



Mount Vernon City Schools DISTRICT NEWS

Fall 2023

Connecting Our Community

"Optimism and Opportunity: Igniting Excellence in Our School District"

A message from Superintendent William Seder Jr.

Our district motto for this year, "**Optimism and Opportunity Ignite Excellence**," reflects our unwavering belief that every child has the potential to achieve greatness when provided with the right environment, resources, and support. In this article, we will explore how we embody this motto in our district, ensuring that every student has the chance to shine.

At the heart of our school district is a culture of **optimism** that inspires students, educators, and parents alike. We believe in the power of positive thinking and encourage our students to approach challenges with a growth mindset. We teach them that setbacks are opportunities for growth and that their potential is limitless. This culture of optimism fosters resilience, determination, and a love for learning that will serve our students well throughout their lives.



We are committed to providing equal **opportunities** for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. We understand that diversity is our strength, and we celebrate the unique talents and perspectives that each student brings to our community. We offer a wide range of programs and support services to ensure every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

We believe that academic **excellence** is a cornerstone of a well-rounded education. Our dedicated educators work tirelessly



to create engaging and challenging learning experiences that inspire a love for learning. We offer a rigorous curriculum that meets the needs of diverse learners, and we provide enrichment opportunities for those who seek to go above and beyond.

In addition to academic pursuits, we offer a rich array of extracurricular activities that allow students to explore their interests and passions. From sports and the arts to clubs and community service, there is something for everyone. These activities not only enhance students' personal growth but also teach valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, and time management.



We believe that education is a collaborative effort, and we value the partnership between our schools, parents, and the community. We encourage parents to actively participate in their child's education, whether through volunteering, attending school events, or communicating with teachers. Together, we can create an environment where students feel supported and empowered to excel.



As we look to the future, we are committed to continually improving our district. We must invest in professional development for our educators, upgrade our facilities, and stay up to date with the latest educational research and technology. Doing so ensures that our students

receive a first-class education that prepares them for success in an ever-changing world.

In Mount Vernon City Schools, "**Optimism and Opportunity Ignite Excellence**" is more than just a motto. We believe in the potential of every child and are dedicated to providing the opportunities and support they need to excel. We invite parents, students, and the community to join us in fostering a culture of optimism, embracing opportunities, and igniting excellence in every aspect of education. Together, we can help our students reach their fullest potential and achieve greatness.

FALL 2023

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 15

Senior Citizens Luncheon
High School Gymnasium & Theater
12:00 - 2:00 pm

NOVEMBER 16

Sixth Grade Orchestra & Band Concert
Middle School Gymnasium 7:00 pm

NOVEMBER 17 & 18

Fall Drama Production - 12 Angry Jurors
MVHS Theater 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 4

East Elementary Winter Program
MVHS Theater 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 5

Columbia Elementary Winter Program
Memorial Theater 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 6

Dan Emmett Elementary Winter Program
MVHS Theater 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 7

Pleasant Street Elementary Winter Program
Pleasant Street Gymnasium 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 11

High School/Middle School Choir Concert
MVNU Hodges Chapel 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 12

Wiggin Street Elementary Winter Program
Rosse Hall, Kenyon College, Gambier 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 13

High School/Middle School Band Concert
MVHS Theater 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 14

Twin Oak Elementary Winter Program
MVNU Hodges Chapel 7:00 pm

DECEMBER 19

High School/Middle School Orchestra Concert
MVHS Theater 6:30 pm

Impressive District Report Card Highlights Achievements

William Seder Jr, Superintendent

Mount Vernon City Schools' recent report card is a testament to the dedication to excellence that permeates our educational community. With an impressive four-star overall rating, we are excited to celebrate the exceptional achievements across multiple components of the state report card. District and Buildings are rated on a 5-star rubric in five component areas:

Ohio Department of Education Rating System:

- 1-star: Significant support needed to meet state standards
- 2-stars: Fell short of meeting state standards
- 3-stars: Meeting state standards
- 4-stars: Exceeding state standards
- 5-stars: Significantly exceeding state standards

Achievement - 4-Star District rating exceeding state standards in academic achievement:

Four schools - Dan Emmett Elementary, East Elementary, Twin Oak Elementary, and Wiggin Street Elementary - have achieved an outstanding five-star rating in the Achievement on state tests component. These schools have not only met state standards but have significantly exceeded them.

Progress - 4-Star District rating exceeding student growth expectations:

In the student growth component, Dan Emmett Elementary, East Elementary, and Wiggin Street Elementary have each earned an impressive five-star rating. This achievement showcases the exceptional growth and development of students throughout the district. It also underscores our district's commitment to providing a nurturing and effective learning environment for our students.

Gap Closing - 5-Star District rating significantly exceeding state standards in closing educational gaps of student subgroups.

Our district's dedication to closing the educational gaps between subgroups is evident in the outstanding performance of several schools. Columbia Elementary, Dan Emmett Elementary, East Elementary, Mount Vernon High School, Twin Oak Elementary, and Wiggin Street Elementary have all earned an exceptional five-star rating in this critical component. These schools have taken significant steps to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to succeed.

Graduation Rate and Early Literacy - A Solid Foundation for Success.

Our district's strong performance in both Graduation Rate and Early Literacy components serves as the cornerstone of our educational excellence. The graduation rate reflects our commitment to supporting students through their high school journey and preparing them for life beyond. Early literacy programs ensure that our youngest learners have a solid foundation for future academic success.

While we proudly celebrate these achievements, it's essential to remember that a district or building report card, as impressive as it may be, does not adequately reflect the many outstanding things that go on every day throughout the district. It is an important snapshot, a measure of our progress, but it cannot capture the full scope of the dedication, passion, and hard work that our educators, students, and families contribute to our community.

In conclusion, we are proud of these accomplishments, and together, we will continue to strive for excellence, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive in a supportive and challenging learning environment.

Senior Citizens - Your Fall Lunch is Served!

We are delighted to extend a warm invitation to our annual Senior Citizens Luncheon, a cherished tradition at Mount Vernon City Schools. This event will take place on Wednesday, November 15th, from noon - 2 p.m. in the High School gymnasium.

Master of Ceremonies, Superintendent Bill Seder, is busy planning an entertaining and informative afternoon for area senior citizens.

Join us for a memorable afternoon filled with good food, great company, and entertainment. It's an opportunity to connect with fellow community members, engage in meaningful conversations, meet our students, and enjoy a delicious meal prepared especially for you.

So, don't hesitate!! R.S.V.P. by calling Jessica Shelton at 740 397-7422, ext 6025, or email her at jshelton@mvcsd.us by Wednesday, November 8th.



Positive Behavior Spirit is SWARMing

Darin Prince, Principal, Mount Vernon Middle School

“The goal of Positive Behavior Support is not ‘perfect children’. Rather, the goal should be creating the perfect environment for enhancing their growth.” ~ Dr. Randy Sprick

Mount Vernon Middle School is celebrating a strong, renewed emphasis on Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) among students and staff. PBIS is a school culture program that focuses on common behavioral expectations in order to achieve an environment in which all students have the opportunity to be successful.

Our first back-to-school assembly in the fieldhouse on Sept. 8 featured Mount Vernon Mayor Matt Starr, who stressed the importance of good character and making good decisions. That set the stage for a schoolwide discussion about the character traits we want to see in our students.



Principal Darin Prince and April Thompson, PBIS coordinator, display the T-shirt that will be provided to all Mount Vernon Middle School students.

Our PBIS committee decided to ask students to come up with a buzzword to ignite our 2023-2024 positive-behavior campaign. Several ideas were put to a schoolwide vote and the winner was SWARM, an acronym that stands for Supportive, Welcoming, Adaptive, Respectful, Mindful. SWARM and the Yellow Jacket mascot will be featured on T-shirts that will be provided to all students and on signs throughout the building.

Teachers will award points for SWARM actions they see, such as a student who sits with a new student at lunch to make them feel welcome. Points can be exchanged for items at the school store. A SWARM assembly at the end of each quarter will recognize students for their efforts.

PBIS/SWARM is not an adult program; Our students have ownership of it. And it is not a “good kids club.” We all make mistakes.

April Thompson, our PBIS coordinator, exclaimed, “We are off to a great start. There is a lot of excitement among students and the great majority of them are buying into SWARM.”

I believe PBIS/SWARM will play an important role in a very successful year at Mount Vernon Middle School.

Video Camera Catches Bus Red-Light Violators

Todd Conant, Transportation Director

{ "Everyone can help keep kids safe around the school bus." ~ Fact }

I will never understand why any driver believes that hurrying to their destination is more important than the safety of children. Our 23 full-time bus drivers travel 2,050 miles every school day on elementary and secondary routes. Safety is their #1 priority as they pick up students in the morning and return them home in the afternoon.

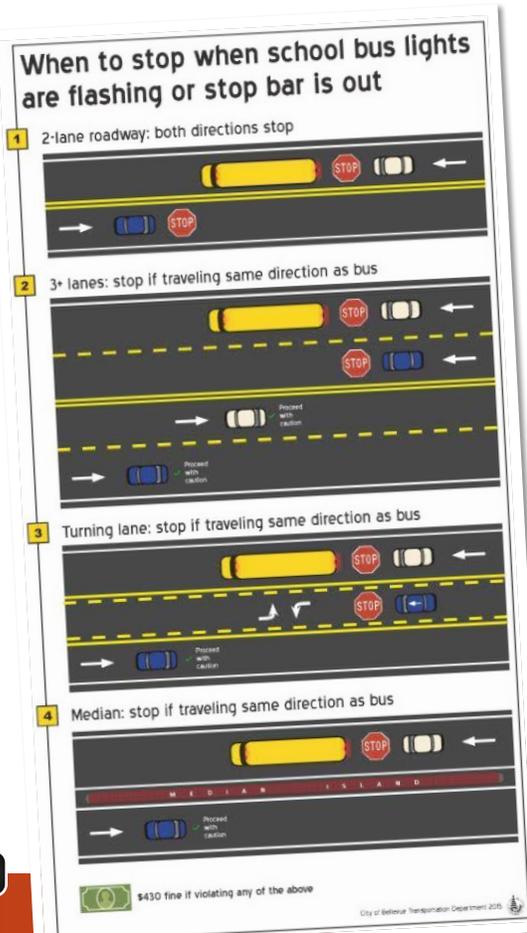
Each week, we see an average of 10 red-light violators – drivers who pass our buses while their red lights are flashing. Ten! Even one poses a potential danger.

All Mount Vernon City School buses now have small exterior video cameras, one of seven on each bus, five interior cabin cameras, and another on the dash aimed at the road ahead. If a vehicle passes a bus with the flashing red-light arms extended, that camera activates automatically, recording the front and rear of a violating car, including its make, model, color, and license plate. Software in the system sends the video directly to my office computer. We have everything needed for the Highway Patrol to locate violators.

In a story for National School Bus Safety Week last year, the Knox Educational Service Center reported that the Mount Vernon Law Director's Office recommends a minimum fine of \$100 for a driver convicted of a red-light violation. The penalty could be higher, the story said, pending a review of each case, while the Ohio Revised Code permits suspension of a driver's license if warranted.



Transportation Director Todd Conant points to the small video camera that activates automatically if a vehicle passes while the bus's flashing red light arm is extended. All Mount Vernon City Schools buses are equipped with the cameras.



From what I have observed, drivers seem to fit into one of these three categories:

- 1) Those who slow down when they see a bus's flashing yellow lights and stop when the lights are flashing red.
- 2) Those who are in a hurry to keep a schedule and disregard any thought of safety.
- 3) Those who are uneducated about Ohio laws involving school buses.

All of our buses – 23 used daily and seven in reserve – are maintained expertly by our mechanics and inspected twice yearly by the Highway Patrol. Our professionally trained and certified drivers observe all school bus safety procedures to ensure the welfare of all passengers. They do a great job every day.

What could be more important than watching out for a child's safety? My message to everyone is simply this: **When you see a school bus, always assume there are children around it.**



East Elementary School Achieves National Blue Ribbon Status

Karly Watterson, Principal, East Elementary School

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” ~ Henry Ford



East Elementary School is celebrating a momentous achievement: being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, an honor bestowed upon schools that demonstrate exceptional academic performance and educational excellence. This prestigious award is a testament to the dedication and hard work of East Elementary's students, educators, and staff.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, annually recognizes public and private schools nationwide for their outstanding achievements in student performance, innovative teaching methods, and overall academic excellence. East Elementary School is among the select schools that have earned this esteemed recognition. East Elementary is also among a smaller number of schools nationwide that have reached National Blue Ribbon status more than once. In 2014, East Elementary earned its first National Blue Ribbon Award.

Principal Karly Watterson expressed her excitement about this accomplishment, stating, "This is a tremendous honor for East Elementary School, and it reflects the tireless commitment of our entire school community to provide an exceptional educational experience for our students. It's a testament to the hard work and dedication of our teachers, students, and parents."

To be considered for the National Blue Ribbon School award, schools must meet rigorous criteria, including maintaining high levels of student achievement on state assessments or nationally normed tests. East Elementary School has consistently excelled in these areas, with students consistently scoring well above state and national averages in reading and math.

Furthermore, the school's innovative approach to education has been a critical factor in its success. East Elementary has been at the forefront of implementing cutting-edge teaching strategies, incorporating technology into the curriculum, utilizing team teaching and flexible grouping, and fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment. These efforts have improved academic outcomes and contributed to the overall development of well-rounded students.



East Elementary will receive the National Blue Ribbon School award during a Washington, D.C. ceremony later this year. This event will allow the school to showcase its innovative practices and share its success story with educators nationwide.

Parents, students, and staff at East Elementary School are understandably thrilled by this prestigious accolade. It is a testament to the school's commitment to excellence and a source of pride for the entire community.

Achieving National Blue Ribbon status is a significant milestone highlighting the exceptional educational opportunities East Elementary School offers.

As East Elementary School joins the ranks of National Blue Ribbon Schools, it serves as a shining example of what dedication, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to educational excellence accomplish.



Building a Solid Literacy Foundation

Teresa Weaver, Pleasant Street Elementary Principal

"No skill is more crucial to the future of a child or to a democratic and prosperous society, than literacy" ~ Los Angeles Times

The ability to read and comprehend text is at the very core of a solid education and a successful journey through life. Our teachers work hard every day to create a foundational skill set that leads to a love of reading.

We are celebrating the resources and supports our district provides for us in order to help us grow our readers. Two of those resources are FOUNDATIONS and HEGGERTY, a structured literacy approach and phonemic awareness, based on the science of reading. Our teachers in kindergarten through third grade have worked hard to expand the professional skills required to implement both programs, which provide children with the hands-on tools needed to develop letter and sound recognition in a multimodal reading, spelling, and handwriting curriculum.

Classroom activities have students learning letter sounds and words through chanting, tapping, and singing. They use magnetic letter tiles to feel the shape of each letter and form words. They learn that words are made up of individual sounds and they can decode words.

Our teachers are supported by two academic tutors and two reading specialists who move from grade level to grade level, in order to serve striving readers. Reading strategies are structured for an entire classroom, small groups, or sometimes one-to-one. High-dosage tutoring for at-risk students is provided in 20- to 30-minute sessions.



Sometimes, our literacy labors bear fruit in small but powerful ways. For his Eagle Scout project a young man in our community built a take one-leave one book box on the southeast corner of our school lawn. Recently, I received a photo of two of our students sitting on the grass near the book box reading on a Sunday afternoon. What a joy it is to see their hard work in school become a lifelong hobby.

A passion for reading serves a lifetime. Once gained, it can never be taken away.



Smart Panels Impact Student Learning

Matt Dill, Director of Gifted Education/Technology

The school district is thrilled to announce a significant upgrade in their classrooms, thanks to federal funding from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program. Over the summer, 140 Interactive SMART Panels were installed in high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, a collaborative effort between the Technology Department Team and high school student workers. This purchase was necessary to replace and upgrade aging SMART Boards and Panels that had served for over a decade. The transition to these interactive panels is supported by research that indicates their positive impact on student achievement.

Interactive SMART Panels offer several benefits to both students and teachers. Firstly, they enhance engagement by providing dynamic and



Smart Panels continued on page 8

Jacket Closet Serves Students' Needs

Cory Caughlan, Principal, Mount Vernon High School

“Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.” ~ Sally Koch

Jacket Closet provides clothing and nutritional snacks for students in need. The idea for the closet, which fills a former classroom, was developed during a leadership team meeting soon after I became principal three years ago. We asked: What can we do to provide more support for our students? What can we do to advance academic achievement? Team members noted that some students come to school without the basics: adequate clothing or food. Jacket Closet was created to help fill that void.

Joy Clinger, health assistant in our nurse's office, took the idea and ran with it. She began collecting donated clothing, new and gently used. She washed the gently used items, then organized all the clothing and shoes by sizes for boys and girls. She has students who help her. Sometimes, a teacher or other staff member will refer a student in need. Mrs. Clinger will arrange a time when classes are in session to meet the student privately at Jacket Closet to avoid any embarrassment to the student. Other times, a student will come on their own to say they need an item of clothing or a pair of shoes. Occasionally, if a student wears something inappropriate to school, we can provide other clothing for use that day.

Mrs. Clinger credits the donations provided by staff members and the public, including local churches and youth groups. Recently, she placed a notice on social media that sweatpants for boys were needed. Later, she found several pairs left anonymously on her desk. Donations have expanded to include dresses for homecoming and prom.



Principal Cory Caughlan and health aide Joy Clinger check clothing in the Jacket Closet.

She was at the checkout at a local store using donated cash to purchase a variety of food items. When the clerk remarked that she must have a large family, Mrs. Clinger explained that they were for high school students who often come to school hungry. An older gentleman in line behind her overheard the conversation and said he had no idea there was such a need. Mrs. Clinger said he had tears in his eyes as he handed her \$40 and told her to go back into the store and buy more food.

Jacket Closet has been put to good use many times. Last year, a middle school student, who is now here at the high school, lost everything in a fire. We were able to provide clothing for that student.

Jacket Closet has expanded to include non-perishable food items, purchased with cash donations. Many people do not realize that some students come to school hungry. Mrs. Clinger was reminded of that again recently.

Donations of clothing, shoes or cash for Jacket Closet can be made by contacting the high school office at 740-393-5900.

Creating a Love For Learning

Andrew Thompson, Principal, Columbia Elementary

“Children want the same things we want. To laugh, to be challenged, to be entertained, and delighted.” ~ Dr. Seuss

If you walk into a first-grade classroom at Columbia, things are buzzing. The students are engaged, asking questions, and want to learn more! There are maps and diagrams with lots of conversation.

First graders are spending their time building their knowledge about the world. They are learning about real-life things. They are growing their genuine curiosity

about how the world works. They have spent time learning about fables and the lessons learned in fables. They have learned about fairytales from different areas of the world. They have learned about the human body and how it works. All of these topics are relevant to their life while



increasing their knowledge of things they haven't yet learned. Rather than giving them a unit test at the end of the unit, they have shown their learning and brought it to life.

Students have created life-size human bodies and outlined the different systems. They then presented these bodies to their peers. They created an x-ray of their hands and described the different bones and joints. They built skeletons and wrote about the importance of our bones and why we have them. Some students have created alternate endings to well-known fables and even milked a fake cow!

One first-grader changed his birthday wish list this year. Rather than Legos and cars, he told his family he wanted an echocardiogram procedure! Although a tough present to find, this student has found a love for learning more about his heart! This love started in his first-grade classroom!

Learning is so much more than just pencil and paperwork. It goes deeper than answering questions found in a textbook. These students are learning lifelong lessons by applying what they know.

They are becoming curious, lifelong learners!

Smart Panels continued from page 6

participatory learning experiences. Teachers can incorporate vibrant visuals, interactive activities, and real-time feedback, which keep students actively involved in their learning. Students can also interact through their Chromebooks or by physically engaging with the panels alongside their classmates.

Moreover, these panels expand learning opportunities by granting access to an array of digital resources, including educational apps and multimedia content. This enables students to explore complex subjects in new, interactive ways. The SMART Panels foster collaboration and inclusivity, allowing students to work together and facilitating group discussions, which enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The technology caters to various learning styles and abilities, ensuring inclusivity in the classroom.

For teachers, SMART Panels are empowering tools that enable them to adapt lessons on the fly, access educational content, and personalize learning experiences for each student. This leads to more effective teaching and

improved student outcomes. The panels also facilitate instant assessment, giving teachers real-time insight into student understanding, allowing for timely intervention and improved student achievement.

In addition to the SMART Panels, the district is committed to providing teachers with professional development opportunities to maximize the technology's potential for instructional enhancement. This commitment to innovation, student engagement, and academic excellence is part of the school community's ethos.

As the district continues to leverage technology to enrich the learning experience, they are excited to witness tangible benefits for their students. The SMART Panels have already led to increased enthusiasm for learning, greater student participation, and improved understanding of complex subjects. This success is attributed to the outstanding teaching staff and a variety of excellent instructional tools, such as the interactive SMART Panels.

Buddy Program Unites Kindergarteners, Third Graders

Christy Grandstaff, Wiggin Street Elementary

“Older children help younger ones when they play together, and in that way, they learn to lead and nurture and develop a concept of themselves as mature and caring.” ~ Peter O. Gray



Recently, third graders used puppets to teach kindergartners a lesson about being assertive and how to ask a friend, their buddy, or a teacher if they don't understand something.

Everyone needs a buddy sometimes.

Here, at Wiggin Street Elementary School, each of our 35 kindergarten students is assigned a third grader to serve as their buddy. The third graders take their responsibility seriously. They have explained the proper use of playground equipment and lunchroom procedures. They showed the kindergartners where the restrooms were and waited outside to escort them back to their classrooms.

Buddies don't always have to play together. As the year progresses, kindergarten students will become more independent, but they will always have a buddy to turn to when needed.

This year, the buddy program has evolved into a two-way street, where third graders and kindergarten students teach lessons to each other every Friday under the supervision of our teachers. The Second Step SEL lessons enhance social/emotional learning. Research shows that students retain 90 percent of what they learn when they teach someone else.

Kindergarten students taught third graders about following directions and the body parts you use to do so. They danced without hearing music and then danced without seeing a video. Then, they talked about how to use your brain to compensate for being unable to see or hear something. They had to describe which was harder.

The buddy program builds relationships while strengthening the sense of our school family. This year, it has expanded to weekly collaborations that teach valuable lessons while enhancing the learning opportunities of all students.



Regulation Stations Keep us Calm and Ready to Learn!

Margy Arck, Principal, Dan Emmett Elementary School

“Self-control is a key factor in achieving success. We can’t control everything in life, but we can definitely control ourselves.” ~ Jan McKingley Hilado



The district has generously supported the Elementary and Middle School Social Workers being trained and certified in the Neurosequential Model in Education (NME). Christy Danzuso, Dan Emmett’s School Social Worker, is completing the Advanced Training Program to better support the implementation of NME across the district. This training educates faculty and students on basic concepts of neurosequential development and then teaches them how to apply this knowledge to the teaching and learning process. This training allows us to understand better how the brain develops, operates, and responds to optimize learning for ALL students. NME has changed how our staff understands behavior, responds to behavior, and implements teaching methods based on what we know about the brain. Behavior is communication, and our faculty and staff focus on building relationships with students so that we can understand what the student needs to learn. The whole-child education framework includes providing quality education to all our students regardless of their individual needs or struggles. It is the core of what our school district lens is all

about. Dan Emmett not only embraces this lens, we practice it daily.

Dan Emmett Elementary staff prides themselves in learning more about reaching every student and giving them the best learning experience possible. A powerful takeaway from NME is recognizing that students must be self-regulated to process new information and be engaged in learning. Regulation is something many students need to be taught, so this school year, we have incorporated regulation stations in each classroom! When you visit Dan Emmett, you will see kids taking self-regulation breaks in the hallway or classroom. Teachers use various ‘brain break’ activities in the classroom, such as Go Noodle or community circle time. You may hear calming or rhythmic music while students work. You can stop by our sensory regulation room and see students taking a break tailored explicitly to the sensory input they need to calm their bodies physiologically. You will see students visiting other classrooms, connecting with former teachers or other students as a way to regulate and return to class ready to learn!

Regulate-Relate-Reason is such a simple yet profound phrase. Biologically, this order is how humans operate. Once regulated, we can relate and engage with others, and then finally, we can reason through a situation appropriately. Dan Emmett staff uses this as our mantra to provide a safe, wise, accepting, respectful/responsible, and mindful environment for all to reach their full learning potential!



Embracing the Science of Reading

Eric Brown, Director of Elementary Curriculum/State & Federal Programs

At Mount Vernon City Schools, we are deeply committed to fostering an environment where every student thrives. We continually seek opportunities to align our initiatives with the most current and effective educational practices. We are excited to update you on some significant strides we have made regarding the Science of Reading and our district's approach to dyslexia.

Understanding the New Mandate on Dyslexia Screening

Starting this academic year, 2023-24, Ohio school districts, including ours, are required to screen students in grades K-3 for early signs of dyslexia. It is important to note that students flagged during this process are not automatically diagnosed with dyslexia. While our district can identify potential literacy challenges, we are not authorized to diagnose dyslexia. Moreover, a dyslexia diagnosis on its own does not automatically qualify a student for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

So, why this focus on dyslexia? Research indicates that approximately 20% of individuals might be dyslexic. For a deeper dive into this topic, we encourage you to visit go.osu.edu/dyslexia and explore the Ohio Department of Education's website at education.ohio.gov – simply search for "dyslexia."

MVCSD's Proactive Response

To proactively address the challenges of dyslexia, we have made significant investments in our literacy approaches:

1. **Professional Development:** A majority of our K-5 teachers have successfully completed Ohio's Dyslexia Modules on the Science of Reading, equipping them with the latest strategies and knowledge.
2. **Structured Literacy:** We have adopted an evidence-based approach across our curriculum, intervention strategies, and teaching techniques to align with structured literacy principles.

MVCSD Literacy Plan Highlights:

- **Dyslexia Screening:** We employ mCLASS®, an evidence-backed assessment tool, conducted three times yearly to monitor student progress and guide instruction.



- **Curriculum Enhancements:**

- **Foundations (K-3) and Just Words (4-5):** These are research-supported programs that lay emphasis on critical reading components from phonemic awareness to comprehension.
- **Geodes Level Classroom Library (K-2):** These decodable books are perfectly crafted for beginning readers.
- **Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Products:** Seamlessly integrated into the K-2 curriculum to establish foundational skills.
- **Lexia Core 5 (K-5):** This tool is tailored to boost foundational literacy skills.
- **Structured Literacy Certification:** We are taking steps to train individuals in the recognized Wilson Reading System and Orton Gillingham approach. With these certifications, we will be able to offer precise interventions, targeting students who require intensive support. Both methods have been heralded for their effectiveness in supporting students with reading difficulties.

In conclusion, our staff's dedication to excellence and continuous improvement remains unwavering. **Thank you for your trust and collaboration as we together cultivate a community of empowered readers.**



RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

Creativity, Imagination Soar in Our STEM Lab

Adam Mowery, Principal, Twin Oak Elementary School

{ *"Critical thinking and curiosity are the keys to creativity." ~ Amala Akkineni* }

**SCIENCE
TECHNOLOGY
ENGINEERING
MATHEMATICS**

Really cool, exciting learning is happening in our STEM lab.

STEM is the acronym for science, technology, engineering and math. Activities in our STEM lab stimulate our students' curiosity and critical thinking while developing their ability to collaborate and communicate with others.

The lab presents students with challenges in an environment of hands-on, inquiry-based learning. They use the LEGO wall, funded and built by our PTO, to duplicate works of art. They use KEVA planks to build a bridge that will support a specific weight. Students must work together, collaborate, and use math to create the bridge.

The lab is a fail-free zone. There is no yes/no or right/wrong. It offers the opportunity to experiment and fail, then learn from errors and try a different approach. It gives kids a chance to rise to challenges presented to them. For example, students were given cardboard and other leftover materials and asked to create an arcade game. Believe it or not, they built a skee-ball ramp and a claw machine. As 4th grader Amelia Well states, "STEM time allows you to be creative and gives students that may not have the chance to create at home, the opportunity to create at school."

Much of the success of our STEM lab is the result of the hard work of Tiffeny Miller, one of our third-grade teachers and a reading specialist. Mrs. Miller devotes her own time after school, on weekends, and on days off to develop lesson plans based on state academic standards that all teachers

can use for lab challenges. Mrs. Miller is quick to emphasize the support of our PTO in providing funding and hands-on support for the development of the lab.

Each of our classes has an opportunity to utilize the STEM lab once a week. It is a time of experimentation, creativity, and self-discovery. It is time to develop the working-together skills that will serve our students throughout life.

It is a time to imagine the future.

