



# Mount Vernon City Schools DISTRICT NEWS

Fall 2024

Connecting Our Community



## Mount Vernon City Schools Master Facility Advisory Committee Update: Shaping the Future of Our Schools

*A message from Superintendent William Seder Jr.*

Since June, the Mount Vernon City Schools Master Facility Advisory Committee has diligently worked on a long-term plan for our district's school facilities. This group of community members, educators, and experts is committed to creating a plan to serve our students, staff, and families for years to come.

### Understanding Our Current Facilities

The committee began with a thorough tour of all eight district buildings, evaluating classroom sizes, safety, green spaces, and more. They assessed each facility's condition, analyzed future housing growth, and reviewed how well the buildings support modern teaching methods.

### Key Priorities for Facility Improvement

The committee identified several key priorities:

- **Aging Buildings:** Many of our schools are outdated, creating inequities in learning environments between older and newer facilities.

- **Evolving Teaching Styles:** Collaborative, flexible learning spaces are needed to integrate technology and personalize instruction..
- **Special Services:** Specialized spaces for special education require upgrades.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Improving energy efficiency and lowering maintenance costs are top priorities.
- **Safety and Security:** Ensuring our schools are safe and secure for all students and staff is a non-negotiable focus.

### Challenges to Overcome

- **Community Buy-In:** Securing widespread community support is essential.
- **Financial Constraints:** Funding upgrades and new construction will be essential and must be evaluated from varying perspectives.
- **Enrollment Uncertainty:** New housing has begun, and future development is planned. Future growth projections are difficult to predict, complicating long-term planning.
- **Maintaining Community Identity:** With new buildings, redistricting may come, which could impact the close-knit feel of our neighborhoods.

### Planning for the Future

The committee is working with educational consultants and the Ohio



Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC), which offers design and financial support, including up to 36% funding for approved projects. OFCC guidelines influence decisions, particularly regarding Mount Vernon's aging buildings.

### Looking Ahead

The committee has formed several subcommittees to explore key areas such as facility assessment, educational vision, student enrollment, and finance. These groups will balance innovation with fiscal responsibility.

### Community Involvement

The committee has extended the timeline for its final recommendations from January to May 2025 to ensure thoroughness and community input.

For updates and meeting materials, visit the district website under the "Our District" tab and select the "Facilities Planning" section.

Our schools are the heart of our community, and this effort will help ensure that future generations of Mount Vernon students can learn in spaces that inspire and support them.





Twin Oak

4

Wiggin &amp; Dan Emmett

5

Pleasant Street

6

High School

8

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## Mount Vernon City Schools Exceeds State Standards with 4-Star Rating

*Eric Brown, Director of Elementary Curriculum*

*Kathy Kasler, Director of Secondary Curriculum*



**Mount Vernon City School District  
4 - Star Ohio School Report Card**

*THANK YOU TO OUR STUDENTS,  
FAMILIES, AND STAFF!*

We are incredibly pleased to announce that Mount Vernon City Schools has earned an impressive 4-Star rating on the Ohio State Report Card, a designation that signifies we are "Exceeding State Standards." This achievement reflects the district's commitment to academic excellence and the hard work of our entire school community.

The district's 4-Star ratings in both the 'Achievement' and 'Progress' categories demonstrate consistent growth and performance across all grade levels. However, one of the most remarkable accomplishments is our 5-Star rating in 'Gap Closing,' a category that evaluates how well we are meeting the needs of all student groups. This "Significantly Exceeding State Standards" rating underscores our success in ensuring that every student has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.






When comparing our results to the state average and a cohort of 20 districts similar to Mount Vernon, as determined by the Ohio Department of Education (ODEW), Mount Vernon outperformed both groups in all academic areas. This is a testament to the exceptional education our students receive, as well as the dedication of our teachers and staff.

Our individual buildings also shared in this success, with every elementary school receiving an overall rating of 4 or 5 stars. Several elementary schools (East, Twin Oak, Wiggin Street) achieved a perfect 5-Star rating across all academic measures. At the high school level, we saw significant progress, with Mount Vernon High School earning a 4.5-Star overall rating, placing it in the top 10% of similar district cohorts and improving on last year's ratings.

While we are proud of these achievements, we recognize that there is always room for improvement. One area we are focusing on is the Graduation Rate indicator. This measure tracks the percentage of students who graduate within four or five years of starting high school. Although the district met the state standard with a 3-Star rating in this category, we believe we can do better and are actively working to increase our graduation rate.

It's also important to remember that a district's success cannot be fully measured by a state report card alone. We are committed to continuing to highlight and celebrate the many qualities that make Mount Vernon City Schools a special place for students to learn and grow.

"We are incredibly proud of our District report card, which reflects 4 and 5 stars across the spectrum," said district leadership. "We are grateful for the hard work of administrators, teachers, and students, as they are all integral to and share in these accomplishments. Well done by all!"

 <b>MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOLS</b>	
<b>2024 OHIO STATE REPORT CARD</b>	
	<b>4 Star Overall District Rating</b>
	<b>4 Star District Rating – Achievement</b>
	<b>4 Star District Rating – Progress</b>
	<b>5 Star District Rating – Gap Closing</b>

# An Overview of School Safety

**Rick Shaffer**, Director of Safety & Maintenance

*"Safety is the most basic task of all. Without sense of safety, no growth can take place. Without safety, all energy goes to defense." Torey L. Hayden*



As we begin another school year, we want to emphasize our commitment to safety and preparedness in case of an emergency. We conduct multiple drills and training exercises throughout the year, some involving both students and staff, and others exclusively for staff. Here are examples of the types of training and drills conducted at Mount Vernon City Schools:

## Staff Training:

- **Stop the Bleed:** All staff members are

trained in this lifesaving program, which equips them with skills to stop severe bleeding in emergencies.

- **Threat Assessment Teams:** Certain staff members are trained to identify and assess potential threats to school safety.

## Student and Staff Drills:

We conduct the following drills each year:

### 1. Fire Drills (9 per year)

- **Purpose:** To train students and staff on how to quickly and safely evacuate the building in case of a fire.
- **Procedure:** When the fire alarm sounds, students follow a designated exit route to an outdoor meeting area. Teachers account for all students, and everyone waits for an all-clear signal before returning to the building.

### 2. Severe Weather (Tornado) Drills (4 per year)

- **Purpose:** To prepare for natural disasters and ensure everyone knows how to stay safe indoors.
- **Procedure:** Students move to designated safe areas, such as hallways or basements, away from windows and potential debris.

### 3. Safety Drills (3 per year)

We conduct various types of safety drills to ensure students and staff are prepared for different emergencies:

- **Evacuation Drill:**
  - **Purpose:** To train students to quickly evacuate the building in the case of emergencies like fire, chemical spills, or other hazards.
  - **Procedure:** Similar to a fire drill but may involve moving to a designated off-campus evacuation site.

- **Shelter-in-Place Drill:**

- **Purpose:** To protect students and staff from external hazards like hazardous materials or severe weather without leaving the building.
- **Procedure:** Students stay in classrooms or secure areas with doors and windows closed and ventilation systems shut off (for hazardous material events). They remain there until further instructions.

- **Reverse Evacuation:**

- **Purpose:** To safely move students and staff indoors when it is dangerous to remain outside (e.g., due to weather or an active threat).

## 4. ALICE (Lockdown) Drills:

- **Purpose:** To train for responses to an active threat or intruder situation inside or outside the school.
- **Types of Lockdowns:**
  - **Modified Lockdown:** Used when a potential threat exists outside the school (e.g., police activity nearby). Education continues, but no one is allowed to enter or leave the building.
  - **Lockdown:** Used when there is a direct threat to the school (e.g., an active shooter or weapon on campus). Students and staff should remain in classrooms, barricade the doors, and await further instructions. If the threat is far enough away, evacuation to a rally point may be advised.

## Evacuation Drill Plan

We will be conducting an evacuation drill where students and staff will walk to the designated rally points. After accountability is completed at the rally points, buses will return students and staff to their school buildings. This drill also helps bus drivers become familiar with rally points across the district.



## Partnership with First Responders

We invite first responders to visit our schools regularly, allowing them to familiarize themselves with any changes in the building layout and to interact with students. These visits are always a positive experience for both students and first responders, as students enjoy the opportunity to have lunch and learn from them.

We look forward to a safe and productive school year!

## Building Future Innovators: Students Dive into STEM with Ozobot Coding

**Adam Mowery**, *Twin Oak Elementary Principal*

*"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." —Steve Jobs*

*"Creativity is thinking up new things. Innovation is doing new things." —Theodore Levitt*

Evo, the one-inch, pocket-sized robot, has become a popular resident in our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) lab.

Evo is an Ozobot. He can travel fast or slow, turn left or right, make a U-turn, and even spin as his colorful lights flash. But he can't do anything without a code that tells him what to do.

That's where our students come in. They are learning the basics of coding, the process of transforming computer instructions into a form a computer can understand. We believe this coding experience will be a great transition to middle school. And, down the road, it could be the start of a path to rewarding, high-paying careers.

Evo, whose battery charges via a USB port, has proximity sensors on the bottom that read black, red, green, and blue. He can be coded in two ways.

First, he comes with a table-top, black-line track that can be configured differently to include turns and intersections. Students then place color-coded cards on the track at various intervals that tell Evo what to do. The cards have many different color sequences, which represent varied commands, so students must decide how to align the cards to code Evo to perform the tasks they want.

Students also can use wide-tip color markers in place of the cards to create coding sequences.



Each of our K-5 classes spends time in the STEM lab each week. There are enough Evos for each student. This allows students to gain experience on their own, although guided videos also are available.

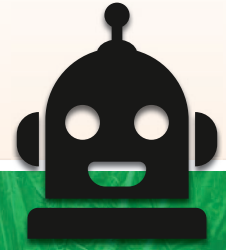
While grant funds were used to purchase the Evo kits, they also were made possible through the support of our PTO and parents. Tiffeny Miller, a third-grade teacher and reading specialist, has gone above and beyond to lead the blending of Evo into our curriculum.

"The Ozobots give us another opportunity to achieve academic content standards through STEM," Mrs. Miller said. "Teachers are learning how to use Ozobots for cross-curricular lessons, on their own time. One of our fifth-grade teachers, Aimee Humphrey, explained, "Our students are very engaged with the Ozobots, and I am interested in having them take that same engagement into math. I had my students use Ozobots to create quadrilaterals and triangles. Later, I have them go further to create the six different classes of triangles."

This is an introductory year for coding. Next year we plan to have our older students coding on the internet. We want coding to be exciting, challenging, and fun. In October, we were visited by Mark "The Engineer" Morscher, a retired staff member at The Ohio State University, who shared his excitement about coding.

More and more coding career opportunities are emerging every day. For example, individuals proficient in using Python, a high-level general-purpose programming language, can earn \$144,000 working remotely from home.

Whether or not our students pursue such careers, they are using Evo the Ozobot to apply critical thinking as they learn cause and effect in the STEM lab. And they are having a lot of fun in the process.



## Wiggin Street and Dan Emmett Awarded PBIS Bronze Recognition Award

**Christy Grandstaff**, Wiggin Street Principal, **Margy Arck**, Dan Emmett Principal, **Tamara Carlson**, **Christy Danzuso**, Social Workers

*"If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach. If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach. If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach. If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach. If a child doesn't know how to behave, we...teach?...punish? Why don't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?" John Herner*

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports) is a framework that focuses on teaching students about behavior with the goal of preventing misbehavior rather than punishing it. PBIS schools have clear behavior expectations and consistent consequences for misbehavior. Educators are trained to use positive behavior practices and use positive reinforcement. The Ohio Department of Education & Workforce and State Support Teams invites schools to apply for PBIS Recognition each year. Last year, Wiggin Street and Dan Emmett applied for the first time. Buildings/programs in the first year can only apply for Bronze Level recognition. In the second year of PBIS implementation or beyond, schools can apply for Bronze, Silver or Gold Level Recognition. Both schools were notified this year that they were awarded the Bronze Recognition Award.



At Wiggin Street, the students learn to be "ROOTed in Respect," which focuses on the school-wide expectations of Respecting Ourselves, Others, and The Space. This year's Wiggin Street PBIS Kickoff started with the Kenyon Men's and Women's Soccer teams greeting students in the morning. Then, students watched a video of Mrs. Grandstaff reading *The Magical Yet* by Angela DiTerlizzi, which emphasized how students can respect themselves by using the Power of Yet to have a growth mindset. Teachers lead students through an "Escape the School" activity as a way to review the behavior expectations. The escape room ended when students used the cipher to find the combination to break out of the school. Each quarter throughout the school year, students have the

opportunity to earn PBIS Rewards points on a daily basis from any staff member. These points are used to earn a quarterly event that is announced at the beginning of each 9 weeks. There are 4 events every school year. The PBIS Events have included Extra Recess with Kenyon Athletes, Snow Cones, Dance Parties, Popcorn and a Movie, Outback Ray Event, Duct Taping the Principal to the Wall, etc. The students need to earn 50 PBIS Rewards Points every 9 weeks, in order to attend the event. Brag Tags can be given out at any time when a staff member recognizes a student for engaging in appropriate behavior at school. The Brag Tags are added to their backpack ring, so they can showcase their positive behavior and choices to their peers, staff, and their family.

Dan Emmett uses the acronym SWARM (Safe, Wise, Accepting, Respectful/Responsible, Mindful) to remind their students of the school expectations. They start the school year teaching their PBIS expectations with a fun video in which students demonstrate positive behavior expectations and staff demonstrate poor behaviors on the bus, in the classroom, cafeteria, hallway, restroom and on the playground. The music teacher, Rebecca Japikse, works with each class to teach/re-teach our SWARM chant. To further reinforce a positive school culture and emphasize the importance of positive behaviors at school, students can earn 'SWARM' shoutouts from staff when they are showing exceptional positive behaviors. These

students are recognized on the morning announcements and earn a special coupon for a free frosty

from Wendy's or free french fries from McDonald's. Christy Danzuso, the school counselor/social worker, focuses August classroom lessons on further explanation of school expectations and helps get students excited about the school wide positive rewards system. Students earn ClassDojo points for positive behaviors every day. These earned points are then used to 'shop' in their PBIS store each 9 weeks.



Wiggin Street & Dan Emmett Continued on page 7

## "From Locker Rooms to Learning Spaces: A New Chapter at Pleasant Street Elementary"

*Teresa Weaver, Pleasant Street Elementary Principal*

*"A room may change its purpose, but the potential for learning within its walls remains boundless." - AI*



The 2024-2025 school year at Pleasant Street Elementary is off to an exciting start! We're thrilled to share how we've given new life to some familiar spaces within our school. Thanks to a team of incredible volunteers from The First Church of the Nazarene and New Life Nazarene, along with our district staff, we spent a full Saturday last April cleaning, organizing, and reimagining spaces that many of you may remember as physical education areas and locker rooms for the Yellow Jacket wrestlers.

"Some of you may remember a group of parents, wrestlers, and coaches transformed the unused locker rooms into the home of Mount Vernon Wrestling during the fall of 1991. That facility served the Jackets for 31 years - over 180 student-athletes practiced and competed here during the winter months. It is wonderful to witness the transformation of this area again into new classrooms and learning spaces that will continue to help Mount Vernon students with their education and the development of life skills." John Frye, former wrestling coach.

Over the summer, our dedicated maintenance crew transformed these areas into two brand-new classrooms! These classrooms are now helping us support the unique and diverse needs of all Mount Vernon City School District learners, providing a welcoming environment for our elementary students to learn and grow. Students in these rooms are receiving services in their communication or behavioral needs with intensive interventions and supports.

We couldn't be more grateful to everyone who made this possible – from our student services department to the hardworking maintenance and custodial teams. We're already seeing the positive impact! Mrs. O'Quin, one of the aides, recently shared, "This room has been turned into a very conducive learning environment for our students with special needs." It's heartwarming to witness the progress our Junior Jackets are making, thanks to the incredible dedication of our Intervention Specialists, teachers, and aides who support them every day. This project has truly been a team effort, and it's just one more way we're ensuring that all of our students have the best possible environment to learn and grow. Go, Junior Jackets!



## Fall Senior Citizens Luncheon

We are excited to extend a warm invitation to our annual Senior Citizens Fall Luncheon, a beloved tradition at Mount Vernon City Schools. This year's luncheon will take place on Thursday, November 21st, from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the High School gymnasium.

Our Master of Ceremonies, Superintendent Bill Seder, has planned a delightful afternoon filled with entertainment, surprises, and engaging activities.

Come join us for a memorable time of fellowship, great food, and entertainment. This event is a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow community members, meet our students, and enjoy a delicious meal prepared especially for you.

**We look forward to sharing this special afternoon with you!**

**Please RSVP by Friday, November 15th to confirm your attendance. You can reach Jessica Shelton at (740) 397-7422, ext. 6025 or via email at [jshelton@mvcasd.us](mailto:jshelton@mvcasd.us).**



*Wiggin Street & Dan Emmett message continued from page 5*

All students get the opportunity to shop and 'buy' something special for showing SWARM behaviors.

"One of the most important parts of education is motivating and recognizing the students for the good they do. PBIS has been a huge part of that here at Dan Emmett. We have our SWARM shout outs for recognition school wide on the morning announcements, which the students enjoy. Dojo has been a unifying way for all staff to award the students points to turn in for prizes at the end of the nine weeks. As a staff and parent, I feel Dan Emmett does a solid job at motivating the students to make smart choices. I am honored to be a part of it!"

—Rachel Farr, 4th grade teacher and parent

PBIS can help improve the quality of the classroom as well as student and teacher well being while also increasing student engagement and instructional time. We are committed to continuing to build our PBIS initiatives to maintain a safe and effective learning environment for all students.



# FALL 2024 UPCOMING EVENTS



<b>NOVEMBER 15</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>Fall Drama Production - Murder on the Orient Express</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 09</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>Middle School Choir Concert</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 16</b> <b>6:00 PM</b> <b>Pleasant Street Elementary Music Program</b> MVHS Theater
<b>NOVEMBER 16</b> <b>2:00 PM &amp; 7:00 PM</b> <b>Fall Drama Production - Murder on the Orient Express</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 10</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> <b>East Elementary Winter Program</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 17</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>High School/Middle School Orchestra Concert</b> MVHS Theater
<b>NOVEMBER 21</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> <b>Sixth Grade Orchestra &amp; Band Concert</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 12</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> <b>Dan Emmett Elementary Winter Program</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 18</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> <b>High School/Middle School Band Concert</b> MVHS Theater
<b>NOVEMBER 21</b> <b>12:00 - 2:00 PM</b> <b>Senior Citizens Luncheon</b> High School Gymnasium & Theater	<b>DECEMBER 13</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>High School Choir Concert</b> MVHS Theater	<b>DECEMBER 19</b> <b>6:00 PM</b> <b>Wiggin Street Elementary Winter Program</b> Rosse Hall, Kenyon College, Gambier
<b>DECEMBER 7</b> <b>3:30 PM</b> <b>OMEA District X Honors Band Concert</b> MVNU Hodges Chapel	<b>DECEMBER 16</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>Columbia Elementary Winter Program</b> Memorial Theater	<b>DECEMBER 19</b> <b>7:00 PM</b> <b>Twin Oak Elementary Winter Program</b> MVNU Hodges Chapel



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# Jacket Journal Soars to New Heights: A Hub for Creative Expression at Mount Vernon High School

## *Jacket Journal Staff*

Mount Vernon High School's *Jacket Journal* is taking student journalism to the next level with an innovative approach to storytelling. The online newspaper, available at [www.mvjacketjournal.org](http://www.mvjacketjournal.org), has evolved far beyond traditional print, offering students a dynamic platform to explore multimedia journalism and creative content production.

Students at Mount Vernon High have an opportunity to develop skills not just in writing but in a wide range of media formats. Along with publishing articles, *Jacket Journal* gives young creators the chance to launch podcasts, capture drone footage, showcase photography, and produce live segments. The publication's **Sports Zone** offers in-depth coverage of school athletics, allowing student journalists to report on games and events while honing their broadcasting skills. Our **Sports Zone** segment, hosted by Editor Wesley Neighbarger and seniors Camden Firebaugh and Isaiah Columer, is released each Friday on [www.mvjacketjournal.org](http://www.mvjacketjournal.org).

What sets *Jacket Journal* apart from many other high school papers is its emphasis on multimedia storytelling. Through drone footage, students provide a bird's-eye view of school events and sports, bringing a new visual layer to their reporting.



Meanwhile, aspiring podcasters have the chance to discuss a variety of topics, ranging from school issues to pop culture, giving them the experience of producing and hosting shows in a format that is growing rapidly in the journalism world.

Photography enthusiasts also find a home in the *Jacket Journal* community, contributing professional-quality images that accompany articles, special features, and sports coverage. This diverse media toolkit is all aimed at preparing students for the future of journalism and digital content creation, industries that increasingly rely on multimedia skills.

Senior Editor Natalie Boggs reflects on her experience, "this has taken me from ground zero to feeling like I can shoot anything with confidence. I have been able to experience Friday night lights, and I even had the opportunity to take photos at the State wrestling tournament. I encourage students to take this class for an opportunity to be creative."

In addition to written articles and pre-recorded content, *Jacket Journal* produces live segments that cover school events, interviews with faculty and students, and timely updates on everything happening at Mount Vernon High. This gives students hands-on experience with real-time reporting, something that is often reserved for professional journalists.

"This is a remarkable opportunity for our students to not only express themselves but also to build skills that will be valuable in college and their careers," says *Jacket Journal* faculty advisor Mrs. Jill McClure.



"They learn everything from journalistic ethics, copyright laws, how to write an inverted pyramid article, video editing with Final Cut, to how to operate a drone, and the sense of pride they take in producing this content is incredible."

With its wide array of content and media options, the *Jacket Journal* serves as a creative outlet for students with diverse interests. Whether they are future journalists, filmmakers, or photographers, this platform allows students to showcase their talents and gain real-world experience in digital media.

As the *Jacket Journal* continues to grow, the staff is excited about future innovations and the opportunity to empower more students to share their voices in creative and impactful ways.

For more information and to check out the latest content, visit [www.mvjacketjournal.org](http://www.mvjacketjournal.org). In addition to our website, there is also an APP - Look for Student News Source in the APP store and type in Jacket Journal or Mount Vernon, Ohio, to receive updates in real time.