

# THE STEAM SCENE

MV STEAM ACADEMY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Testing**

June 1st  
*Finals Begin*  
 June 9th-10th  
*Regents*  
 June 17-18th  
*Regents*  
 June 23rd-25th  
*Regents*

### **May Meetings**

June 3rd  
*Faculty Meeting 3-4pm*  
 June 17th  
*Department Meeting 3-4pm*

### **Fieldtrips**

June 10th  
*8th Grade Trip*  
 June 22nd  
*Senior Trip*

### **School events**

June 4th  
*Undergraduate Awards Ceremony*  
 June 8th  
*National Honor Society Induction Ceremony*  
 June 11th  
*Mentors in Medicine Health Fair*  
 June 10th  
*Mock Trial Recognition at City Hall*  
 June 11th  
*Sports Award Night at MVHS*  
 June 12th  
*Field Day*  
 June 15th  
*Senior BBQ*  
 June 16th  
*Senior Awards Convocation*  
 June 25th  
*Graduation*

### **Upcoming Holidays**

June 19th  
*No School: Juneteenth*

### Spotlight

## A LEGACY OF ADVOCACY: HONORING MR. EMERSON & AUTISM ACCEPTANCE ACROSS MOUNT VERNON

At Mount Vernon STEAM Academy, advocacy is more than a message; it's a movement, thanks in large part to the dedication of Mr. Don Emerson. A veteran educator, mentor, and community leader, Mr. Emerson has spent decades shaping students' lives while championing autism awareness throughout the district.

Mr. Emerson's passion for advocacy is deeply personal. After his son was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, he became committed to raising awareness and building meaningful support systems for families. In 2001, alongside colleagues Arnie Betancourt, Jackie Shkreli, and Starling Churn, he helped develop what would become the Mount Vernon City School District's annual Autism Acceptance Day, now a cornerstone event that celebrates students of all abilities and promotes inclusion districtwide.

Throughout his career, Mr. Emerson has exemplified compassion, leadership, and service. From his early days as a substitute teacher to becoming a lasting presence in the district, his work continues to leave a powerful impact on students, families, and colleagues alike. His connection to community initiatives, including his involvement with the Daisy Dream Project, reflects his ongoing commitment to advocacy beyond the classroom.

*Mr. Emerson and Mr. Batkay at the Daisy Dream Dinner Dance!*



... article continued from front page Spotlight

This April, the district came together to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month in meaningful and engaging ways. At STEAM Academy, students and staff embraced a vibrant Autism Acceptance Spirit Week, with each day centered on promoting kindness, teamwork, awareness, and positivity. From wearing gold and orange to symbolize acceptance, to sharing messages of encouragement and inclusion, the week fostered meaningful conversations and reinforced a schoolwide commitment to celebrating differences.

The celebration continued at the districtwide Autism Acceptance Day held at Graham School, where students, families, and community members gathered for an afternoon of connection and joy. The event featured interactive games, sensory stations, a bounce house, music, and access to valuable parent resources, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. It was a powerful example of what it looks like when a community comes together to support and uplift every learner.

That spirit of advocacy extended beyond the school day through events like the Daisy Dream Project’s Casino Night fundraiser, which raised significant funds to support programs, resources, and experiences for individuals with Autism and their families. The strong turnout and community support highlighted Mount Vernon’s ongoing commitment to not only raising awareness, but also taking meaningful action.

Together, these efforts reflect a shared commitment to inclusion, compassion, and opportunity for all students across the district.



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*“I’ve never experienced a sense of community quite like what I witnessed at both Autism Awareness Day and the Daisy Dream Project’s charity event. As someone who grew up upstate, Mount Vernon continues to surprise me in the best way. From the bouncy castle to the blackjack tables, and most importantly, the genuine sense of brotherhood, it has been an incredible and welcoming experience as I continue to find my place in this community.”*

– Mr. Batkay, Social Studies Teacher

Celebrations

# HONORING THE HEART OF STEAM ACADEMY

Mount Vernon STEAM Academy proudly celebrates two outstanding staff members who were recognized during the Mount Vernon City School District’s 2026 Secretaries & School Nurses Recognition Ceremony for their dedication, professionalism, and commitment to students.

Ms. Shirley Coleman, who has faithfully served the Mount Vernon community for 30 years, was honored for her exceptional organization, reliability, and positive attitude. Known as the school’s go-to person, Ms. Coleman consistently helps ensure that daily operations run smoothly while supporting students, staff, and families with care and professionalism. There is no one like her!

School Nurse Patronella Dawson was also recognized for the tremendous impact she has on the STEAM Academy community. Beyond providing medical care, Ms. Dawson plays a vital role in maintaining student health, safety, and well-being. Her support during Academic Power Hour, Saturday Regents prep, and other school events reflects her unwavering dedication to student success. Both honorees embody the spirit of STEAM Academy through their compassion, commitment, and years of service. Congratulations to Ms. Coleman and Ms. Dawson on this well-deserved recognition!



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Field Trips

# LEARNING HISTORY THROUGH REMEMBRANCE AT THE 9/11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM

On May 21, juniors from Mount Vernon STEAM Academy traveled to New York City for a Social Studies Department organized field trip to the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. The visit came as students had just begun learning about the events of September 11, 2001 in class, an important topic that will also appear on the upcoming New York State Regents Exam in June.



Throughout the day, students explored the memorial grounds and museum exhibits, examining artifacts, personal stories, and historical timelines that helped bring their classroom learning to life. The experience encouraged reflection and gave students a deeper understanding of the lasting impact 9/11 had on New York City, the United States, and the world.

The trip was chaperoned by Mr. DeHay, Ms. Guziczek, Mr. Pally, Ms. Wallace, Ms. Prince, Ms. Monique Porter, Ms. Forson, Ms. Grosso, and Security Officer Jesse. After visiting the museum, students enjoyed lunch in the city before returning to school.

## Celebrations &amp; Honors

**A CAREER OF DEDICATION AND IMPACT**

After 31 years in education, including 21 years dedicated to the Mount Vernon City School District, Ms. Sharon Whitter is preparing to close an unforgettable chapter, leaving behind a legacy of resilience, authenticity, and deep care for students and colleagues.

Throughout her career, Ms. Whitter has worked at AB Davis Middle School, Mount Vernon High School, Parker School, Leadership Academy, Williams School, and Mount Vernon STEAM Academy. Along the way, she taught Earth Science, Integrated Science, and Living Environment, helping generations of students navigate not only science concepts, but life itself.

When asked what inspired her to become a teacher, her answer was simple: "I wanted to change the world." Over three decades later, she realized that this monumental task had to be modified to one classroom, one conversation, and one student at a time.



*I began working with Ms. Whitter in 2018, during the inaugural year of MV STEAM Academy. From the very start, she was an invaluable source of support, especially in developing and managing the reflection room. Her steady, thoughtful guidance made a meaningful difference in our school community, and we are proud to celebrate her 21 years of dedicated service to the district." - Dr. Pearce, Principal*

Ms. Whitter describes her career as filled with both "the best of times and the worst of times," always choosing to learn from every experience. One saying she carried with her throughout the years became a reflection of both her personal and professional journey: "What nuh kill yuh, make yuh stronger." That mindset helped shape the compassionate, honest, and grounded educator so many students and colleagues came to admire. Some of her favorite memories are the simple ones: laughing with students and coworkers, sharing milk and cookies after school, and hearing students she never even taught greet her by name in the hallways. "Everyone knows you, Ms. Whitter," students would say, a testament to the warmth and presence she brought into every building she worked in.

She credits her colleagues with helping her grow into her authentic self and hopes students remember one important lesson above all else: "Practice makes improvement. Keep practicing." She also reminds students that they matter deeply, calling each of them a "VVVIP - a very, very, very important person."

For new teachers entering the profession, Ms. Whitter offers heartfelt advice: know your triggers, take care of yourself, and learn to laugh at yourself as you grow. "Take that day off! The only person who remembers that you worked is you," she shared, encouraging future educators to find balance and protect their peace. "Enjoy your youthful days while you are committed to work."

As retirement begins, Ms. Whitter says she looks forward to "waking up in a world where tomorrow is always Saturday." After more than three decades of service, mentorship, and dedication, it is a future she has more than earned. While she may be stepping away from the classroom, the impact of Ms. Whitter's career will continue to live on through the students she encouraged, the colleagues she inspired, and the countless lives she helped shape along the way.

**Thank you, Ms. Whitter, for 31 incredible years of service and for reminding all of us that strength, kindness, and authenticity can truly change the world!**



Celebrations

## CELEBRATING DR. STARLING T. CHURN: A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION AND EXCELLENCE

Mount Vernon STEAM Academy proudly celebrates Dr. Starling T. Churn, a dedicated middle school English teacher who has served the Mount Vernon City School District for over 20 years. This May, he achieved a remarkable milestone by earning his Ph.D. from Liberty University, demonstrating his continued commitment to growth and excellence in education.

Throughout his career, Dr. Churn has embraced his role as both an educator and mentor, supporting students not only in the classroom but also through community and faith-based initiatives. His passion for student success has guided his work, including tutoring and mentoring youth while encouraging academic accountability and achievement.

Dr. Churn’s doctoral capstone project, titled *Recommendations to Solve the Problem of a Low Percentage of Black Male Teachers in the Classrooms of Edward Williams School in New York*, reflects his dedication to addressing equity and representation in education. As he looks toward the next chapter of his career, he plans to continue impacting students and communities by consulting, organizing, and expanding access to educational resources for 21st-century learners.



**“In the words of our principal, Dr. Pearce, we are MV STEAM, and we are all the way up! Blessings to all as we go higher to what is next.”**  
**- Dr. Starling T. Churn, Class of 2026, Liberty University**

English Department

## SKELETON LANDS BEHIND BARS, THANKS TO ONE DETERMINED SENIOR

Classroom learning often comes with a sense of humor, especially when White Boy Carl is involved. White Boy Carl, or “WBC,” is a classroom skeleton in Ms. Benjamin’s English classroom who quickly became a favorite among seniors after students voted to give him his now-famous name at the start of the school year. Since then, WBC has appeared in a variety of themed outfits connected to holidays and classroom units, dressed as everything from Santa Claus and Cupid to a judge and a gangster.

Most recently, WBC appeared during students’ study of Stephen King’s *The Green Mile*, dressed as a death row prisoner inspired by the novel and film. As a joke, senior Leonard Oduro was challenged to get a picture of White Boy Carl with a local police officer, and even “extra-extra credit” if he could somehow get him placed inside a real jail cell.

Leonard delivered.

The now-famous photo of White Boy Carl inside an actual jail cell quickly became one of the funniest and most memorable moments of the school year, showcasing the creativity, humor, and school spirit that make our school unique.

White Boy Carl is also part of a larger skeleton “family,” which includes Bonetta, WBC’s little sister, and Alternate Dimension Zeus, also known as Steve. This writer wonders if they helped White Boy Carl post bail?



“For extra credit, I was somehow assigned the impossible task of arresting our class pet, Carl. With the help of my friends Aidan and Leonardo (former STEAM students), we took the mission seriously and went to the New Rochelle Police Station. After explaining our very unusual assignment, a police officer actually agreed to help, making Carl’s arrest official... though he insists he was innocent and just “too good-looking.””  
 - Leanoard Oduro, Senior

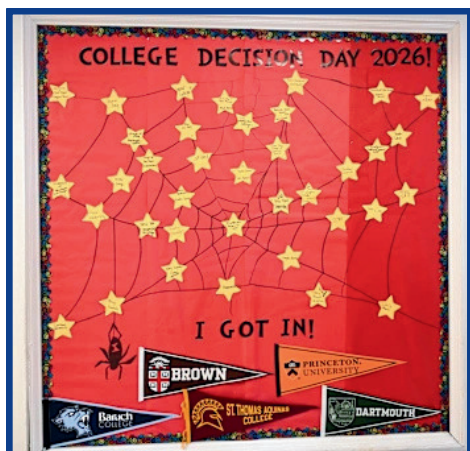


Guidance Department

# STEAM SENIORS CELEBRATE BRIGHT FUTURES ON COLLEGE DECISION DAY

On May 1st, Mount Vernon STEAM Academy seniors marked an exciting milestone during College Decision Day, celebrating their post-graduation plans and the journeys ahead. The event highlighted the diverse paths of the Class of 2026, with students committing to four-year colleges, community colleges, trade schools, and military service.

The celebration reflected not only academic achievement but also each student's individuality and ambition. As seniors proudly shared their next steps, the day served as a powerful reminder that success looks different for everyone, and that each path is worth celebrating. With futures set in motion, STEAM Academy seniors are ready to take their next big step beyond the classroom!

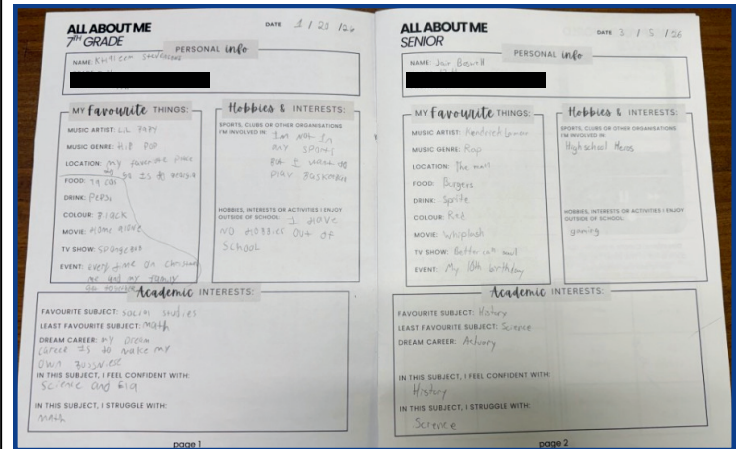


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No Place for Hate

# NO PLACE FOR HATE: JOURNALS OF BELONGING



This school year, Mount Vernon STEAM Academy continued its commitment to building a more inclusive and respectful school community through our No Place for Hate (NPFH) campaign. Led by Ms. Wallace, Ms. Vogel, and Assistant Principal Anjanette Brown, the initiative paired 7th-grade Social Studies students with 12th-grade ELA students in a yearlong journal exchange focused on empathy, identity, allyship, and belonging.

Throughout the year, students completed monthly activities centered on topics such as identity, being an upstander, diversity, and cyberbullying while building meaningful cross-grade connections. Seniors served as mentors, offering thoughtful encouragement and support along the way.

The campaign also featured the school's "wings" bulletin board created from signed pledge feathers during the December kickoff, symbolizing how individual voices can come together to stand against hate.



**A HUGE THANK YOU TO MRS. FISHLOCK, MR. DONATICH, MS. BENJAMIN, MS. VOGEL, MR. EMERSON, MR. DURANTE, MR. BATKAY AND MS. CIALLELLA FOR THEIR COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THIS MEANINGFUL INITIATIVE!**

Music Department

## ENCORE! AN EVENING OF MUSICAL EXCELLENCE



On May 28th, students took center stage for an impressive musical performance that highlighted months of hard work, practice, and dedication. Under the direction of the amazing Ms. Faust, STEAM Academy's music teacher extraordinaire, students showcased their talents through band performances, solo acts, rock band numbers, and even a special dance performance.

The concert opened with selections by the High School Beginner Band, including Beethoven's 9th Symphony and a student-inspired Class Playlist arrangement. Audience members were also treated to a variety of solo performances featuring flute, piano, saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, and percussion, played by students who confidently demonstrated their growing musical skills.

One of the highlights of the evening was the performance of student rock bands. The Beats performed "Beaches" by Beabadoobee, while Overcast energized the crowd with renditions of "Zombie," "Join Me in Death," and "Smells Like Teen Spirit." The program also featured a dance performance by Jah'ri Monpoint and several collaborative performances that showcased both student talent and the strong sense of community within the music program.

The concert reflected the tremendous growth of students across all skill levels and musical interests. From first-year band members learning their instruments to students performing as soloists and rock musicians before an audience, every performer contributed to a memorable performance.

A huge thank you goes to Ms. Faust, whose passion, dedication, and countless hours of preparation made the event possible. Her commitment to providing students with meaningful musical experiences continues to inspire young musicians and create opportunities for them to shine. The performance was a wonderful celebration of creativity, perseverance, and the joy of making music together.

Diyaa Farea, Alto Saxophone  
 Spencer Edoh, Alto Saxophone  
 Stephen Ahiamadi, Alto Saxophone  
 Layla Humphrey, Alto Saxophone  
 Joseph Adjei, Percussion  
 Salvador Cardenas, Percussion  
 Aadyn Fulcher, Percussion  
 Dakarai Jacobs, Percussion  
 Emely Mateus, Percussion  
 Jaden Sandoval, Percussion  
 Oliver Silva, Percussion  
 John Simpson, Percussion  
 Galilea Valdivia, Percussion

Joy Padilla, Percussion and Piano  
 Addison Goodwine, Flute  
 Kimberly Munguia, Flute  
 Victoria Galindo, Flute  
 Daniel Marcelino, Flute  
 Matias Ramirez Escalante, Flute  
 Zahreka Levene, Bass Clarinet  
 Leia Forman, Clarinet  
 Roaldo Beharry, Clarinet  
 Hailey Perrier, Clarinet  
 Maritza Aguilera, Trumpet  
 Azariah Smith, Trumpet  
 Kylee Walker, Vocalist  
 Jahri Monpoint, Dancer

Alexia Ortega, Guitar  
 Alistair Bell, Guitar  
 Eliab Obando, Guitar  
 Carlos Garcia Pena, Bass Guitar  
 Cesar Aguilar, Vocalist  
 Kimberly Valladares, Snare Drum  
 Anthony Buck, Snare Drum  
 Rushane Kirlew, Snare Drum  
 Frank Fabian Colon, Snare Drum  
 Mrs. Faust, Band Director, Arranger,  
 Trumpet Performer, and Drums  
 Ms. Wallace, Vocalist  
 Ms. Mag, Vocalist

After School

## ACE STUDENTS SHOWCASE ENGINEERING & DESIGN EXCELLENCE

On May 19, students from the ACE Mentor Program at Mount Vernon STEAM Academy presented their final project, a fictional Hudson University School of the Arts, to Con Edison executives, mentors, parents, and guests. Working alongside New York City Department of Education students and industry professionals, students collaborated on the design and planning of the university campus.

STEAM student Carlos Pena Garcia opened the presentation by introducing the project and the student teams. Freshman Leia Forman shared the Architecture Team’s vision for the building, while Juan Torres Veliz discussed the exterior layout of the campus. Felix Guevara and Eli Forman highlighted the building’s facade and exterior design elements. Representing the Mechanical Engineering Team, Elijah Cassie explained the planning of the HVAC systems, and Victoria Galindo presented the Construction Team’s proposal detailing the project’s cost and timeline.

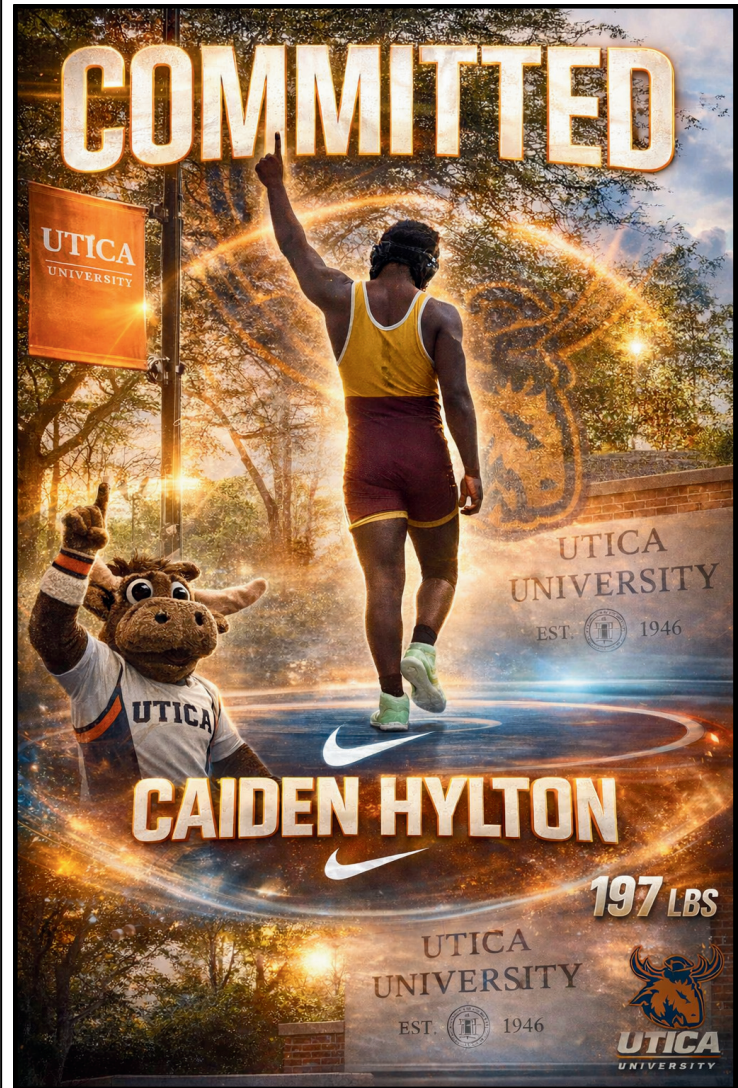
Following the presentations, students participated in a question-and-answer session with Con Edison employees, showcasing both their knowledge and professionalism. The ACE students will continue their work next week at an expo hosted by Stuyvesant High School, where they will present alongside ACE teams from across the New York City metropolitan area.

“On behalf of the ACE students of STEAM, we would like to thank Dr. Pearce and the Mount Vernon City School District for advocating for the continuation of the ACE program,” said Ms. Rodriguez, who oversees the program, “and giving our students the opportunity to learn alongside industry professionals.”



Senior Corner

## CONGRATULATIONS CAIDEN!



	2			3		4
6						3
		4			5	
			8	6		
8				1		6
			7		5	
		7				6
4						8
	3			4		2

Field Trips

# MOCK EMERGENCY, REAL LEARNING

On May 21, students participated in “Operation Influx” at a local Mount Vernon hospital, an immersive emergency response simulation designed to recreate the challenges of a large-scale medical crisis. Chaperoned by Mr. Boylan and Mr. Glinias, students took on the roles of different victims, each receiving detailed injury profiles, symptoms, and medical histories that emergency staff had to assess and respond to in real time. Throughout the simulation, students experienced the fast-paced environment of emergency medicine while learning how hospitals coordinate triage, patient care, communication, and crisis management during high-pressure situations. The hands-on experience provided students with a unique look into healthcare careers and the teamwork required to respond effectively during emergencies.



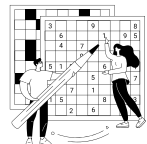
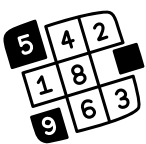
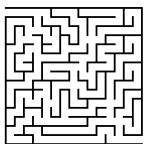
Puzzles

## WORD SEARCH

Find and circle each word from the word bank!

- |             |            |              |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| AUTISM      | ACCEPTANCE | MOTHER'S DAY |
| MEMORIAL    |            | TROUT        |
| WHITTER     |            | YANKEE       |
| DOCTORATE   |            | SCIENCE      |
| SKELETON    |            | APPRECIATION |
| DECISION    |            | INSPIRE      |
| JOURNAL     |            | WELLNESS     |
| SHOWCASE    |            | BUDGET       |
| CAIDEN      |            | SQUAD        |
| ENGINEERING |            | ATTENDANCE   |

Q	K	X	F	A	U	D	V	Q	J	U	V	E	N	G	I	N	E	E	R	I	N	G	P	N	J	U	K	N	B
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Senior Spotlight

**SHINING ON TO GRADUATION: ZIOR WILLIAMS**

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE FULL EPISODE OUR DISTRICT WEBSITE!



**ZIOR WILLIAMS**  
MOUNT VERNON STEAM ACADEMY - SENIOR

As graduation approaches, Mount Vernon STEAM Academy proudly celebrates senior Zior Williams as part of the district's Shining on to Graduation series. Zior has distinguished herself through her determination, focus, and clear vision for the future.

This fall, Zior plans to pursue a dual path in English and Law, combining her passion for language, critical thinking, and advocacy. With aspirations to make a meaningful impact beyond her community, she represents the drive and purpose that define the Class of 2026.

Zior's journey reflects the power of perseverance and ambition, and her story serves as an inspiration to her peers as they prepare to take their next steps. STEAM Academy is proud to celebrate her accomplishments and looks forward to all she will achieve in the years ahead.

Science Department

**FROM CLASSROOM TO CREEK**

Last weekend, Mr. Glinias and Mr. Boylan released the young trout raised at STEAM through the Trout in the Classroom program into the waters at Pound Ridge. The program provided a hands-on look at conservation, ecosystems, and environmental stewardship, culminating in the trout's release into their natural habitat!



Parent Resource Center

**BLOOMING TOGETHER: A MOTHER'S DAY CELEBRATION**

On May 7, 2026, Mount Vernon STEAM Academy welcomed families into the cafeteria for a special Mother's Day Celebration filled with creativity, learning, and connection. Hosted and organized by Parent Liaison Ms. Dardane Prelvukaj, the event brought parents and students together to paint flower pots, plant flowers, and enjoy refreshments and breakfast in a warm and welcoming environment.

The hands-on activity blended academics with family engagement as participants explored science concepts related to plant growth, the plant life cycle, and the care needed for flowers to thrive. Students and their families also expressed their creativity through colorful pot designs while strengthening fine motor and artistic skills.

Beyond the crafts and planting, the event supported social-emotional learning by encouraging teamwork, communication, patience, and appreciation. Most importantly, the celebration strengthened the home-school connection and reminded everyone of the importance of nurturing growth, responsibility, and gratitude, both in plants and in one another.



*Field Trips***SENIORS STEP UP TO THE PLATE AT YANKEE STADIUM**

The Senior Yankee Trip, held on May 7th at Yankee Stadium, gave 18 seniors an unforgettable opportunity to experience the excitement of a live Major League Baseball game. Accompanied by Ms. Monique Porter, Coach Michael Smith, and Ms. Prince, students traveled to see the New York Yankees take on the Texas Rangers in a highly anticipated matchup. The students enjoyed an exciting game as the Yankees defeated the Rangers 9-2, adding to the day's energy.

The trip was designed to provide students with a fun and memorable outing while exposing them to a professional sporting event in person. For many of the participants, this was their very first visit to a Yankee game, making the experience even more special. Throughout the day, students cheered on the team, took in the electric atmosphere of the stadium, and spent quality time together outside of the classroom while enjoying America's favorite pastime.



**“The moment number 99 stepped up to bat, the entire stadium erupted. You could feel the energy, his aura was undeniable.” - Kiara Hamilton, Senior**

*Project Lead the Way***HANDS-ON HEART SCIENCE**

Students in PLTW recently participated in a heart dissection as part of their heart unit with Mr. Glinias. The activity gave students a hands-on opportunity to explore the chambers, valves, arteries, and vessels of the heart while deepening their understanding of human anatomy and the circulatory system.

*School Events***A SWEET CELEBRATION OF APPRECIATION**

On Friday, May 8, Mount Vernon STEAM Academy celebrated National Teacher Appreciation Day with a special breakfast buffet honoring the teachers and staff who make a difference every day. Hosted by the school's administrative team, the event was made possible with the help of Ms. Blake, Ms. Monique Porter, Ms. Pogue, Ms. Ingram, Ms. Wallace (TA) and Mr. Hyman.

Held in the auditorium, the space was beautifully transformed by Ms. Ingram, who arranged elegant table settings and created a welcoming dining atmosphere right on the stage. Staff members enjoyed a delicious breakfast spread while taking time to relax, connect, and feel appreciated for their hard work and dedication throughout the year.

“The best part were the Fruity Pebble waffles,” shared Mr. Glinias, echoing the excitement many staff members felt about the thoughtful menu. More than just a meal, the breakfast served as a meaningful reminder of the strong sense of community and gratitude shared throughout the STEAM Academy family.

After School

# INSPIRE SCHOLARS PROGRAM CONCLUDES TRANSFORMATIVE FIRST YEAR AT MV STEAM ACADEMY

This year, MV STEAM Academy students reached for the stars through the INSPIRE Scholars Program, a student-led mentorship and college readiness initiative founded by STEAM alumni Maame Forson (Harvard University) and Heily Gonzalez (Cornell University). What began as a vision to support students through the college process quickly grew into a thriving community centered on mentorship, opportunity, and empowerment.

Throughout the school year, INSPIRE provided students with meaningful academic and personal support through 24 workshops, 14 guest speaker mentorship sessions, and hands-on college readiness programming. The program supported 35 students under the guidance of 15 mentors and 7 dedicated board members, many of whom are MV STEAM Academy graduates now attending prestigious colleges and universities.

Workshops throughout the year focused on topics such as college essay writing, financial aid, FAFSA and CSS Profile support, career exploration, self-care, and confidence-building. Guest speakers and mentors shared their educational journeys while helping students navigate the often overwhelming college application process. Programs such as the "Show Me the Money" financial aid workshop and creative expression sessions gave students practical tools while also encouraging self-discovery and personal growth.

For many students, the impact of INSPIRE extended far beyond academics. Senior Rozelle Brewster shared, "To be a part of this program means to be part of a network and community. In this community, I am taught by strong mentors who have been on a similar path, coming from an underrepresented area and working toward their dreams and aspirations. With this guidance, there's hope for me to do the same." Senior Tamaya Benjamin reflected that the program, "inspired me to fully lock in and stop procrastinating," while helping her take both her senior year and college process more seriously.

Mentors also expressed how rewarding the experience was. INSPIRE mentor Daniella Costa Dos Santos reflected on helping her mentee navigate applications and scholarships, sharing that she appreciated "all the effort she has put into each of our sessions." Another mentor, Indya Taylor, described the opportunity to support students from her former high school as "a deeply rewarding experience."

The year will conclude with the "Starbound Scholars Celebration," an end-of-year event recognizing the accomplishments, growth, and resilience of INSPIRE scholars. The celebration brings together students, mentors, staff, families, and supporters for an afternoon filled with reflection, recognition, and community.

As INSPIRE prepares for its second year, the program is already planning to launch a student internship and volunteer initiative. Applications for next year's INSPIRE Scholars cohort are now also available on the program's Instagram page, continuing its mission to help students dream big, build confidence, and create pathways toward future success.

From college applications to mentorship connections, INSPIRE has quickly become more than an afterschool program at MV STEAM Academy; it has become a community dedicated to uplifting the next generation!



Follow Inspire on social media for updates and more!



Instagram



LinkedIn



Facebook

Mental Health Awareness Month

## HEALING HAPPENING: STUDENTS PRIORITIZE MENTAL WELLNESS



On May 28, the Library Media Center became a space for relaxation, creativity, and connection during Healing Happening, a special mental wellness event held during lunch periods for students in grades 9–12.

Coordinated by Mrs. Roberts, the event featured a variety of activities, including tea and treats, mandala coloring, bookmark-making, bracelet and lanyard-making, potpourri-making, clay sculpting, and a photo booth. Mrs. Roberts secured supplies through a successful DonorsChoose project and brought together a team of staff members to help make the day possible.

The event was supported by Ms. Grosso, who graciously allowed the Library Media Center to be used, and Parent Liaison Dardane Prevlukaj, who helped coordinate throughout the day. Appreciation also goes to the many staff volunteers who led activity stations and supported students during each lunch period.

Students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, taking time to relax, create, and connect with one another. Recognition also goes to students Jaden and Leonard, who helped capture memories from the event through photography and the photo booth.

The positive energy throughout the day highlighted the importance of supporting student wellness and creating opportunities for students to recharge, reflect, and have fun together.

District News

## STUDENT VOICE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE

Junior student representative Valeria Martinez is encouraging families and community members to vote in the upcoming June 16 school budget vote after attending a recent superintendent's meeting focused on the district's financial future. Selected by Assistant Principal Ms. Brown to represent STEAM Academy alongside fellow student representative Tristan, Valeria attends monthly meetings where students share perspectives and discuss ways to improve the educational experience for current and future students.

During the meeting, Valeria said she was especially impacted by discussions surrounding potential program cuts, staffing reductions, and technology concerns if the budget is not approved. **“Students are the future, and investing in their education creates brighter opportunities for everyone,” she shared.**

Valeria hopes her message encourages greater civic engagement in the community and reminds families of the direct impact that school budgets have on students' opportunities, programs, and resources. She also emphasized the importance of students understanding how educational funding decisions shape their everyday experiences in school.



About Us

# THE STEAM SCENE SQUAD

As the final print issue of The STEAM Scene closes out another unforgettable year (we'll have one more digital issue in June!), we would like to recognize the powerhouse trio behind the pages. Ms. Wallace worked tirelessly chasing stories, begging for photos, and surviving the last-minute "Can you add this?" emails. Mrs. Fishlock bravely took on the role of editor, saving us all from bad adjectives, missing commas, and occasional typo chaos. And of course, none of it would have made it to print without Ms. Cardillo-Rojas, our print shop extraordinaire, who somehow transformed scattered files and frantic deadlines into a polished final product every single month. Together, they stressed, edited, and printed their way through a year of The STEAM Scene and, honestly, deserve at least one dramatic slow-motion hallway applause scene for their efforts.



**Ms. Ashley Wallace** is a middle and high school social studies teacher (*temporarily on loan from the English department for one year only*) and the Director of Journalism Operations behind The STEAM Scene. Her daily responsibilities include hunting down photos, translating chaotic emails into coherent sentences, and pretending "final draft" actually means final. When she's not covering every event in the building, she serves as advisor for the Class of 2028, enthusiastically encouraging students to participate in approximately 700 fundraisers so they can someday afford prom, senior activities, and possibly a functioning class treasury. Despite no less than 47 open tabs at all times, she continues to survive on sheer determination and the love of editing school videos that feature the joys of teaching.

**Ms. Jenifer Cardillo-Rojas**, a Mount Vernon native, received her Associate's Degree in Computer Science in 2005 and her Bachelor's Degree in Media Communications in 2018 from Pace University. Jen began her employment with the Mount Vernon City School District in 2003 as a Per Diem Typist at Mount Vernon High School and became a permanent Typist for the Print Shop in the Career & Technical Education Department in 2004. In 2007, her hard work earned her a promotion from Typist to Senior Typist, and in 2023, her talent and dedication to the MVCSD earned her a new position as Print Shop Production and Graphic Designer. From a young age, Jen spent every summer helping her mother, Joan Cardillo, in the office at Nichols/Franko/Longfellow Middle School (Now Benjamin Turner Academy). This is where her love for her community and graphic design talent began. Jen's strong work ethic shows in the quality of the work she does for the school community. She is always willing to help and go above and beyond; this quality is what



makes her appreciated by staff and administration throughout the district. In her spare time, she loves spending time and making memories with her husband, Jorge, and their three children, Jiana, Jenna, and Jordan. She also enjoys visiting family and friends, hosting parties, and judging your font choice.



This is a story all about how my life got twist-turned upside down. And I'd like to take a minute, just sit right. I'll tell you how I became the QUEEN of a school called STEAM. In central New York, I was born and raised. In the cow fields is where I spent most of my days. I was chillin' in my classes, and acting was cool. I was always in the theater after school, when a couple of teachers who were up to no good started me thinking teaching was where I stood. I got in one little college and my mom filled with glee. She said, "Now go and get your Master's degree." I whistled for a job and when it came near, the department was tight and there was no fear. If anything, I thought, "I could make it here," and then I said, "Let's do this. I'm teaching English this year!" I pulled up to the school but I couldn't know then that the years would fly until I'm in year 10! Looked at my queendom, I was finally there. To sit on my throne and show kids I care. - **Mrs. Laura Fishlock-Claro**

## Message from the Principal

Thanks for your commitment to Academic Rigor, High Expectations, the 4Cs, RAW (Reading, Analyzing, and Writing in all subjects), PBL (Project-Based Learning), Explicit Direct Instruction, Collaborative Progress Monitoring, Excellence, and Professionalism at the MV STEAM Academy!



## Donations

### DONATE TO THE SUNSHINE FUND!

Donate to our faculty-supported program that is used to acknowledge and support staff members during significant life events, both positive and challenging. See Ms. Grosso with any questions!

DONATE HERE:  
Venmo @Laura-Grosso-1



*Around the School*

## MAY ATTENDANCE

7<sup>th</sup> Grade - 87.19%  
 8<sup>th</sup> Grade - 84.49%  
 9<sup>th</sup> Grade - 82.33%  
 10<sup>th</sup> Grade - 81.28%  
 11<sup>th</sup> Grade - 78.82%  
 12<sup>th</sup> Grade - 72.57%

## CLASS ADVISORS

**Class of 2026**  
 Ms. Stanton

**Class of 2027**  
 Ms. Comrie & Ms. Roberts

**Class of 2028**  
 Ms. Wallace

**Class of 2029**  
 Mr. Claro & Mr. Glinias

**Class of 2026 & 2027 (Middle School)**  
 Ms. Ingram & Ms. Porter

*About MV STEAM Academy*

## MISSION AND VISION

The vision of the Mount Vernon STEAM Academy is to prepare students for success in the 21st century by providing equitable, rigorous and innovative learning opportunities across all content areas through a STEAM lens.

We will promote active learning and challenge our students to take full ownership of their education centered around the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity) and 5Es (engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate). We encourage our students to identify and recognize their skills, talents and passions.

*Important Information*

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT NEWSLETTER!

Help us showcase the amazing things happening at MV STEAM Academy! Share a classroom celebration, student achievement, or event you'd like featured in our monthly newsletter.



## STAFF MEMBER OF THE MONTH NOMINATION FORM

Every role in our school makes a difference. Help us recognize a colleague who goes above and beyond! Nominations are open to all staff members – teachers, security, support staff, office, custodial, cafeteria, TAs, and more!



# MARCH & APRIL STAFF OF THE MONTH!

**THE Hollywood REPORTER**

**EMPATHY IN ACTION**  
Using Her Heart of Compassion Without Conditions

**SHEPHERD AMONGST THE FLOCK**  
5 Steps to Give Hope & Amplify Voices

**FROM STRUGGLE TO STRENGTH**  
How Does Comrie Help Students Rewrite Their Stories?

**THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE**  
How Do Faith & Love Inform Comrie's Journey to Serve?

**LAWS OF ATTRACTION**  
Explore the Magnetic Force of Comrie's Aura. What Does It Take To Be the Light of the World?

**Queen of Hearts**

Author, Educator, Advisor & Winner of Numerous Book of the Year Awards for *Rain Raising*

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**DISCOVER**  
SCIENCE THAT MATTERS

**INSIDE THE MIND OF GLINI THA PIRATE**

**SCIENCE IN MOTION**  
HOW DOES BEEKEEPING BRING STEAM TO LIFE BEYOND THE TEXTBOOK?

**POLLINATING YOUNG MINDS**  
HOW DOES GLINI THA SPREAD CURIOSITY & A THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE?

**CREATING A COLONY:**  
STRUCTURING ONE'S CLASSROOM FOR MAXIMUM SUCCESS

**BEYOND THE VEIL:**  
GLINI THA PIRATE UNMASKED EXPLORE THIS HUNTER'S MINDSET & HIS NEED FOR ADVENTURE

**THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING:**  
EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE INDIVIDUAL NECTARS FOR COLLECTIVE DEVELOPMENT

**KEEPER OF THE HIVE**

HUNTER, EXPLORER, EDUCATOR, WRANGLER

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