



# MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 2024 DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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## PROJECTED GRADUATION RATES

MVHS	76.50%
STEAM	90.70%
DWSA	93.55%
RTA	<u>21.90%</u>
	76.92%

**3%** INCREASE  
FROM 2023





Dear Mount Vernon School Community,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer and is rejuvenated and ready for a year full of learning.

This year, the Mount Vernon City School District is building on its theme of going back to basics and continuing to strengthen core skills to move forward to mastery. We will continue with a strong emphasis on reading, arithmetic and writing. We will especially focus on reading, which is the greatest tool we can give our students.

Last year, I asked everyone to “get on the bus” with me, and our school community did just that. As a result, we saw great improvements in our academics, suspension numbers, Dignity for All Students Act reports and attendance. Everyone bought in and now that we are all on the bus, we are ready to continue progressing down the road to reach our destination.

Teachers showed great resolve last year, and our students benefited immensely from their work. This year we will maintain this momentum, largely due to the dedication our teachers have shown time and time again.

I always say that magical things happen in Mount Vernon. While facing our challenges, we improved and delivered superb academics and programs to our students. This year has the potential to be even better. My administrative cabinet has displayed superb leadership, and we are ready to lead this District to another successful year. When we have the right people in place, the possibilities of what we can accomplish are endless. Thank you to the Board of Education for your support and providing our scholars with all they need to succeed.

Kindest regards,

Dr. K. Veronica Smith  
Acting Superintendent of Schools



### CONGRESSMAN JAMAAL BOWMAN VISITS STEM SUMMER CLASSES AT PENNINGTON

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.



### MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT WELCOMES BACK STAFF AT CONVOCATION

Unity, togetherness and collaboration were the focus for the 2023-24 school year's convocation on Tuesday, September 5, 2023. Administrators and Board Trustees attended the ceremony at the Board of Education, and it was broadcast to each school via Zoom, where teachers and building administrators watched it together.

## DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### STUDENTS THRIVE IN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

The Mount Vernon City School District offered a number of afterschool programs throughout the 2023-2024 school year at all its schools. The programs offered in the District include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ Academic Power Hour
- ▶ Extended Day Programs
- ▶ Extended School Year Summer Program
- ▶ Clubs at every school
- ▶ Wide array of athletic programs
- ▶ EMT after school training program at MVHS
- ▶ Weight room extracurricular club
- ▶ Mount Vernon STEAM Academy e-sports
- ▶ Voluntary Income Tax Assistance training at MVHS
- ▶ Mock trial at MVHS
- ▶ DWSA robotics team
- ▶ Theater production of Beauty and the Beast at Pennington
- ▶ Drumline at Mount Vernon Leadership Academy
- ▶ DWSA middle school drumline
- ▶ DWSA theater, which put on performances of Annie Jr. this year
- ▶ B.A.P.S. (Beautiful, Ambitious, Positive Sisters) Girls Club at Benjamin Turner Academy
- ▶ Mount Vernon Youth Bureau Programs: Girls Embracing Maturity (G.E.M) after school program; Safe Haven Program; Safe Place for Our Girls, and more.

**Contact your children's school for more information on after school programs available.**



## Superintendents for the Day



### MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS SHINE DURING THEIR AS SUPERINTENDENTS FOR THE DAY

Seven administrators served as superintendents for the day during the 2023-2024 school year. Dr. Satish Jagnandan, director of STEAM; Dr. Pauline Pearce, principal at Mount Vernon High School; Dr. Crystal Waterman, principal at Edward Williams School; Dr. Natasha Hunter-McGregor, principal at Graham School; Dr. Christopher Pearce, principal at Mount Vernon STEAM Academy; Dr. Colleen Seivright-Crawford, principal at Mount Vernon Leadership Academy; and Dr. Severin Cornelius spent a day experiencing the top leadership role in the District.



### PENNINGTON SCHOOL CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH WITH DERBY TEA PARTY

Young ladies in stylized hats and pastel-dresses gathered at the media center at Pennington School with anticipation for the first Women's History Month Derby Tea Party Celebration on Thursday, March 14, 2024. In preparation for the event, students took etiquette classes taught by Crystal Breaux, special committee assistant, twice a week for four weeks. Here, they learned how to sit properly at the dining table, how to set up a table, and how to mix and mingle with others while dining.



### SCHOLARS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT PARTICIPATE IN GROW BAG INITIATIVE

Scholars from Rebecca Turner Academy, Lincoln School and Graham School were digging up soil and getting their hands dirty at the Mount Vernon High School greenhouse to plant nutritious resources for the community on Thursday, May 23, 2024.



### MVHS SENIOR TO ATTEND VAUGHN COLLEGE FOR AVIATION

Nathaniel Edwards, a senior at Mount Vernon High School, was recently accepted into Vaughn College of Aeronautic Engineering, Aviation and Technology, where he will pursue a degree in the Aircraft Operations program.



### MOUNT VERNON STEAM ACADEMY STUDENTS TEACH AT GRAHAM SCHOOL

Graham School students received engaging financial literacy classes from new student-teachers on Thursday, February 29, 2024, as Mount Vernon STEAM Academy students came to teach the elementary schoolers.



### FOOD PANTRY OPENS AT BTA

Students and parents congregated with eagerness at Benjamin Turner Academy for the opening ceremony of a new food pantry located at the school on Thursday, May 2, 2024. During the event, faculty and staff cut the opening ribbon to launch the generous facility stocked with supplies for families in need to utilize.



### KAITLYN LESLIE-SMITH, NAMED MOUNT VERNON YOUTH POET LAUREATE WINNER

Kaitlyn Leslie-Smith, a rising junior at Denzel Washington School of the Arts, was announced the 2024-2025 Mount Vernon Youth Poet Laureate on Thursday, June 27, 2024.



### STUDENTS IN MY BROTHER'S KEEPER PROGRAM VISIT ALBANY

Students in the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Program, along with MBK advisory Brother Arthur Muhammad, visited Albany in April 2024 and met with New York State Commissioner of Education Dr. Betty A. Rosa.



## DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### TWO MVCSD STUDENTS RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIPS AT CARROLL F. JOHNSON SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT DINNER

Two twelfth grade students, Britaney Sinclair from Mount Vernon High School and Demaris Ferrer from Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, received scholarships at the Carroll F. Johnson Scholastic Achievement Dinner, hosted by the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents on Wednesday, May 22, 2024.



### MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT HOLDS SUPER HEALTH AND WELLNESS BLOCK PARTY

Children ran around the field at Mount Vernon Honor Academy playing games, as their families gathered information from various community organizations at the Mount Vernon City School District's Super Health and Wellness Block Party on Saturday, June 1, 2024. Several children wore superhero costumes, the theme of the day.



### CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION NURSING ASSISTANT STUDENTS PASS PROMETRIC EXAMS

Mount Vernon High School Career and Technical Education nursing assistant students are now Certified Nursing Assistants after taking their Prometric exams last week. All 10 students passed both the written exam and practical skills, making this the second year in a row with a 100 percent pass rate.



### FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS AT GRAHAM SCHOOL START BAND LESSONS

Fourth-grade band students at Graham School unwrapped their new instruments during music class to play trombones and trumpets on Thursday, April 4, 2024. These new and newly repaired instruments came after the school received a grant from the Guitar Center Music Foundation for musical instruments and mouthpieces.



### MOUNT VERNON YOUTH ATTEND PUBLIC SAFETY SUMMIT

Students, young people up to 25 years old, and MVCSD Associate Superintendent for Operations and Accountability Mark Raimondi partook in discussions about public safety in Mount Vernon on Thursday, February 29, 2024, at the City of Mount Vernon's Youth Public Safety Summit. The event was hosted by the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau and Cities United, an organization committed to helping cities improve across America.



### REBECCA TURNER ACADEMY STUDENTS ON ACCELERATED PATH TO GRADUATION IN FIRST YEAR OF THE ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL

In August 2023, the Mount Vernon City School District decided to relocate its alternative high school program, the Sundown Academy, to the former Rebecca Turner Elementary School location. In the wake of this decision, the school was renamed Rebecca Turner Academy (RTA) and became a location that housed the alternative high school and pre-kindergarten classes.

Compared to Sundown, the program at Rebecca Turner Academy has seen a significant increase in student attendance. Courses are accelerated and may be completed in one semester, allowing students to receive more credits in a shorter time. With the accelerated program, students are also more motivated to complete it, despite being behind. Students see that their work will pay off quickly, which drives them to finish and graduate.



### RALLY AGAINST STATE EDUCATION CUTS HELD AT BENJAMIN TURNER ACADEMY

Over 50 community members, students, educators and local representatives lined up on the steps outside Benjamin Turner Academy to protest state education cuts on Friday, March 1, 2024. After over a month of lobbying with state and local officials, the District prevailed and will receive the \$2.9 million that was set to be removed from our budget in Governor Kathy Hochul's budget proposal.

# DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR AND KNIGHT LIGHT AWARDS GIVEN AT BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

Two Mount Vernon City School District administrators, Pennington Principal Dr. Melissa White and Director of Humanities Marybeth Rhodes, were honored at the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. Acting Superintendent Dr. K. Veronica Smith and Board of Education President Lorna Kirwan presented the awards.



## FORD ACE PROGRAM EXPANDED TO MV STEAM ACADEMY STUDENTS

Students from the Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, Mount Vernon High School and Rebecca Turner Academy (RTA) are coming together to learn car mechanics. Earle Mitchell, technical placement specialist at Ford, visited the auto shop at Mount Vernon High School on Monday, March 18, 2024, to share more information about trends in the automotive industry and career opportunities.

## MV STEAM ACADEMY ESPORTS TEAM PLACES SECOND AT CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT

Scholars at the Mount Vernon STEAM Academy immersed themselves in Valorant, a competitive 5v5 strategic elimination game during a High School Esports League championship final against Western High School from Ohio on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.



## LINCOLN SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT REBECCA TURNER FOR BLACK HISTORY MONTH

In recognition of Black History Month, fourth and fifth-grade students at Lincoln School took part in an informative and highly engaging assembly program on the extraordinary life of Rebecca Turner.



## DWSA STUDENTS MEET STUDENTS FROM CHINA VIRTUALLY THROUGH ONE WORLD GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

After a year of communications with students from Jingling Primary School in China, Denzel Washington School of the Arts sixth graders finally met their Chinese counterparts via Zoom on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.



## ACTING SUPERINTENDENT DR. SMITH RECEIVES PROCLAMATION FROM NYS SENATOR JAMAL BAILEY

Acting Superintendent Dr. K. Veronica Smith received a proclamation from New York State Senator Jamal Bailey, recognizing her for her exemplary service to the community and the State of New York for Women's History Month on Friday, April 5, 2024. Nakia Hiland, director of Safe Place for Our Girls, from the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau and Unique Groom, community liaison for Jamal Bailey presented the proclamation to Dr. Smith.



## OVER 500 ATTEND MVCSD'S SECOND ANNUAL AUTISM ACCEPTANCE DAY

Rainbow and blue shirts, recognizing people with autism, covered the field at Traphagen School, as students and families played games, ate together and connected with each other to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month. Over 500 community members, students and parents attended the Mount Vernon City School District's second annual Autism Acceptance Day on Monday, April 29, 2024.





## DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT

#### ONLINE REGISTRATION LEADS TO LINE-FREE REGISTRATION YEARLONG

The Mount Vernon City School District has offered online registration since 2021, with in person registration assistance at the Education Center. With the implementation and refinement of this process, parents and guardians face no lines when registering their children.

#### MVCSD OFFERS EXTENDED TAX COLLECTION HOURS

The Mount Vernon City School District offered extended hours for tax collection from 3 to 6 p.m. from July 29 to 31 to ensure that all residents had ample time to prepare and pay their taxes without waiting in long lines. The District began collecting its own taxes in 2021 and has refined the process to ensure a smooth tax collection process.

#### PARTNERSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT FOSTER ACADEMIC GROWTH

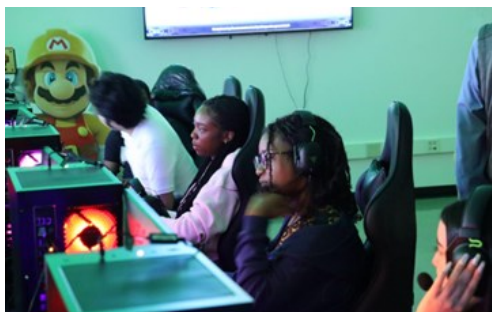
In the past 10 years, the Mount Vernon City School District has introduced and grown partnerships with a number of organizations, colleges and universities to deliver exceptional academic programming to students. The District has also increased its offering of trade programs during this time, expanding possibilities for all scholars.

#### GRADUATION AND PROFICIENCY RATES TRENDING UP OVER TIME

Acting Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel Services Dr. Marie Gaboton-Swift, presented the improving graduation and proficiency rate trends throughout the District at the Board of Education Meeting on Tuesday, May 7, 2024.

#### MOUNT VERNON VOTERS APPROVE BUDGET FOR 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

Voters approved a \$271,266,317 budget for the Mount Vernon City School District 2024-2025 school year by a 1,164-483 vote on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. Results were certified following the counting of absentee ballots.



#### APPROXIMATELY 60 PARTICIPANTS COMPETE IN THE KNIGHTS E-SPORTS CLUB

In the lower level of Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, students can often be found after school collaborating digitally and competing in an unconventional way. The STEAM Knights Esports Club began in October 2023, with an official ribbon cutting on December 18. Now in April 2024, the club has approximately 60 participants and is providing students with an engaging and competitive afterschool activity.



#### REBECCA TURNER ACADEMY STUDENT RECEIVES SCHOLARSHIP AT VFW BANQUET

Rebecca Turner Academy 11th grade student Alicia Barton accepted a \$500 scholarship from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 596 at the VFW Scholarship Banquet on Tuesday, April 23, 2024. To earn the scholarship, she won the Voice of Democracy Essay Contest with an essay about the pillars of democracy.



#### OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY DEPARTMENT PROJECTS IMPROVE DISTRICT BUILDINGS AND PERFORMANCE IN IT'S FIRST YEAR

In its first year, the MVCSD Operations and Accountability Department successfully completed a number of projects to directly improve the safety and educational experience throughout the District.

- Removal and abandonment of all oil tanks in compliance with New York State Education Department and Westchester County Department of Health requirements.
- Merger of Rebecca Turner Elementary School and Benjamin Turner Middle School. Provided all logistical, operational and public relations support for the entire undertaking.
- All buildings were inspected and received certificates of occupancy, a massive undertaking for a school district with 17 buildings.
- Comprehensive security camera upgrade for five schools – Benjamin Turner Academy, Mount Vernon Leadership Academy, Mount Vernon Honor Academy, Hamilton School and Grimes School – at a significant cost savings from the previously contracted camera company and utilized remaining grant money resulting in zero cost to the district.
- Purchased four government-level X-Ray machines directly from the manufacturer for three high schools, providing security improvements.
- Successful District-wide emergency abatement of asbestos was also completed weeks before the opening of schools in 15 classrooms at MVHS, the Pupil Personnel Services suite and bathroom at the Board of Education and a bathroom at Edward Williams School, improving the safety of all individuals in those buildings.
- Led a partnership with City Hall, Westchester Youth Shelter, the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau to create a cannabis court and find alternative disciplinary pathways to implement restorative practices for challenged youth, while offering them additional and nontraditional pathways to success.

# DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

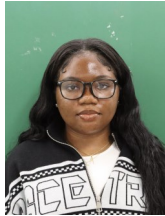


## MVCS D VALEDICTORIANS AND SALUTATORIANS EARN SCHOLARSHIPS AND ACCEPTANCES TO PREMIER UNIVERSITIES



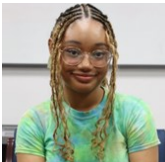
**Eric Lu** was announced as the valedictorian of the MVHS Class of 2024 with a GPA of 104. He is an International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) student enrolled in a rigorous class schedule that prepares him for his collegiate future and success. He will be committing to SUNY Stony Brook and plans on joining the Biomedical Engineering degree program after his first two years.

**Britaney "British" Sinclair** has been announced salutatorian for the MVHS Class of 2024 for having the second-highest GPA in her graduating class at 96.65. British serves as the current president of the MVHS senior class. Howard University has awarded British with their Presidential Scholarship, amounting to \$20,000 for each year.



**Chanel Baxter** has been named Denzel Washington School of Art's valedictorian for the Class of 2024. Chanel will be committing to Brown University in the fall on a four-year full-ride scholarship provided by QuestBridge and will be majoring in neuroscience.

**Brielle Henderson** has been announced the 2024 salutatorian of the Denzel Washington School of the Arts after achieving a GPA of 4.0 or 100, the second-highest GPA of her graduating class. She is committed to Fordham University and has been given a full-ride scholarship into their integrative neuroscience program.



**Damaris Ferrer** was named as the valedictorian for Mount Vernon STEAM Academy with a GPA of 101. She has been accepted into the Simon STEM Scholars program at SUNY Stony Brook, which is an honors program that offers a full scholarship, access to research opportunities, and in-house advising and tutoring that supports students academically. In addition to receiving the Simon STEM Scholarship, Damaris has also been given the Corporate Scholarship at the Carroll F. Johnson Scholastic Achievement Dinner, hosted by the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents in May.

**Margaret Djamongue** was named the Class of 2024 salutatorian at the Mount Vernon STEAM Academy with a GPA of 100. She is a recipient of the Mercy University Presidential Scholarship which is given to incoming freshman students that have demonstrated academic merit. Margaret was inspired by her father and several family members to pursue the medical field.



## DENZEL WASHINGTON VISITS DWSA TO SPEAK WITH STUDENTS

Denzel Washington School of the Arts students and staff, along with Acting Superintendent Dr. K. Veronica Smith, her cabinet and the Board of Education, had a rare opportunity to meet and speak with Denzel Washington, the namesake of the school, on Tuesday, June 4, 2024.



## MVHS EARN NYS DESIGNATION 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.



## MVHS CTE DEPARTMENT HOSTS SHARK TANK COMPETITION

The auditorium of Mount Vernon High School was transformed into a contest stage for the House that Time Forgot Competition, presented by the Career and Technical Education Department, on Thursday, April 25, 2024.



## 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.



# Congratulations CLASS OF 2024

# MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### 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).



### MV STEAM 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 AI and allowed students to begin programming their own AI to identify emotions of happiness or sadness.



### 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.



### 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.



### 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.