton" Theodorou, Mad Science's New York operations manager, visited the school and ran several experiments for the students on Wednesday, November 29, 2023.



COUNTY EXECUTIVE SIGNS BILL AT MVHS

George Latimer, Mount Vernon High School alumnus, signed the "Truthful Disclosure" bill into effect at MVHS on Thursday, March 30, 2023.

"Thank you for letting me return to my old high school," said Latimer. "I am a very happy person right now."





MOUNT VERNON STEAM ACADEMY STUDENTS BEGIN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CLASS THROUGH IONA UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

Students at Mount Vernon STEAM Academy entered their classrooms for an Artificial Intelligence class, taught by Sumaiya Chowdhury, on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. The lesson reviewed the basics of Al and allowed students to begin programming their own Al to identify emotions of happiness or sadness.



PRE-K STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES LEARN ABOUT NUTRITION WITH FEEDING WESTCHESTER

Elementary students from various schools and their parents were showing off their cooking skills while they learned about the importance of nutrition on Thursday, October 26, 2023. In collaboration with Feeding Westchester, families learned how to make various delicious dishes, such as sweet potato fries, pear quesadillas and pumpkin cookies.



MOUNT VERNON HONOR ACADEMY STUDENTS HAVE A 'BOOK TASTING'

Fifth-grade students at Mount Vernon Honor Academy took it back to the basics by participating in a "book tasting." This event allowed the students the opportunity to sample and review novels.



STUDENTS AT REBECCA TURNER ACADEMY CREATE NEWS STORIES IN ENGLISH CLASS

Sheba Serna's English 4 class at Rebecca Turner Academy recently completed an assignment where they read an urban fiction story, "Double Jeopardy," and were asked to identify a part of the story that would be in the newspaper if it was real life. They then created a pseudo newspaper article, using textual details for accuracy. Students completed this during the week of Monday, October 30, 2023.



CTE DEPARTMENT INTRODUCING EMT PILOT PROGRAM FOR RTA AND MVHS STUDENTS

The Mount Vernon City School District Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department has announced that it will be offering emergency medical technician (EMT) training at Mount Vernon High School. The courses will be available for around 20 12th-grade students at MVHS and Rebecca Turner Academy (RTA).



STUDENTS COMPLETE FUNDATIONS LESSON AT MOUNT VERNON LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Pre-K students drew colorful pictures as they learned about the letter 'O.' Scholars at Mount Vernon Leadership Academy were practicing their phonics through the Fundations learning program on Wednesday, October 25, 2023.



MOUNT VERNON HIGH SCHOOL HOLDS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Mount Vernon High School held a full week of events from Monday, May 22, 2023 to Friday, May 26, 2023, in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. Mental health activities were available throughout the week for all students and staff within the building. Mental Health Awareness Week was held a week after International Baccalaureate Programme testing and prior to New York State Regents tests, so students were in a position to relax.



STUDENTS SHARE SUGGESTIONS AT SUPERINTENDENT'S ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

Students from several K-8 schools visited the Education Center on Wednesday, November 8, 2023, with ideas for improvements in their schools. The Superintendent's Advisory Council held their monthly meeting and discussed ways they can continuously improve the educational experience for students throughout the District.



STUDENTS AT GRAHAM SCHOOL WRITE COMPASSIONATE LETTERS FOR ACTIVE SOLDIERS ON VETERANS DAY

For Veterans Day one class of first grade students at Graham School wrote compassionate letters to a schoolmate's father who is currently serving overseas. Sergeant Dwayne Richards shared this appreciation for the letters with the class.

DR. K. VERONICA SMITH'S BOARD OF EDUCATION INTRODUCTION AS ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Good Evening, Mount Vernon Board of Trustees and the Mount Vernon community. Before we begin tonight's Special Board Meeting I would like to quickly say that I understand and fully realize that these are very trying times for the Mount Vernon City School District.

I was born and raised in Mount Vernon. I am a graduate of Mount Vernon High School and I have spent the past 20-plus years as an educator and administrator for this school district. This is my home.

So, as Acting Superintendent I can assure you that I will continue to make the education and safety of our scholars my highest priority. Please remember that in our schools, every day, magical things happen between teachers and students. My goal is to maintain this focus. Our scholars deserve nothing less than our full attention in this regard.

Lastly, I would like to say thank you to the Board of Trustees for your confidence in me to carry on the educational mission as the Acting Superintendent of the Mount Vernon City School District and I appreciate the support of everyone who works for the school district, the families of our students and the community.

Thank you.





MICROSOFT TRANSLATOR IMPLEMENTED IN SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT OFFICE FOR REGISTRATION

The Microsoft Translate application has been introduced in several schools across the district and is being used in classes in several subjects. This allows English as a New Language (ENL) students to be more engaged in classes. Teachers have already reported that ENL engagement has increased since students have been able to listen to instruction in their own language. It also enhances their academic results and helps them prepare better for the New York State Regents Exams. The program is also being used at the Board of Education to assist parents with registration.



THREE MVHS GRADUATES RECEIVE IB DIPLOMAS

Three out of four candidates for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme recently passed their tests and completed the requirements for their IB diplomas. Daren Lu, Lesley Iyamu and Prescilazoe Nyarko, Mount Vernon High School Class of 2023 graduates, were awarded with the diplomas in early July.



BACKPACK GIVEAWAY

News 12 teamed up with the Mount Vernon City School District and gave away over 200 backpacks and school supplies to students in need on Thursday, August 17, 2023, at Edward Williams School. The backpacks were donated by News 12, Optimum and Warner Bros. Discovery.



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HOLDS ANNUAL NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK FAIR

The New York State Department of Labor and various local trade unions set up tables at Mount Vernon High School to share available apprenticeships and opportunities with students. The Mount Vernon High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department held their annual National Apprenticeship Week Fair on Friday, November 17, 2023.



ENTREPRENEUR CLASS AT MVHS PARTNERS WITH IONA UNIVERSITY

Mount Vernon High School entrepreneur students are partnering with Iona University students to complete an entrepreneurial project together. The students will be working to create a business model and their own pitch to develop and enhance the MVHS logo. The students will be coached by the Iona University students. This project will culminate with the business pitch being presented to a panel of judges.



MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT AUTOMOTIVE PROGRAM EXPANDED TO REBECCA TURNER ACADEMY

Mount Vernon City School District, Rockland Community College and Ford officials gathered in the auto shop at Mount Vernon High School, surrounded by automotive equipment and cars, to announce the expansion of the Ford Automotive Career Exploration (ACE) program on Thursday, November 16, 2023.

MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTERS

Westchester Community Health Center has been in the community for over 50 years. For decades they have run a school based health center at Edward Williams and Mount Vernon High School. They provide primary care, behavioral care and specialty care on site at schools. This module is the best way to care for students because they miss the least amount of school.

Currently, the district and the health center are working together to establish additional school based health centers at Graham, Hamilton, BTMS and RTES. This is a free service, so no one is turned away. The goal is to eventually have health centers implemented across the district.

OUR SCHOOLS: A YEAR AT A GLANCE



DISTRICT WIDE AUTISM AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE DAY HELD AT MVHA

The first annual district-wide Autism Awareness and Acceptance Day was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023. The celebration was started to show autistic people that they are accepted by the community and that they deserve to be celebrated. It also helped raise awareness that there are many ways that the community can support them.



GIFT CARD DRIVE HELD TO SUPPORT FAMILIES AFFECTED BY FIRE

The Mount Vernon City School District held a gift card drive to support families affected by a fire to help make a difference in the community by assisting these families who lost everything. The fire occurred on May 9, 2023, and the district began its gift card drive within several days. People donated gift cards to grocery stores, department stores, retail stores and Visa/ Mastercard.

VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS RECOGNIZED FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The valedictorians and salutatorians at each high school received hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of scholarships, including several full-rides.

Violet Cleary, valedictorian at DWSA, received a \$23,000 per year scholarship to attend Pratt Institute and study animation and visual effects.

Abigail Swift, salutatorian at DWSA, received a \$31,000 per year scholarship to Manhattan College, a \$1,000 per year scholarship to Stony Brook University, a \$24,000 four year scholarship to SUNY Albany, and a \$29,000 per year scholarship to Simmons University.

Daren Lu, valedictorian at MVHS was accepted into the University of Rochester, CUNY Lehman College, City College, Brooklyn College, SUNY Purchase College, New Paltz, and others. He received a \$2000 scholarship from the Board of Education for his achievements as valedictorian.

Lesley Iyamu, salutatorian at MVHS, was accepted with a full scholarship into several colleges including Adelphi, Columbia University, and Wesleyan University.

Daniella Costa Dos Santos, valedictorian at Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, Daniella received merit scholarships to Iona University, where she plans to study early childhood education and become a first-grade teacher.

Tran Chau, salutatorian at Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, received full-ride scholarships to Wesleyan University and Hamilton College and will attend Wesleyan. She wants to be a math teacher and credits her teachers for inspiring her to become an educator.



LIFE SKILLS, SPECIAL EDUCATION AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

The plan is to roll out **Kinems** this summer in the Extended School Year Program for students with disabilities to prepare for the implementation of Kinems in several schools. It develops personalized Kinect-based learning games for children with special needs such as autism, cognitive delays and ADHD.

n2y Unique Learning System (ULS) is an internet based special education program that comprises over 30 lessons and unique instructional downloads centered around a monthly theme. It provides access to Next Generation Learning Standards and Common Core Standards in the content areas of ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

F.O.C.U.S.E.D.(*For Our Children's Unique Social Emotional Development*) This program is designed for students with autism and significant developmental delays. Staff facilitate groups to increase social awareness, communication skills, daily living skills using project-based activities, cooperative play, and problem-solving and academic activities.

S.E.E.D. (Special Education Extended Day)

This program focuses on providing support through specialized instruction in small groups to support students with meeting grade level expectations and their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. Students work on ELA and Math skills including "hands-on" projects and games aligned to the curriculum, instruction, and skills.