



Mount Vernon City School District
Home of the Knights



The First 90 Days Dr. Demario A. Strickland



A transformational educational leader with 18+ years of experience driving systemic change in New York State's urban districts through coalition building and data-driven initiatives. **Committed to advancing equity, expanding access, and amplifying student voice to inspire success for all learners.**



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District Mission:

The Mount Vernon City School District, comprising its board members, staff, scholars, parents, and community members, is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment that recognizes every scholar's unique qualities while providing a comprehensive and rigorous education that promotes respect, cultivates character, and inspires intellectual growth. The district is committed to empowering scholars to become lifelong learners, who are successful and responsible citizens and who positively contribute to their local and global communities.

District Vision:

The Mount Vernon City School District, through a shared decision-making process, is committed to helping its scholars, parents, teachers, and administrators enhance their academic, social, economic, and technological skills to prepare individuals to function effectively in today's global society.

Core Values:

- All scholars can learn.
- Scholars learn in different ways and at different paces.
- Scholars should be challenged to be lifelong learners.
- The key aspect of education is developing well-rounded scholars who think creatively and critically to make informed decisions and solve problems.
- Education enables individuals to be responsible, self-disciplined members of society.
- Cultural diversity enriches the educational experience for scholars.
- A safe and caring environment is important to scholars and staff.
- Education is a collaborative partnership with the Board of Education, staff, scholars, families, and resources in the community.



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District Goals

Academic Goals

1. Ensure that every scholar has foundational reading, writing, and arithmetic skills.
2. Prioritize teachers' use of data assessment to drive instructional practices in all classrooms.
3. Increase scholars' achievement district-wide by at least 3% in all core subjects with particular attention to sub-groups with special needs.

Operational Goals

1. Promote efficiency and accuracy in all of the operational branches of the Central Office – Administration, Buildings & Grounds, Business, Curriculum & Instruction, Human Resources, Operations and Accountability, Pupil Personnel Services, and School Improvement.
2. Create and communicate unified procedures, protocols, and practices throughout all facets of the school district.
3. Improve communication between central office leadership and building-level leadership.
4. Obtain additional funding for district programs.



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To the Mount Vernon City School District Family,

It is with great humility and deep commitment that I step into the role of Superintendent of the Mount Vernon City School District (MVCSD). I want to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to the Board of Education for entrusting me with this responsibility. Their unwavering commitment to our students, educators, and families is evident, and I look forward to working in partnership with them to continue advancing our district.

For the past several years, I have had the honor of serving as Chief of Schools, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, and Interim Superintendent, in the Rochester City School District where I have worked alongside our talented educators, dedicated staff, and engaged families to improve student outcomes and create a system that prioritizes excellence and equity. Throughout my career, I have remained steadfast in my belief that education is the great equalizer, and I am committed to ensuring that every student in MVCSD has access to the high-quality education they deserve.

A Vision for Transformation

I approach this work with the understanding that I am the genesis of transformation—but transformation is never a solitary effort. It is a collective commitment that requires all of us—students, families, educators, staff, and community partners—to work together to shape the future of our district.

To guide this work, I will be focusing on the **5 (M.O.U.N.T)** Critical Steps to Drive Immediate Impact:

- **Meet** – Engage with students, staff, families, and community members to build relationships and understand the district's culture.
- **Observe** – Conduct a deep dive into the district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities through classroom visits, data analysis, and discussions.
- **Understand** – Listen actively to stakeholders and gather insights to inform decision-making and align with district priorities.
- **Navigate** – Identify key areas that need immediate attention while ensuring smooth day-to-day operations.
- **Transition** – Establish a clear path forward, laying the groundwork for sustainable improvements and long-term success.

The Goals of my “90 Day” Plan are as follows:

1. Build Trusting Relationships with Stakeholders
2. Conduct a Comprehensive Assessment of District Operations
3. Establish Clear Communication Systems and Early Wins

While pushing forward to meeting these goals, I will keep at the forefront the following questions:

- What will I do? Who will I do it with? How will I track my success?

As I embark on this journey with the Mount Vernon City School District, I recognize that true transformation requires not just a plan, but a shared vision and collective effort. The MOUNT framework and 90-day plan outlined above represent my commitment to intentional leadership that honors Mount Vernon's rich history while building toward an even stronger future. I invite each of you—students, families, educators, staff, and community members—to join me in this important work as your voices, experiences, and aspirations are essential to our success.

In the coming weeks, I look forward to meeting many of you, learning from you, and working alongside you. My door will always be open, and I am committed to transparent, responsive leadership that puts students at the center of every decision. The future of Mount Vernon City School District is bright, and I am honored to serve as your superintendent. By working together with purpose and persistence, there is no limit to what we can achieve for our children and our community.

Dr. Demario A. Strickland
Superintendent of Schools
Mount Vernon City School District



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Personal Values



Equity - Every child deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of background or circumstance.

Integrity - Leadership must be grounded in honesty, transparency, and a relentless focus on student success.

Collaboration - Transformation happens when educators, families, and communities work together.

Accountability - Every decision must be student-centered and results-driven.

Resilience - Obstacles exist, but perseverance and innovation will drive change.

Core Beliefs

1. **Every child has unlimited potential.** - It is our responsibility to create an environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
2. **Literacy is the key to unlocking a child's future.** - Strong literacy skills empower students to think critically, communicate effectively, and access opportunities that change their lives.
3. **The quality of teaching determines the quality of learning.** - Investing in educators means investing in student success.
4. **Strong relationships create strong outcomes.** - Students succeed when they are seen, heard, and supported by caring adults.
5. **A child's ZIP Code should not determine their future.** - We must break down systemic barriers to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.



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Purpose of the 90-Day Entry Plan

As I begin my journey as Superintendent of **Mount Vernon City School District (MVCSD)**, I recognize that my first 90 days are critical for establishing momentum and direction. My entry plan serves as a roadmap for transformation, setting forth concrete objectives and measurable milestones that will guide our district's journey toward educational excellence. I have designed this strategic framework to align every action with our core mission: ensuring that every student receives an equitable, world-class education that prepares them for success. By focusing on key priorities and actionable goals during these vital first three months, I am committed to laying the foundation for sustainable, systemic change that will benefit **MVCSD** students for generations to come.

Guided by the phases of the **MOUNT** framework—**Meet & Observe, Understand, Navigate, and Transform**—this entry plan reflects my commitment to listening, learning, leading, and building the relationships necessary to achieve transformational change. These steps will serve as the foundation for ensuring immediate focus and alignment:

1. **Meet and observe**—Engage with students, educators, families, and community stakeholders to build relationships and gain a comprehensive understanding of the district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities.
2. **Understand** – Actively listen and analyze data to ensure informed decision-making that reflects the needs of the Mount Vernon community.
3. **Navigate** – Identify priorities and immediate areas for growth while ensuring smooth operations and alignment with district goals.
4. **Transform** – Implement strategies that lead to measurable, sustainable improvements in student achievement and overall district success.

There will be 3 Goals Associated with this plan:

Goal 1: Build Trusting Relationships with Stakeholders

Goal 2: Conduct a Comprehensive Assessment of District Operations

Goal 3: Establish Clear Communication Systems and Early Wins



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District-Wide Data

Type	Numbers/Percent
Accountability Status	Target District
Population	6,454
Graduation Rate	76% (4 year) 81% (5 year) 86% (6 year)
Graduation Pathways	Humanities (70%) Arts (4%) CTE (4%) Math (0%) Science (40%) CDOSS (4%) LOTE (1%) Civics (4%)
Grade 3 – 8 ELA	42%
Grade 3 – 8 Math	40%
Grade 8 – Math (Regents)	76%
Grade 5 Science	27%
Grade 8 Science	20%
ELA Regents	65%
Algebra Regents	30%
Biology	42%
Earth Science	67%
Chronic Absenteeism (Elementary/Middle)	26%
Staff Qualifications (Teachers) (Principals)	(82%) (53%) - Experienced



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Entry Plan

Days 1-30 (Meet & Observe)

Task:	Status:
Meet individually with each Board of Education member to understand their perspectives and priorities for Mount Vernon schools	
Meeting with Executive Assistant	
Visit all 16 school buildings to assess facilities and summer programs	
Hold introductory meetings with key district personnel including cabinet members, principals, and department heads	
Connect with Mount Vernon community leaders including Mayor, City Council members, Chamber of Commerce, NYS legislators, and faith-based organizations	
Review Mount Vernon's recent state assessment data, graduation rates, and accountability status	
Seek to attend Neighborhood Association meetings across the city to introduce myself to the residents	
Review the current district budget and fiscal status, with particular attention to the recent capital improvement projects	
Review the district's FTE counts by central office and buildings	
Establish weekly communication updates for staff and Board of Education Members	
Meet with all collective bargaining unit's leadership to build a collaborative relationship and find out what are the current strengths and areas of growth for these relationships	
Establish year-long calendar for the district	
Begin to identify quick wins and strategize to show progress and gain ground	
Review the district's professional development plan for all staff (executive cabinet, school leaders, teachers, assistants, paraprofessionals, etc.)	
Meet with the Board president to determine supervision cadence	
Review reforms that have occurred and determine effectiveness through the listening tours	
Monitor the district's reconfiguration plan and adjust to ensure schools are ready to open	
Provide me with a legal update with the legal status of the district with General Council	
Review the district's registration numbers by school, by grade	
Retreat - Cabinet members presents their department goals: Accomplishments Barriers Goals Norming work – How will we scope out of the year	



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Days 31-60 (Understand & Navigate)

Task:	Status:
Retreat with the Board of Education	
Analyze comprehensive data about Mount Vernon's academic performance, disaggregated by school, grade, and demographic groups	
Conduct focus groups with diverse stakeholder groups, including students, parents, teachers, and community members	
Review Mount Vernon's curriculum alignment with NYS Next Generation Standards, particularly in Literacy and mathematics	
Assess the district's special education services and compliance with state requirements	
Meet with educational partners for Mount Vernon	
Evaluate the district's technology infrastructure and determine compatibility for remote options	
Review transportation services and routes in preparation for school opening	
Establish "Superintendent's Student Advisory Council" with representatives from all Mount Vernon Schools	
Host "Meet the Superintendent" community forums in different neighborhoods	
Finalize and communicate school opening plan to all stakeholders	
Work with HR to address any critical staffing vacancies before school starts	
Review safety protocols at all buildings in collaboration with Mount Vernon Police Department	
Establish communication plan with the Board of Education	
Retreat with the Board of Education to support the planning of SMART Goals, as well as to design Superintendent's Evaluation Framework	
Present School Leaders with the Year's Focus and Goals	
Direct an external review of the district's operations	
Establish a strategic planning committee with representation from all stakeholder groups	
Realign organizational chart	



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Days 61 – 90 (Transform)

Task:	Status:
Visit every school on opening day to welcome students and staff	
Implement “First 30 Days” classroom observation schedule to visit classrooms across the district	
Launch monthly “Coffee and Cocoa with the Superintendent” sessions at different school locations	
Conduct first formal evaluation of academic programs and initiatives currently in place	
Present initial observations and preliminary recommendations to the Board of Education	
Launch weekly spotlight and monthly newsletter and enhanced social media communication strategy	
Begin development of district dashboard to track key performance indicators	
Host recognition event for staff members who went above and beyond during opening weeks	
Collaborate with Mount Vernon Public Library on literacy initiative for the school year	
Meet with high school student government representatives to understand student priorities	
Establish calendar of regular data review meetings with principals to focus on attendance and early academic indicators	
Present “State of the Schools” address to Mount Vernon community detailing findings and initial action steps	
Attend athletic events in support of the student athletes	
Draft a new strategic plan that outlines the district’s priorities for the next three to five years.	
Meet with Mayor, Council, and NYS Legislators regarding the vacant buildings	



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Igniting the Shift

Educate All Urban Students to High Standards: This goal focuses on ensuring that every student in urban districts achieves academic excellence, with an emphasis on closing achievement gaps and preparing students for college and careers.

Lead, Govern, and Manage Urban Schools Efficiently and Effectively: Superintendents are expected to provide visionary leadership, implement effective governance practices, and manage resources strategically to support student learning and organizational sustainability.

Bolster Public Confidence in Urban Education: Building trust and confidence among stakeholders—including parents, community members, and policymakers—is crucial. This involves transparent communication, community engagement, and demonstrating the success and value of urban public schools.



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