



NEWS

VOLUME 16 ISSUE #2 WINTER 2015

MERCER ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Mercer Island senior ships donated school supplies to students in Sierra Leone

- *A local to global connection* -

When Mercer Island senior Jason McRuer saw extra school supplies donated by students' parents that were not being used in the classroom, he saw opportunity. Over the past two years, McRuer has collected gently used school supplies and raised money through Kickstarter to ship them to students in need in Sierra Leone to enrich their school experiences.

Years ago, McRuer collected pens, pencils, and erasers from classmates before a trip to Africa. "It was an incredible trip, and the students there really appreciated the supplies," says McRuer. "Four years later, in high school, I realized that I could expand that initial idea on a bigger scale."

On a Kickstarter fundraising page, McRuer wrote, "The 10-year civil war affected more than just a generation in Sierra Leone, but it also destroyed the schools that would be used by the next generation. Their schools are being rebuilt as we speak. As a teenager, I don't have the money to support a charity, but I can move gently used supplies to a place where they will get better use. This project



Islander Jason McRuer with two pieces of art made by students in Sierra Leone and included in a calendar to his project backers

will allow students, no different than me, to make art, and to showcase their illustrations for all of you to see!"

"It's an overwhelming perspective shift to see the vastly different

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New elementary school boundaries coming for 2016-17 school year

In October of 2014, the Mercer Island School District held the first meeting of the Boundary Committee, which was charged with presenting Superintendent Dr. Gary Plano with a recommendation for new elementary boundaries for

the four elementary schools. Those boundaries will determine school placements for students beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

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Mercer Island School Board, an opportunity to serve

This fall, three of the five Mercer Island School Board seats will be up for election. This includes board positions 1, 3, and 5. Board members are elected to four-year terms by Mercer Island voters.

Specific responsibilities of board members include, but are not limited to: systematically measuring the district's attainment of Board Policy 2020; monitoring superintendent performance; setting district policy; adopting an annual operating budget; placing levies and bonds before voters; and ratifying contracts negotiated with the local bargaining unit.

The board will present an overview of board

governance for interested community members at meetings on March 12 and March 17.

Individuals who wish to run for one of the three seats up for election must file with King County Elections between May 11 and May 15. To run, an individual must be a registered voter living in Mercer Island. If more than two people file for a single position a primary election will take place.

More information at:

www.KingCounty.gov/Elections

Filing period: May 11-15, 2015

Primary election: Aug. 4, 2015

General election: Nov. 3, 2015

Studying world languages in elementary schools



Dr. Gary Plano
Superintendent

The Mercer Island School District is studying the feasibility of adding a world language program to our elementary curriculum in the fall of 2016. Nationally, about 25 percent of all elementary schools have some form of world language instruction taught in elementary school.

Research shows that the period of early childhood is an optimal time to begin the study of a second

language. Early second language instruction has shown to have reciprocal benefits for children in learning their native language, too.

Adding an elementary world language program is subject to finding adequate resources, including capable instructors certified to teach the target language to K-5 students.

Parents, staff, and other stakeholders are presently being involved in the conversation.

Jason McRuer, donated supplies

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conditions in which they have to learn. And now, with the recent outbreak of Ebola, conditions have been even more difficult. The schools are now broadcasting lessons to the students' homes via portable radios so the students can continue to learn in spite of the epidemic," explained McRuer. "The students there see education as a huge privilege, and seeing their tenacity to learn has made me reconsider my values about education and opportunities."

McRuer raised more than \$800 to ship 500 pounds of supplies to classrooms in Sierra Leone. As a thank you, students sent him their drawings. "Out of the 73 drawings I received, I turned 12 of them into a calendar. I distributed the calendar as a thank you to the backers of my Kickstarter project."

New elementary school boundaries

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By the end of February, the committee of parents and staff will present their final recommendations. During the five-month process, the Boundary Committee received a great amount of community input, both online, and at the public preview on Dec. 10, 2014, and the public hearing on Feb. 4, 2015.

Balancing enrollment at the four elementary schools will require moving students from various elementary schools in order to right-size existing elementary schools and locate 450 students in the new elementary school.

Boundary Committee members include the elementary principals, several parent representatives who were selected with the help of each school's PTA leadership, and two community members without children currently in an elementary school.

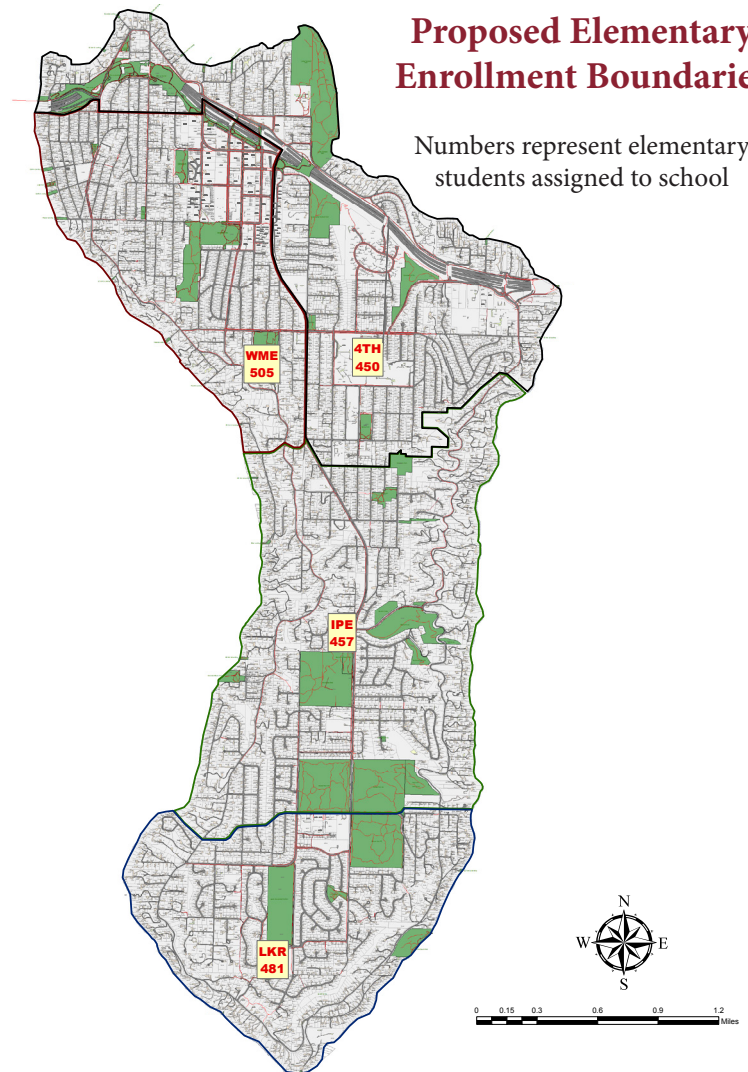
More information, including a larger version of the map to the right, can be found online at www.MercerIslandSchools.org/Boundaries.

District studies later high school start times

The Mercer Island and Bellevue School District superintendents have formed a High School Start-Time Committee, which is currently conducting a collaborative, feasibility study of the potential benefits and implications of changing high school start times to a later time. The membership of the committee includes parents and staff members from both districts. The committee's work will include three phases and recommendations to the two superintendents should be made by June of 2015. More information can be found online at www.MercerIslandSchools.org/StartTime.

Proposed Elementary Enrollment Boundaries

Numbers represent elementary students assigned to school



Important dates:

Mid-winter break - *February 16 - 20*

Mercer Island School Board meetings devoted to board governance overviews for prospective board candidates - *March 12, 6:00 p.m., Mercer Island City Hall & March 17, 10:45 a.m., West Mercer Elementary*

The Mercer Island Schools Foundation, which donated \$1.5 million to the district last year to maintain low class sizes, outstanding curriculum, programs, and enrichment, will host the "Breakfast of Champions" - *April 28, 7:00 - 8:30 a.m., MIHS*

WINTER DISTRICT NEWS

Mercer Island School District

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Mercer Island, WA 98040

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School construction: on time; 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.



Demolition at the North Mercer campus

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
gary.plano@merceraislandschools.org

Title IX Compliance Coordinator:
Dean Mack, CFO/COO, (206) 236-4522
dean.mack@merceraislandschools.org

Section 504 & ADA Coordinator:
Lindsay Myatich, Director, (206) 236-3326
lindsay.myatich@merceraislandschools.org

Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator:
Mark Roschy, Director, (206) 236-3439
mark.roschy@merceraislandschools.org