



Mount Vernon City Schools DISTRICT NEWS

Spring 2025

Connecting Our Community

Building the Future: Facility Planning Committee Announces Key Decisions

A message from Superintendent William Seder Jr.



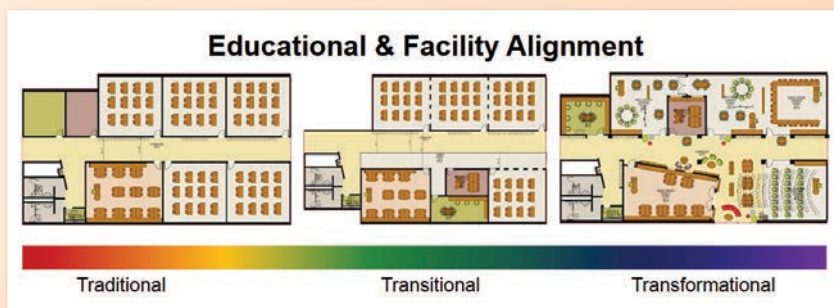
For the past year, the Facility Planning Committee has been working diligently to assess the state of our school buildings and explore solutions that will provide safe, modern, and efficient learning environments for our students. After seven in-depth meetings, multiple school tours, and thorough research, the committee has reached key decisions that will shape the future of our district.

Why Change is Needed

Our schools have been a pillar of the community for generations, but as educational needs evolve and our buildings continue to age, the district must take steps to ensure our facilities support students both now and in the future.

Through our research and discussions, the committee identified five key drivers for change—critical factors that highlight the need for significant facility improvements.

- 1. Aging Buildings & Infrastructure** – Many of our school buildings have been serving students for decades. While they have been well maintained, they were not designed for modern learning environments. Structural issues, outdated heating and cooling systems, inefficient energy use, and ongoing maintenance costs are becoming major concerns. Without action, these problems will only grow, making it more expensive to maintain outdated facilities.
- 2. Increased Student Needs & Special Services** – Over the years, the demand for intervention services, special education programs, and mental health support has grown significantly. Many of our schools were not originally built to accommodate these services, creating space limitations and accessibility challenges. Our facilities must evolve to meet the needs of all students, ensuring they have the support and resources necessary to succeed.
- 3. Changing Teaching & Learning Styles** – Education has transformed dramatically in recent years, with a greater emphasis on technology, hands-on learning, collaborative workspaces, and flexible classroom designs. Unfortunately, many of our current buildings do not support these modern teaching methods. Schools must be designed to foster creativity, problem-solving, and 21st-century skills—preparing students for success beyond the classroom.
- 4. Operational Efficiency & Cost-Effectiveness** – Maintaining multiple aging buildings is costly. Utilities, repairs, and upkeep expenses continue to rise, putting a strain on the district's budget. By optimizing our school facilities, we can reduce overall operating costs, making the best use of taxpayer dollars while ensuring students have high-quality learning environments.
- 5. Safety & Security Concerns** – Student and staff safety is a top priority. While we have taken steps to improve security, many of our buildings were not originally designed with today's safety standards in mind. Schools need secure entrances, improved traffic flow for pickups and drop-offs, updated fire suppression systems, and better emergency response measures. Our facility plan will address these concerns, creating safer schools for everyone.



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Vice President

Margie Bennett

Mary Rugola-Dye

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Matthew J. Dill

Director of Safety/Maintenance
Rick Shaffer

Director of Transportation
Todd Conant

Key Decisions and Next Steps

After extensive research and discussion, the committee has made two major decisions regarding the future of our school buildings:

1. We will maintain our long-standing K-5 elementary school structure but downsize from six elementary schools to four. Each school will serve approximately 450 students, similar to Twin Oak Elementary, providing equitable learning spaces while maintaining a strong sense of community.
2. The Middle School and High School will undergo significant renovations to improve learning spaces, enhance technology, update safety features, and modernize the overall student experience.

These changes will ensure that our schools remain efficient, functional, and future-ready while continuing to meet the needs of students, families, and educators.

A Stronger Future with State Support

To help fund these critical improvements, the committee has decided to partner with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC). The OFCC has worked with over 415 school districts across Ohio, providing expert guidance and funding opportunities to improve school infrastructure.

Through this partnership, the state will contribute 36% of the total cost—an estimated \$50 million in funding. This financial support will significantly reduce the burden on local taxpayers while helping us build the schools our students deserve.

Join the Conversation

The Facility Planning Committee has shared updates through district newsletters, board meetings, and our website, but now we want to hear from you!

We invite all community members to join us for our first Public Forum on Wednesday, April 16th at 7:00 PM in the High School Auditorium. At this event, we will share more details about our plan and answer your questions.



Mount Vernon City Schools – Committed to Excellence, Focused on the Future.

Financial Update

Judy Forney, CFO Mount Vernon City Schools

As we plan for the future of Mt. Vernon City Schools, we remain in a stable financial position while closely monitoring budget trends and facility needs. While the district currently maintains a surplus, careful planning is essential, as future projections indicate potential challenges if expenditures outpace revenue by 2029. Enrollment has fluctuated in recent years, impacting funding, though new housing developments may bring future growth. Additionally, Ohio's school funding structure limits revenue flexibility, as property taxes do not adjust for inflation and the state funding formula remains unpredictable.



To address long-term facility needs, the district is exploring a potential bond issue for November 2025 to fund the construction of three new elementary schools. A Facilities Advisory Committee, formed in February, continues to assess options, with about 20 active members working on recommendations. Community engagement meetings are scheduled for April to gather public input.

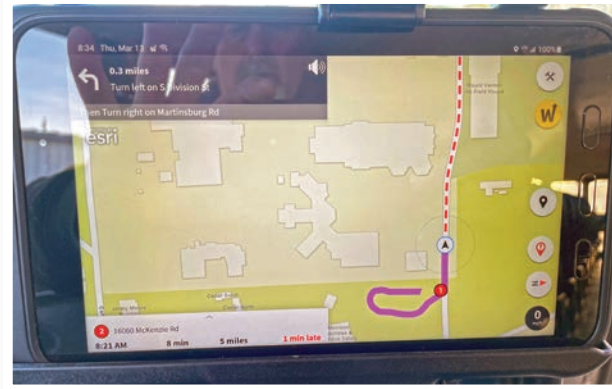
Thank you for supporting our school district. We remain committed to responsible financial management and strategic planning to best serve our students and community.

Enhancing Student Safety: Wayfinder Technology Improves Our Bus Transportation

Todd Conant, *Director of Transportation*

At Mount Vernon City Schools, student safety is always our top priority—especially when it comes to transporting children to and from school and athletic events. This year, our Transportation Department has taken another step forward by introducing **Wayfinder**, an advanced navigation system designed to help our bus drivers stay focused on the road.

Wayfinder is a state-of-the-art tablet that provides turn-by-turn voice directions, ensuring drivers have the most accurate routes without needing to glance at printed maps or written instructions. With bus stop locations pinpointed within 10 feet, this system allows our drivers to concentrate fully on the road, making every trip safer for our students.



"This technology has made a huge difference," said veteran bus driver Dave Doup, 'Doupy'. "Before, I had to rely on printed directions or memory, which could be tricky on unfamiliar routes. Now, Wayfinder gives me clear, accurate instructions. I can keep my focus on driving and, most importantly, on the safety of the kids on my bus."

But technology is just one part of our commitment to safety. Our bus drivers undergo extensive training beyond the state's required standards, including monthly safety meetings and hands-on instruction to prepare them for all driving conditions. Behind the scenes, our mechanics conduct daily spot inspections, follow a strict preventative maintenance schedule, and work alongside state inspectors to ensure every bus meets rigorous safety standards.

The roads can be unpredictable, but our dedication to safety is unwavering. With ongoing training, advanced technology, and a team of professionals committed to protecting our students, we are making sure that every ride is a safe one—whether it's to school, a field trip, or the next big game.

Spring Senior Citizens Luncheon

We are thrilled to invite you to our annual **Senior Citizens Spring Luncheon**, a beloved tradition at Mount Vernon City Schools! Join us on **Tuesday, April 22nd, from noon to 2 p.m.** in the **Mount Vernon High School gymnasium** for an afternoon of good food, great company, and wonderful entertainment.

Superintendent Bill Seder is excited to welcome you and share the many inspiring things happening in our schools. Your presence and support make Mount Vernon a truly special place, and we cherish the opportunity to celebrate you—our valued senior citizens.

Enjoy a delicious meal **served by our students**, who are eager to meet and connect with you. After lunch, **head to the theater for a special performance by our talented students**, showcasing their creativity and hard work.

We look forward to sharing this special day with you!



So, don't hesitate!! R.S.V.P. by calling Jessica Shelton at 740 397-7422, ext 6025, or email her at jshelton@mvcasd.us by Tuesday, April 15th.

Heroes Helping Students at Columbia Elementary

Kimberlie Atkinson and Lori Luna, Second Grade Teachers

At Columbia Elementary, community engagement is fundamental to our educational philosophy. Through a variety of events, we aim to foster strong bonds between students and local community members. Among the many impactful events held throughout the year, the Fall Festival and Hero Day stand out.

During the Fall Festival, students were delighted by the participation of Mount Vernon Nazarene University's men's volleyball and women's softball teams. College students volunteered their time to engage with elementary students, enhancing the festival experience and serving as positive role models from our community's universities.

In the spring, second-graders enthusiastically participated in the Community Hero unit, which educates them about local heroes and their vital roles. As a culmination of this unit, the school arranges a memorable event where local firefighters and police officers visit in their respective vehicles. The highlight of the event has students lining the entrance, enthusiastically applauding these heroes while proudly displaying handmade thank-you cards. This gesture aims not only to express gratitude but also to familiarize children with emergency responders, alleviating potential fears that could arise during emergencies involving uniformed personnel. We believe that such positive interactions can potentially make a significant difference, ensuring that children feel safe and supported in challenging situations.



"It was really cool to see the firefighters. We don't often get to see the fire trucks up close." - 2nd Grader Kaitlyn Hoar

"Being recognized as a hero by the students was an incredibly special moment. Their heartfelt cards and signs were a reminder that our work makes a difference, and their gratitude inspired us to keep going. It's moments like these that remind us of the true impact we have on the community, and how the smallest gestures of kindness can lift us all." - Chief Christopher

These initiatives underscore our commitment to integrating community involvement into the educational experience, enriching the lives of our students and fostering lasting connections within our community.

State Wrestling Champs!

Ashlynn Brokaw and Alex Taylor became the first-ever individual State Wrestling Champions in MVHS history.

"Our wrestling program had an incredible season, highlighted by a top-10 team finish at the state level and a historic milestone—our first two individual state champions! Ash and Alex's work ethic and focus have demonstrated that Mount Vernon student-athletes have the talent and drive to compete at the highest level. Their achievements prove that success is possible through commitment and perseverance."

Coach Firebaugh

"We are incredibly proud of the wrestling program and the outstanding accomplishments of Ashlynn and Alex. Their state championships are a testament to their hard work and dedication, but even more inspiring is the way they have represented Mount Vernon City Schools—with respect, sportsmanship, and true excellence on and off the mat."

Superintendent Bill Seder



East Elementary Explores the Wonders of STEAM!

Karly Watterson, East Elementary Principal



East Elementary buzzed with excitement on Friday, February 28, as families gathered for a captivating **STEAM Family Night**. From 4-6 p.m., the school transformed into a hub of discovery and innovation, leaving students and parents alike inspired.

The highlight of the evening was the incredible **STEAM Museum** from Mobile Ed Productions, made possible by **East PTO**. Students marveled at interactive exhibits, exploring principles of science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics through hands-on learning. From building structures to experimenting with light and sound, the museum ignited curiosity and fostered a love for exploration.

East Elementary's talented staff also contributed to the evening's success, leading engaging STEAM activities. Students designed and built structures, tested theories, and unleashed their creativity in various stations.

The collaborative atmosphere fostered teamwork and problem-solving skills, showcasing the practical applications of STEAM concepts. Kate, a fourth grader at East, said "My brother and I loved the force and motion station where we competed to build a track to see who's car would go the farthest. I won, of course!"

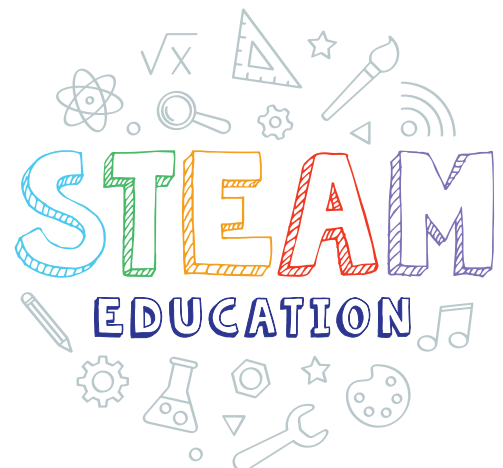


Adding to the vibrant atmosphere was the **Scholastic Book Fair**, providing families with the opportunity to browse and purchase a wide selection of books. The book fair encouraged literacy and provided a perfect complement to the STEAM-focused activities.

The **STEAM Family Night** was a resounding success, demonstrating East Elementary's commitment to providing enriching educational experiences.

The event fostered a love for learning, sparked curiosity, and strengthened the school community.

SCIENCE
TECHNOLOGY
ENGINEERING
ARTS
MATHEMATICS



Safer Play and Smoother Parking: Exciting Changes at Dan Emmett Elementary!

Margy Arck, Dan Emmett Elementary Principal

Exciting changes have taken place at Dan Emmett Elementary, thanks to Mount Vernon City's North End Redevelopment Project! Our school now boasts new playground equipment, updated basketball hoops, a fresh cement driveway, additional parking spaces, and a brand-new car loop to enhance safety during drop-off and pick-up times.

These improvements have already made a noticeable difference for students, staff, and parents. The newly designed car loop has streamlined traffic flow, reducing congestion and making drop-off and pick-up times safer and more efficient. Parents have expressed their appreciation for the improved parking layout, especially during the busiest school hours. Chrissy Phillips, a longtime Dan Emmett parent, shared her enthusiasm: "I love how nice the new parking lot and pickup area turned out! As a parent with kids at Dan Emmett for the past 10 years, we were due for a new parking lot, and what we ended up with was above and beyond what I was expecting."

For families who prefer not to use the car loop, additional parking is now available on the North Side of the building and at the back, with new sidewalks leading to the entrance for added convenience.



Students are especially thrilled about the new cement playground, which offers a larger play area and a safer, smoother surface. "I like that there is more area to play!" said Ashlyn Davis, capturing the excitement many students share. Gracie Phillips echoed this enthusiasm, adding, "The new equipment has more choices of things to do."

Beyond the added fun, students have also noticed the improved safety of the playground's surface. "The concrete is smooth, so it's easier to not trip," observed Dakota Carmen, while Daniel Cobb pointed out, "The playground is safer to run on because it's smoother." Teachers have also noted fewer trips and falls, making recess a safer experience for all.

A big thank you to Mount Vernon City for making these fantastic improvements possible! These upgrades have created a safer, more enjoyable environment for our students, staff, and families, and we are thrilled to see the positive impact they are already making.



Worthy Wordsmiths: Spotlight on MVMS' Power of the Pen Team

Darin Prince, MVMS Principal

Student Authors: Miriam Vanderhoof (8), Allyson Brooks (8), Anna Camillus (8), Molly Emig (8), Vera Holland (8), Piper Straight (8), Leah Weiser (8), Mira Jedlinksy (7), Vincent Jiang (7)

Power of the Pen is an interscholastic writing program for middle school students across Ohio that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and storytelling skills. Mount Vernon Middle School has proudly participated in this program since the 1980s, with a legacy of inspiring young writers to hone their craft.

Students are given 40 minutes to compose an original short story based on a given prompt, challenging them to think quickly and creatively while crafting compelling narratives. After months of practice, students put their skills to the test in tournaments at the district, regional, and state levels, where they are judged on their originality, writing style, and ability to engage readers.

The 2024-2025 Southeast District and Regional tournaments were great successes for Mount Vernon's team. Miriam Vanderhoof, Piper Straight, Anastasia Camillus, and Molly Emig received individual awards for their writing at Districts, with Anastasia and Molly earning additional accolades at the Regional tournament on March 7. The eighth-grade team's outstanding collaboration and dedication led them to a first-place finish at Districts and second place at Regionals, ultimately securing a third-place overall ranking among competing schools.

Beyond the awards, Power of the Pen provides students with a platform to develop their voice and confidence as writers. "Power of the Pen is significant to me because it lets me become a better writer and express my creative side," said 8th-grade student Vera Holland. Many of her teammates echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing the program's ability to cultivate a love for storytelling and self-expression.



Looking ahead, the team is eager for new opportunities. "We are very excited for our state tournament and looking forward to embracing new writers next year!" shared Anna Camillus, an eighth-grader who has been a key contributor to the team's success. As the team prepares for the state competition, they carry forward the enthusiasm, dedication, and creativity that have made them stand out in the world of competitive writing.

Their journey serves as a testament to the power of words and the impact of storytelling, reminding us all that young voices have the potential to inspire, challenge, and move readers in remarkable ways.



Mount Vernon City Schools
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SPRING 2025 UPCOMING Events



APRIL 8 6:30 PM

Columbia Elementary Music Program
Knox Memorial Theater

APRIL 10 6:30 PM

Twin Oak Elementary Music Program
Knox Memorial Theater

APRIL 11 7:00 PM

High School Spring Musical - Little Women
MVHS Theater

APRIL 12 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM

High School Spring Musical - Little Women
MVHS Theater

APRIL 15 6:30 PM

East Elementary Music Program
MVHS Theater

APRIL 17 6:30 PM

Dan Emmett Elementary Music Program
MVHS Theater

APRIL 22 12:00 - 2:00 PM

Senior Citizens Luncheon
High School Gymnasium & Theater

APRIL 24 6:00 PM

Pleasant Street Elementary Music Program
MVHS Theater

APRIL 25 7:00 PM

Tops & Pops Jazz Band Concert
MVMS Commons

MAY 1 7:00 PM

High School Orchestra Spring Concert
MVHS Theater

MAY 5

Fifth Grade Outdoor Education Camp
Twin Oak & Columbia / Heartland Conference Center

MAY 6 6:00 PM

Wiggin Street Elementary Music Program
Rosse Hall, Kenyon College

MAY 6 6:30 PM

Kiwanis Awards
MVHS Theater

MAY 8 7:00 PM

Middle School Choir Concert
MVHS Theater

MAY 10 6:00 PM

May Fiesta Choir Concert
MVHS Theater

MAY 12

Fifth Grade Outdoor Education Camp
Dan Emmett & East / Heartland Conference Center

MAY 12 6:30 PM

High School Band Spring Concert
MVHS Theater

MAY 13

Fifth Grade Outdoor Education Camp
Pleasant Street & Wiggin Street / Heartland Conference Center

MAY 13 6:30 PM

Middle School Band Spring Concert
MVMS Gymnasium

MAY 15 7:00 PM

Middle School Orchestra Spring Concert
MVHS Theater

MAY 17 8:00 PM

Prom
Ariel Foundation Park

MAY 22 6:30 PM

Senior Awards Night
MVHS Theater

MAY 25 3:00 PM

High School Commencement
The Energy Fieldhouse

MAY 27 - 30

Eighth Grade Trip
Washington DC

MAY 29

Last Day for Students
Two-Hour Early Release

