



NEWS

Mercer Island School District

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District NEWS is designed to present information on the 2020 Vision, district and school improvement planning and other programs. Please continue to check the district website for the most current information. www.misd.k12.wa.us



Winning the future

THE MERCER ISLAND COMMUNITY IS MAKING IT POSSIBLE

At the end of the day on June 10, 2011, the Mercer Island Schools Foundation and PTA *Bridge the Gap* Task Force announced that our community has raised \$1.2 million from families, individuals, community organizations and business groups, including the challenge grant from generous donors.

**We did it again –
The Bridge the Gap campaign
raises nearly \$1.2 million for
Mercer Island schools!**

In the final two week sprint to the finish, Penny Yantis, Executive Director of the Mercer Island Schools Foundation, reported to her *Bridge the Gap* Task Force:

“This afternoon we accepted \$182 from a very adorable Lakeridge second grader who sold lemonade this past weekend to support *Bridge the Gap*!”

Bridge the Gap fundraising was launched on January 1, 2011 in the wake of the governor’s announcement of the state’s \$5.3 billion shortfall for the next biennium. The most significant cuts are in the areas of salary reductions and elimination of funding for staffing to maintain low class sizes in kindergarten through 4th grade. The legislature reduced funding for salaries by 1.9 percent for certificated and classified staff and 3 percent for certificated administrators.

Superintendent's Message

“The work we are doing together is about realizing our vision and Winning the Future. It’s about collaboration, invention, creativity and critical thinking. Our students will grow up to cure diseases, find new sources of energy, and have the strong ethics and character to lead financial institutions and run companies. Someday they may be our employees – or, we may be working for them! Through our students’ success, the Mercer Island School District will be a model of visionary leadership for schools nationwide. We will model a 21st century education – a personalized, responsive learning environment focused on students’ interests and ambitions.”



When the final numbers came in on June 11, Plano said, “I am simply overwhelmed by the generosity and commitment of this community. Thanks to you, our students will have the tools they need to achieve their dreams.”

– Superintendent Gary Plano at the 8th annual Breakfast of Champions,

April 26, 2011



Mercer Island School District's **2020 VISION** **Fundamentals** *in Classrooms and Beyond*

The following projects are examples of the district's 2020 Vision fundamentals for teaching and learning in our schools funded in part by donations to the Mercer Island Schools Foundation

Pursue passions and interests beyond the traditional classroom environment

At first glance it looked like a triage unit in an emergency room. A group of students were huddled together peering at some rather gruesome looking wounds on each other's arms. Thankfully it was only stage makeup in this "enrichment day" special effects class at Islander Middle School, courtesy of teacher Weston Lucas.

Said IMS Co-principal Aaron Miller about Enrichment Days, "We thought Enrichment Days would be a great way for students to try something new. Thanks to an incredibly supportive team of 50 to 60 parent volunteers, it has been a huge success."

This year, the students were given the choice of attending over 50 enrichment opportunities, both at school and in the community including: Native American art, creating modern marvels such as the Space Needle and Golden Gate Bridge, beading, biking around Mercer Island, touring the UW campus, bowling, video gaming, touring the Digi Pen Institute, sailing, kayaking and kite boarding at Luther Burbank Park, line dancing and much more.



Curriculum should be flexible and responsive to a constantly changing, global reality

Engaging students in learning history can be a challenging task. Because technology and visual communication is a huge part of teenagers' lives, MISD teachers have developed opportunities for students to present historical information in an engaging way for a mainstream audience.

Students in Karen Sherwood's AP US History class produced one-minute shows on a variety of historical topics. According to one student, "Now I know how challenging it is to create something visually interesting, yet informative at the same time."

Students in Ed Puchalla's World History class entered their documentaries and websites in the National History Day contest. Five students took videos to the regional contest and three of the students' websites not only competed at regionals, but also won 3rd, 5th and 6th place at the state History Day contest!



Mercer Island School District's **2020 VISION** **Fundamentals** *in Classrooms and Beyond*

Creating a more personalized learning environment

Most mornings at West Mercer Elementary, primary grade students are busy working on reading and writing, although they are not sitting at their desks in neat rows. The apparent lack of structure is actually a carefully constructed learning environment designed for a very unique classroom management system called the Daily5/Café.

The students choose among five reading and writing tasks including: Read to Self, Working on Writing, Read to Someone, Listen to Reading and Word Work. After 15 minutes they switch to another activity.

One day, Ms. Harnish's students had just selected among the menu of activities and were moving to different areas of the room where they know they learn the best. Lilly and Ally are sitting on the beanbag chair together, reading sections of their book and writing responses. Zack and Sam are at one of the bigger tables where they can spread out and construct 3-D words from their spelling list. Justin and Slater are lying on the floor reading a book together. Samantha, Ella and Elizabeth are making words from their spelling list on a magnetic board. In the meantime, their teacher is working with individual students writing topic sentences.

Cross-discipline thinking, creativity, and innovation using technology

Learning to read can be a daunting prospect for a first-grader, often way less interesting than playing video games on a computer. Thanks to a technology tool known as RAZ Kids, students at Mercer Island's elementary schools are being given the opportunity to "play" on the computer once a week while they test their reading fluency and comprehension levels. Students select from a digital library of both fiction and non-fiction at their level or above. Then, they listen, read, answer questions and even record fluency passages.

That sounded like a great idea for one young student who said, "I love reading and every Saturday I get to use the computer, so now I can do both!"



Developing Global Awareness

In the tradition of *A Thousand Cranes*, the novel about the power of human beings to spread peace in the world, first-graders in Cathy Dugovich's Lakeridge class made paper cranes to send to the Students Rebuild Organization, a project of Seattle's Bezos



Family Foundation. Paper cranes launched a \$200,000 donation from the Foundation at \$2 per crane, with a goal of 100,000 cranes made by students worldwide.

Islander Middle School's leadership class and WEB leaders (Where Everyone Belongs) worked with their teacher, Becky Mullvain, on the same project. Seventh-grade students Elisabeth Williams, Sabrina Kwan and Gillian Dewhurst spent a weekend in March collecting and folding more than 1,000 cranes!

The donation from the Bezos Foundation will go to the Architecture for Humanity's reconstruction projects in Japan and the cranes will be woven into an art installation. Recently the Foundation announced that they are increasing their donation to \$400,000 to reflect the incredible commitment of thousands of students all over the world.

Residential Customer

Honoring our Retiring Staff

On June 6, 2011, MISD said goodbye to our 2011 retirees and acknowledged employees who have been serving students and community in benchmark service years of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 plus years of service. "The quality of education in Mercer Island Schools is because of your dedication," said Dr. Gary Plano. "We include you among the best employees in public education."

Retiring staff include: Roger Baker, Judy Burnstin, Karen Campbell, Peggy Chapman, Keith Ellis, Burt Hovander, Ann Palmason, Barbara Sharpe, Judy Shannon, Ingrid Stipes, and Vicki Wittenberger.

Congratulations!

- To **MISD** for being recognized by *Forbes* Magazine as #2 among the best school districts in small cities across the country.
- To our eleven new **National Board Certified teachers**: Trista Bamer, Andrea Confalone, Denise DiPrima, Allison Fiser, Alice Larkin, Victoria Mann, Joan Papasadero, Julianne Riccio, Katherine Shaner, Shannon Sue, and Kelly Tran.
- To the **graduates in the MIHS Class of 2011**.

Important School Dates 2011-2012

July 6 – August 5 – K-5 summer session

August 31 – Start of 2011-2012 school year

MISD Teachers of the Year



Sally Bartow came to the Mercer Island School District in 2002 and teaches both special education and general education courses at Crest Learning Center. According to Mark Roschy, Associate Principal, "Sally is grounded, introspective, very intelligent and has a brilliant sense of humor. She has the uncanny ability to meet each of her students where they are, both emotionally and academically."



Kerida Millison came to Island Park Elementary in 1989 and has taught almost every elementary grade level over the course of her 22-year teaching career. She has been teaching 5th grade since 2002 and is highly respected among students, teachers and parents. According to Island Park Principal Nancy Loorem, "Kerida exhibits that perfect balance of deep care and knowledge of her students as unique individuals while holding them all to high standards. She is a leader in curriculum and program development who has influenced teaching and learning across our district."



Julie Riccio is the lead Special Education teacher at Islander Middle School where she instructs students with moderate to severe intellectual/physical disabilities. According to Co-principal Mary Jo Budzius, "Julie is one of the most amazing teachers I have ever had the opportunity to work with and learn from. She reminds us all the time that we are here for the students and that we need to keep them as the center of every decision we make!"

MISD Board of Directors

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