



OCTOBER 2019

MT. VERNON

# Mainstream

TOP 10 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



## Superintendent's Note

As good as we are, what will it take to be even better? That is the question that we continually ask ourselves as we dial in and focus on learning for ALL.

We began our Professional Learning Community initiative at the beginning of the school year with our teachers. This process will

guide our faculty through the learning progression for students as they work as a team to achieve high levels of learning for all. This highly intentional process is results oriented! Faculty have already begun to revise curriculum into **Essential Learnings** that students must learn to succeed now and in the future. Teacher teams are designing common assessments and reflecting on instructional practices that worked. This great information will be curated for future generations of teacher teams as we continually learn how we can best meet student needs. Purposeful collaboration is the best way to achieve for students and staff!

Collaboration is key to any high-functioning organization. Teaching is not an exception. We are currently working on Level 1 (Safe and Collaborative Environment) of the High Reliability Schools framework. School administrators are working as a team themselves to increase our collaborative practices with students, parents, and staff. Formal ways for

*continued on page 2*

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## Mental Health Initiatives

**SEE INSIDE** ➤



## Deb Thomas — IDOE Top 10 Teacher of the Year

Mt. Vernon Middle School (MVMS) Seventh Grade Social Studies Teacher, Ms. Deb Thomas, is a Top 10 Finalist for Teacher of the Year with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). Ms. Thomas has been exemplary in the use of student engagement, cultural awareness, and community learning in her classroom at MVMS for 29 years.

Ms. Thomas increases student engagement in her classroom through a variety of activities and teaching methods. Her students have tasted food from different cultures, recreated historical architecture using everyday materials, and have also explored some basic Mandarin vocabulary from the high school Mandarin teacher, Miss Lin. Through collaborative and experiential learning, she is able to help her classes learn a variety of perspectives

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# Mental Health Initiatives

**MVCSC IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUPPORTIVE STAFF AND LIVE IN A COMMUNITY THAT ACTIVELY ENGAGES IN MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS.**

## **ALL MVCSC TEACHERS ARE TRAINED ON SUICIDE PREVENTION**

All Mt. Vernon teachers have been trained in suicide prevention through the Question Persuade Refer (QPR Institute), a certified program acknowledged by the state. Hancock Health provides teachers with training to respond to in-crisis or suicidal individuals. MVCSC teachers are trained every three years and two staff members are becoming QPR trainers.

## **EACH MVCSC SCHOOL HAS A COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK COUNSELOR ONSITE**

Community Health Network has provided each of our schools with a counseling representative that Mt. Vernon families can utilize for support services during school hours. These counselors support students and provide continuity with the schools.

## **MT. VERNON MIDDLE SCHOOL RECEIVED GOLD STAR RECOGNITION FROM THE INDIANA SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION**

Mt. Vernon Middle School paved the way in the corporation's mental health initiative by becoming a Gold Star School. The Gold Star status is awarded to schools who have comprehensive and accountable counseling and guidance programs. This

Providing support and resources for mental health is a top priority at Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation (MVCSC). Mt. Vernon Schools are taking major steps to educate students, staff, and parents/guardians on the importance of mental health and wellness through a variety of programming and resources.



*MVCSC counselors meet monthly to coordinate student services.*



*Mt. Vernon Middle School counselors Michelle Shepherd, Chelsea Pacheco, and Carey Cole.*

award also makes the middle school eligible for the national award of Recognized ASCA Model Programs (RAMP).

## **TOP 10 TEACHER OF THE YEAR IN INDIANA IS ADVOCATING FOR MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES**

Mt. Vernon Middle School also has a staff member who is being formally recognized for her excellent teaching methods as well as advocating for a variety of mental health initiatives. A seventh

## **SUPERINTENDENT** *continued from page 1*

stakeholders to provide input into key decisions on a regular basis allows us to work even better together. Our baseline survey to all parents, students, and staff last spring has provided a baseline for our efforts. We will continue to collect data both formally and informally as we progress through the year. Be ready to provide

your perspective on our goal to increase collaboration. Everyone will have an opportunity!

*Jack*

Dr. Jack Parker, *Superintendent*



grade Social Studies Teacher, Ms. Deb Thomas, was named one of the Top 10 Indiana Teachers of the Year by the IDOE. Ms. Thomas's platform emphasizes the importance of mental health in schools and the need for additional resources, both for students and staff. See the article on Ms. Thomas for details.

### **MT. VERNON HIGH SCHOOL HOSTED THE FIRST "RISE ABOVE IT" INTERACTIVE MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOP**

Mt. Vernon High School is a county trendsetter as the first school to host Healthy 365's "Rise Above It" interactive mental health workshop on September 11. Healthy 365 is part of Hancock Health, and was the sponsor of this countywide mental health event. The workshops were dedicated to educating students (ages 13+) and adults on the best ways to cope with life's challenges. Attendees participated in a variety of breakout sessions, all of which dealt with common obstacles that students and adults will face or have already faced. The topics covered in the workshops dealt with problems that adults and students can encounter on a day-to-day basis, such as; anxiety, addiction, grief & loss, social media, cultural sensitivity, depression, suicide, and many more. There were shuttle buses available from several Hancock County schools, as well as complimentary food for participants.

### **ALL MVCSC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND THE MINI-MARAUDER PRESCHOOL TEACH "SECOND STEP," A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PROGRAM**

All three MVCSC elementary schools also have taken part in supporting mental health awareness initiatives through a program called "Second Step." It is dedicated to social-emotional learning and consists of four lessons: skills for learning, empathy, how to calm down, and problem solving. A lesson is taught every week with students and is continually reinforced every day through a variety of teaching methods.

MVCSC is fortunate to have supportive staff and live in a community that actively engages in mental health wellness. As MVCSC grows, the mental health programs and services will continue to improve to ensure the best learning environment and optimal wellness for students and staff.

**DEB THOMAS** *continued from page 1*

about other cultures around the world. She models exceptional teaching and student engagement daily in her classroom.

Ms. Thomas consistently cares for her students and fellow colleagues. She is leading a mental health initiative to benefit her students, Mt. Vernon staff, and the educational community as a whole. She believes that Indiana schools should be provided with additional tools that are needed to support children who have experienced trauma or grief.

Not only does Ms. Thomas advocate for the support of students, but staff as well. She is urging Hoosier lawmakers to propose and support legislation to increase awareness, resources, and training for trauma and bereavement so educators are better able to help their students. She is also encouraging the IDOE to partner with school districts and provide educators with additional information about mental health programs, employee assistance programs, alternatives for crisis response, e-counseling and new digital tools that are easily accessible.

Ms. Thomas states, "Children and adolescents who have experienced grief and trauma need a safer, more supportive learning environment filled with well-trained adults to succeed; therefore, statewide trauma-informed education is critical."

In times of tragedy, Ms. Thomas wants to encourage students to realize the importance of hope. She believes that students need ways to confront their grief which is why she is pursuing a grant for ceramic heart kits from Hearts of Hope. Hearts of Hope is a non-profit organization that strives to help others through art. Her goal is to give each of the former students on her team who endured the loss of their Mt. Vernon Middle School teacher last year, the chance to paint his or her own ceramic heart to donate to another who is grieving.

Ms. Thomas shared, "By encouraging someone else, I want students to realize that our legacy of losing one of our Mt. Vernon Middle School teachers is not one of darkness and tragedy, but one of light and hope. That is the most important lesson of all."

Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation wishes nothing but the best for Ms. Deb Thomas in her exemplary endeavors to guide Indiana schools in a positive direction. Her lasting impact in her students' lives, her colleagues' lives, and now with her statewide initiative to positively affect students and educators throughout Indiana with new mental health tools, makes her undoubtedly worthy of this award.



# HANCOCK COUNTY PROMISE

IUPUI had some big dreamers visiting their campus on

September 27! As a part of the Hancock County Promise, nearly 1,000 kindergarteners flooded the IUPUI campus and were involved in activities that helped inspire their futures beyond high school.

The Hancock County Promise aims to foster a community-wide culture where all students have the opportunity to open a CollegeChoice 529 Direct Savings Account. The program strives to ensure every student believes they can have a post-secondary education and has community support.

At IUPUI, students attended the "Walk into My Future" event and dreamt of their life after high school. They engaged in hands-on activities, met college students, participated in a pep session, and learned about possible careers or areas of study. Some of the various stations the kindergarteners visited include: making an IUPUI pennant, creating a book, learning about needs versus wants, playing soccer and bingo bonanza.

The Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation is encouraging all kindergarten parents/guardians to sign their child up for the Hancock County Promise and receive free money from community partners towards their child's education post high school. Through the Hancock County Promise, all kindergarteners in Hancock County can receive a free CollegeChoice 529 Direct



Savings accounts, thanks to community partners: Hancock Health, Greenfield Banking Company, NineStar Connect, Tyner Pond and Meijer in McCordsville.

## HANCOCK COUNTY PROMISE STEPS:

- 1) Enroll your kindergartener at [HancockCountyPromise.org](http://HancockCountyPromise.org), and follow the steps to sign up for your CollegeChoice 529 Direct Savings account.
- 2) Each kindergartener receives \$25 in their account from the community partners listed above
- 3) All Hancock County kindergarteners visited IUPUI on September 27 for the "Walk into My Future" event.
- 4) Kindergarten champions donate \$25+ to your child's account
- 5) Receive another \$25 match in their account from community partners

[www.HancockCountyPromise.org](http://www.HancockCountyPromise.org)



## School Security Grant

The safety of students and staff is the number one priority at MVCSC. The district was recently awarded a \$100K Secured School Safety Grant (\$50K grant with \$50K matching funds). This grant allows MVCSC to provide additional tools and resources to protect its students and staff.

In the past, the grant has been used to fund security cameras, threat assessment evaluations and radios. However, for future security grants, MVCSC plans to fund two School Resource Officers (SRO), one of which is a new position at McCordsville Elementary School.

These officers play a critical role in the protection of staff and students in the Mt. Vernon District.

Mt. Vernon administrators regularly meet with law enforcement for training in school buildings. District leaders also do annual threat assessments to reduce the amount of weaknesses in the security systems. MVCSC is constantly looking for new ways to improve corporation-wide safety. Be sure to visit the "Safety is a Priority" web page for further safety initiatives.

*"Engage, Educate & Empower Today's Students"*

# MV Community Champions

The Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation asked ALL community members to be a part of the **MV Community Champions** initiative to develop a 10-year Future Growth Plan for our district. The response was amazing! Over 300 participants came to our first meeting on August 27 to learn about the various aspects of our growth as well as provide direct input to the Advisory Committee related to grade configurations of our future schools. We are inviting those same stakeholders to a meeting again on January 21, 2020 to review a draft plan and provide further input.

For the remainder of the fall semester, our **MV Community Champions Advisory Committee** will review the great input provided and develop our draft plan that will take us through our next decade of growth. It is our desire to take a final plan to the MVCSC School Board at the March 2020 meeting.

MVCSC greatly appreciates the 300+ community members that came to voice their opinions about the future of the Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation. The advisory committee and school corporation values the community's opinions and will use them to improve upon our growing district.



# Early Education Grant

Mt. Vernon Mini-Marauder Preschool was recently awarded a capacity-building grant of over \$17,400 from the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA). The Mini-Marauder Preschool will use these funds for additional staffing, classroom materials, evidence-based curriculum/instruction materials and family engagement. Special thanks to the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation for providing the 5% match and serving as the community partner required by the grant.

The education capacity-grant for Indiana totaled more than \$870,000 to 14 applicants that represent 19 pre-kindergarten programs in 13 Indiana counties. The goal of the grant is to provide higher quality early education in Indiana.

Those who received the grant are located in counties whose residents are eligible for the On My Way Pre-K Program, a state-funded pre-kindergarten program for low-income children.



The grant funds in part will be used to invest in social emotional curriculum training. The "Second Steps" program is the same program that Mt. Vernon elementary schools use for all students. This will ensure continuity of lessons throughout students' early formation years. The program will help staff ensure that the children have the knowledge

and skills that they need to manage and understand their emotions and give them a good foundation of decision-making skills.

The Mini-Marauder Preschool will also invest in additional student engagement materials as they strive to meet the educational needs of all students. All of the materials will be representative of various age groups, abilities, and cultures to support cultural development. There will also be new STEM materials used to improve math and science development.

The funding will also be used for a new instructional assistant in the Mini-Marauder Preschool to support 15 pre-kindergarten students. In addition, the funds will also support supplies for the annual "Family Day" event.

The Mt. Vernon Mini-Marauder Preschool is looking forward to implementing the new curriculum and materials needed to support the pre-k students and prepare them for a bright future.



## FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL: Mini-Marauder Preschool Snapshot



- Inclusive preschool serving students ages 3-5
- Special services are available to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Open 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- Half day and full day options are available
- Morning preschool: 7:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
- Afternoon Preschool: 11:15 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- Extended Preschool: 7:00 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- Extended Preschool a.m.: 7:00 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Aftercare begins at 2 p.m.
- Accepts CCDF vouchers as a Legally Licensed Exempt Provider in Indiana
- Learning environment and curriculum is driven by the Indiana Foundations for Early Childhood
- Works with Paths to Quality to ensure a high quality early learning environment for every child
- New playground with swings, jungle gym, merry-go-round, and sand table
- iPads are used within the classroom
- Doors are always locked or entrance monitored by receptionist or staff
- Plans for a future nature trail
- Curriculum is aligned with developmentally appropriate best practices for young learners
- Classroom centers include: art, science, library and dramatic play
- Holiday or special theme activities for family involvement
- Parent volunteers welcome
- Young learners have access to bikes and balls in gym
- Interaction with cadet teachers from Mt. Vernon High School
- Cafeteria with breakfast and lunch available through Mt. Vernon food service

**ERIN ELLENWOOD, PRESCHOOL COORDINATOR  
MINI-MARAUDER PRESCHOOL  
1806 WEST STATE ROAD 234, FORTVILLE, IN 46040  
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[www.preschool.mvcsk.k12.in.us](http://www.preschool.mvcsk.k12.in.us)  
[twitter.com/Mini\\_Marauders](https://twitter.com/Mini_Marauders)  
[facebook.com/minimarauderpreschool](https://facebook.com/minimarauderpreschool)

## Indiana D.A.R.E. Youth Advocacy Board Representative

Mt. Vernon High School sophomore, Maitlyn Griner, was recently selected to represent the state of Indiana as the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Youth Advocate. D.A.R.E. is a program that is dedicated to teaching children about the dangers of substance abuse, violence, and other potentially harmful behaviors. Maitlyn will hold this position until she graduates in May 2022.

Sergeant Christine Rapp, D.A.R.E. officer at the Hancock County Sheriff's Department, said that Maitlyn was the exact fit for the program. Rapp shared, "once I found Maitlyn and remembered her drive and personality, I stopped looking."

Over the summer, Maitlyn traveled to the thirty-second D.A.R.E. International Training Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. During the conference, Maitlyn learned about the responsibilities that come with her role as the Indiana D.A.R.E. Youth Advocate, as well as more training on the consequences and dangers of substances. She also met other members of the Youth Advocacy Board, or the YABs, who greeted her with open arms.

Maitlyn is extremely dedicated to fulfilling her responsibilities and loves helping others; "I really want to help people live substance free... I care about everyone, whether I know them or not and I don't want them to go down a wrong path. I want them to have the best life they can have," she stated.

Sergeant Christine Rapp has been educating Marauders about the dangers of substance abuse and violence for twenty years and is set to become the state coordinator for D.A.R.E. in January. She is thrilled to have Maitlyn in her corner and will be utilizing Maitlyn's strong desire for change in our communities.

The Mt. Vernon community is proud of Maitlyn's appointment and drive to make a difference. The district is also grateful for Sergeant Rapp and the countless ways she has positively influenced Mt. Vernon students throughout the years.



# Creating Climates of Inclusion — MVCSC Unified Champion Special Olympics



MVCSC has been designated as a Unified Champion School District that brings together athletes with and without disabilities to train and compete on the same team. The Mt. Vernon Middle School is one of six middle schools in the state to receive the Champions Together in the Middle award for the 2017-18 school year. Unified Champions is an inclusive event designed for all Mt. Vernon students to participate regardless of athletic, intellectual, ambulatory or functional abilities.

The Mini-Marauder Preschool and the three elementary schools had their Unified Champions field day in May. Students walked a lap around the track and then rotated through various fun activities including walking on balance beams, running in relay races, kicking the soccer ball, jumping over obstacles, and more.

The middle school and high school participated in their own Special Olympics event as well. It started off with a parade around the middle school, with all of the students lining the halls and cheering for all participants, followed by a variety of activities at the track. The event ended by awarding the Andrew Mize Unified Champions Participant of the Year Award, in honor of a Mt. Vernon student who passed away unexpectedly.

MVCSC is proud to be a unified school and a participant of the Unified Champion Special Olympics! Mt. Vernon places the importance on creating climates of inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity for ALL students.

## FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL: Mt. Comfort Elementary School Snapshot



### INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOUR STAR SCHOOL – 18 YEARS TOTAL

- IREAD-3 Results – 2018-95%, 2017-96%, 2016-97%,
- ISTEP+ Scores – In 2018 Exceeded State Average by 11%, Consistently Exceeded State Average in Prior Years
- Strong Community, PTO and Outreach Partnerships
- Each Student has a Chromebook
- IDOE Stem-Certified
- 2 Playgrounds, 4 Softball/Baseball Fields, Outdoor Track
- Classrooms Have Interactive White Boards, Document Cameras, Projectors and Apple TV's
- Resource Officer Onsite Daily
- 10 Club Opportunities
- Frequent Programs and Guest Presentations
- Media Center – Over 16,500 Books Organized by Reading Level and Partnership with Hancock County Library
- Video Surveillance and High-Tech Safety Features
- English Language Learners (ELL) Assistance Program
- Speech/Language, Special Education and Sensory Room, & High Ability Programs

(PER THE LATEST STATISTICS FROM THE INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION)

#### ALISSA LOCKWOOD, PRINCIPAL

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MT. VERNON EDUCATION FOUNDATION | SAVE THE DATE!

## MVEF Black & Gold Gala

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Indianapolis Marriott Downtown



# MT. VERNON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

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## Realtors & Builders!

# Join us for breakfast

## Wednesday, November 6 | 9:00-10:30 am

Learn the latest about Mt. Vernon Schools! Visit [mvsc.k12.in.us](http://mvsc.k12.in.us) for details and to register.



# Traveling Talks

with  
Superintendent  
Dr. Jack Parker

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Grab your own lunch/dinner and share your thoughts on education with Superintendent Dr. Parker:

Tue., **Oct. 29** - Noon – Grill in McCordsville  
Wed., **Nov. 20** - Noon – Sero's in Cumberland  
Tue., **Jan. 28** - Noon – Lincoln Square in Fortville

Tue., **Mar. 10** - 6 p.m. – Kinsey's in McCordsville  
Thu., **Apr. 9** - Noon – Sero's in Cumberland



See Inside!!  
GRANTS IMPACT MV SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS!