



NEWS

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MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

MIHS band students take their instruments, talents to Australia - *a global connection*

This spring, about 100 members of the Mercer Island High School band, along with parents, teachers, and administrators, took their talents to Australia to compete with other bands in the Australian National Band Championships. The trip, from March 31 to April 10, included many cultural excursions and performances outside of the competition.

"It was a concentrated educational opportunity for us to do three things: come together as a program; perform at the very highest level on a world stage; and immerse ourselves in a cultural opportunity," said Band Director Parker Bixby. "The trip to Australia included an enormous amount of material. We performed 11 times in eight days!"

"We were the only international invited guest for this event. Last year it was a band from Hong Kong," said teacher and parent Jen McLellan. For the students, the trip was an opportunity to share their work with a new community and to have an international cultural experience. "Parker Bixby does a remarkable job asking students to think,



MIHS band students play at the Sydney Royal Easter Show during their trip to Australia

reflect, and absorb as many experiences as possible as our journey continues," said McLellan. During the trip, MIHS senior Isabel said, "We are making memories that will be with us for the rest of our lives."

"Marching band culture is not very developed in Australia and

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District names new administrative staff

The Mercer Island School District will welcome two new administrators and promote two others on July 1, before the 2015-16 school year begins.

Director of Learning Services Fred Rundle has been promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services. Rundle will retain many of

his current duties, but will also lead the learning services team and supervise the four elementary principals.

Earlier in the year, the district announced that current West Mercer Elementary Principal Aimee Batliner-Gillette will serve next year as the

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Teachers and support staff of the year named; thank you to 2014-15 retirees

The 2014-15 Mercer Island School District teachers of the year are: Mercer Island High School science teacher Larry Bencivengo; Islander Middle School music teacher David Bentley; and West Mercer Elementary second-grade teacher Trina Sherman.

Craig Vanderhorn was named support staff of the year for his work as a Mercer Island High School special education paraprofessional.

This year's retirees include: Michael Flaherty (hired 1992); Carol Wiseley (hired 1997); Sue Jobe (hired 1998); Jean Field (hired 1998); and Jan LaFountaine (hired 2009). Thank you for your dedication to Mercer Island students!



Superintendent Gary Plano presents Larry Bencivengo with the MIHS "Teacher of the Year" Crystal Apple

Band on the run... in Australia!

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it was really cool to bring a new form of entertainment to the crowds," said Zoe Lewis. "Adults stopped with surprise and kids watched us with wide eyes. We were so close to the crowds it was amazing to see their reactions."

After performing in Sydney's Royal Easter Show, Tanner said, "Many individuals came up and asked me where we would be playing next. I happily shared that we would be performing a show in the arena later that day and I sincerely hope that they saw it because it was a true showing of Mercer Island pride."

McLellan added, "It was a spectacular trip on every level for the students!"



Top picture: MIHS band students play at the Sydney Conservatorium. Bottom picture: Students with the Marching Koalas, an Australian marching band formed in 1986 after a visit from a U.S. high school.

New administrators join school district

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planning principal for Elementary No. 4. Funding for that position comes from 2014 bond sales.

In July, Carol Best will take over as principal at West Mercer. Best most recently served as the special programs coordinator in the Issaquah School District, overseeing programs ranging from highly capable to pre-kindergarten programs. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and coach with 12 years of classroom experience.



New West Mercer Principal Carol Best with parents at the “Breakfast of Champions”

At Lakeridge Elementary, Jenny Gibbs will serve as the next principal. She previously taught at West Mercer Elementary, where she was able to complete her administrative internship. She was the assistant principal at Hazelwood Elementary in the Renton School District, leading and supervising educators and support staff.

Michael Bylsma will assume the role of special education program coordinator in July. Bylsma joins the learning services department to work alongside director of special education, Dr. Lindsay Myatich.

Bylsma is not new to the school district. He served as a seventh and eighth grade language arts and social studies teacher and program coordinator at Islander Middle School during the 2008-12 school years. For the last three years, Bylsma has been the assistant principal at Timbercrest Junior High in the Northshore School District.

David Bynum was also recently promoted from transportation dispatcher to director of transportation and emergency services.

A community dedicated to students, learning



Dr. Gary Plano
Superintendent

It has been another amazing year for the Mercer Island School District! We are thrilled for our graduates, including: the class of 2015; those students who will be moving from our elementary schools to Islander Middle School; and the students making the exciting transition to Mercer Island High School.

This community cares deeply about the education our students receive. Such

caring is demonstrated in many ways, such as volunteering in our schools, to financial support through our PTAs, booster clubs, and the Mercer Island Schools Foundation. Thank you for the generosity you have shown to our students and staff through Bridge 2015.

Please have a wonderful summer, travel safely, and enjoy your time with family and friends.

SUMMER DISTRICT NEWS

Mercer Island School District

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School construction: on time and on budget

The three facilities projects approved by Mercer Island voters in the February 2014 bond proposition to address overcrowding are on time and on budget. The Mercer Island High School addition is scheduled to open for the 2015-16 school year, while the middle school expansion and new elementary school will be ready for the 2016-17 school year. Updates are available online at www.MercerIslandSchools.org/Construction.



Aerial view of Islander Middle School site preparation

MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

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The Mercer Island School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Coordinator:

Dr. Gary Plano, Superintendent, (206) 236-3300
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Title IX Compliance Coordinator:

Dean Mack, CFO/COO, (206) 236-4522
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Section 504 & ADA Coordinator:

Dr. Lindsay Myatich, Director, (206) 236-3326
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Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator:

Mark Roschy, Director, (206) 236-3439
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