



JANUARY 2021

MT. VERNON

# Mainstream

GROWTH & FINANCES



## Superintendent's Note

At the halfway point of the school year, we have a great deal to celebrate, especially with a year that has challenged us beyond our expectations. We began the year with a great deal of uncertainty in what the pandemic would bring to us. We developed plans that were

made in great painstaking detail to support our efforts in educating students in-person and virtually, as well as providing a full complement of co- and extracurricular activities that round out a child's school-aged experiences.

The success of our COVID protocols has seen very little to no transmission of the virus within our buildings. Even though the virus, as well as traditional factors, have impacted our ability to have adequate numbers of staff for in-person students, we have made adjustments to our schedule in hopes that we can continue to provide ongoing learning for all of our students through the challenging winter months and beyond.

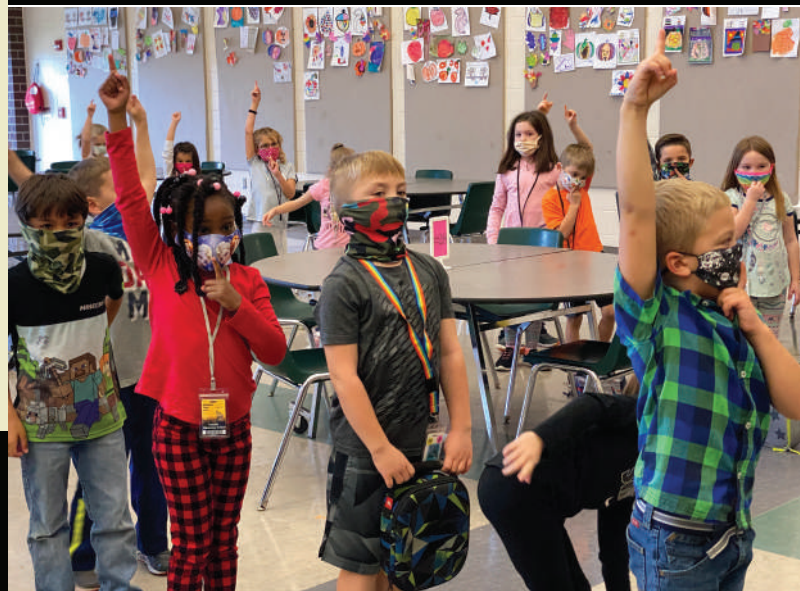
Our biggest celebration is how much our entire staff has stepped up to meet the needs of our students. We have significantly changed not only how we manage and run a school, but also our

**"OUR BIGGEST CELEBRATION IS HOW MUCH OUR ENTIRE STAFF HAS STEPPED UP TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS. WE HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED NOT ONLY HOW WE MANAGE AND RUN A SCHOOL, BUT ALSO OUR APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING."**

*Continued on page 2*

## FUTURE GROWTH PLAN

**SEE INSIDE ►**



## Dual Track Decision for the Future Growth Plan

The Future Growth Plan began with the MV Community Champions a year and a half ago. This group of over 300 community stakeholders made the recommendation that was approved by the board to reestablish an intermediate school with grades 5 and 6. This peels one grade out of the elementary schools and the middle school, creating capacity in all those buildings. This current decision would have Fortville Elementary changed back into an intermediate school, which creates the need for a new elementary building.

At the December 14, 2020 MVCSC Board of Trustees meeting, the school board decided to table the Dual Track

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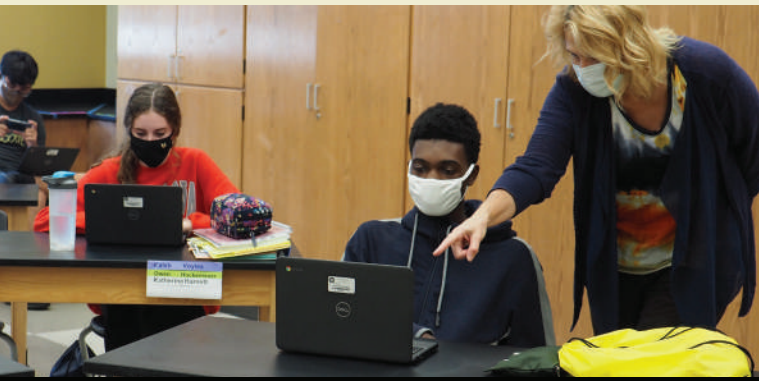
**SUPERINTENDENT** Continued from page 1

approach to teaching and learning. We recognize that focusing on relationships and mental health while still providing quality learning experiences is the best way to set our students up for success in the future. The loss of learning can be regained, and even accelerated, once we are through this pandemic; but getting our students back on track quickly hinges on their emotional readiness to learn.

I also want to celebrate the great Mt. Vernon Community as a whole. We have come together, supported one another, provided grace when needed, and kept the highest possible morale we could in a year we never expected to have to experience. Thank you for rallying around one another and for your support of our students and staff. I wish you a wonderful holiday break with your loved ones.

*Jack*

Dr. Jack Parker, Superintendent



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**FUTURE GROWTH PLAN** Continued from page 1

decision until their regular meeting in January. The Dual Track decision is whether MVCSC should build a new elementary school or renovate the existing preschool/administration building back into an elementary building. The community is invited to watch the School Board Meetings live on the district's YouTube channel, which is linked in the footer of [mvcsc.k12.in.us](http://mvcsc.k12.in.us).

**FUTURE GROWTH PLAN OPTIONS**

**OPTION 1:**

- ◆ Addition/Renovation of the Current Administration Building to (PK-4) \$36,500,000
- ◆ Addition/Renovation of the Current Transportation Building to Admin \$3,800,000

**OPTION 2:**

- ◆ New Elementary/Pre-K \$42,000,000
- ◆ Renovation of the Current Administration Building \$2,000,000

**OPTION 3:**

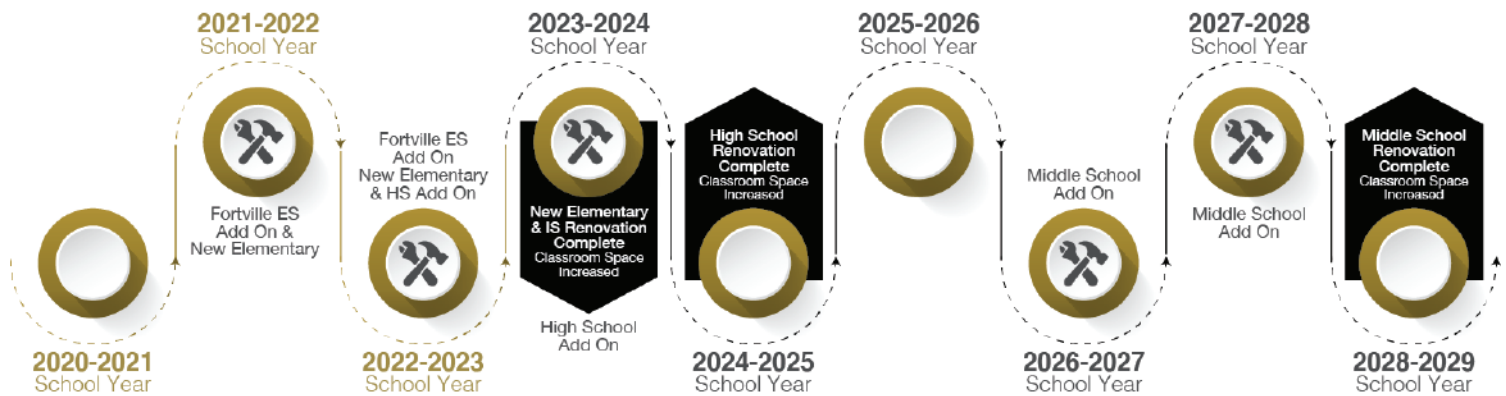
- ◆ New Elementary School (K-4) \$34,000,000
- ◆ Renovation of ½ of the Current Administration Building to Pre-K \$8,000,000
- ◆ Renovation of ½ of the Current Administration Building \$2,000,000

On December 14, the school board discussed at length the pros and cons of building new or renovation. Discussion topics included:

- Maintaining the current administration building for collaboration, training, and community use.
- Community members choose to move into our community in part for the great schools and offerings we provide our students.
- Updating the current administration building enough to ensure it is state of the art — architects confirmed that the building would basically be gutted and rebuilt with all new mechanical systems, etc.
- Potential unknowns with constructing new or renovating buildings — it was reported that there are contingency funds within the estimates for both renovation and new construction.
- The net cost differential of \$40,300,000 for renovation and \$44,000,000 for new construction
- The timeline differential of 12-14 months for renovation and 18-24 months for new construction



THE COMMUNITY CAN STAY UP TO DATE ON THE FUTURE GROWTH PLAN THROUGH THAT WEBSITE PAGE LOCATED UNDER THE "COMMUNITY" TAB. TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH THE MVCSC SCHOOL BOARD, VIEW THEIR CONTACT INFORMATION ON [MVCSC.K12.IN.US/BOARD](http://MVCSC.K12.IN.US/BOARD).



#### CURRENT GRADE CONFIGURATION

#### ADDING GRADES 5-6 INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Prior to the December School Board Meeting, Superintendent Dr. Parker hosted two Community Virtual Presentations on the Dual Track with a survey and Q & A afterwards. A total of 47 people participated in the survey and the results showed that there was strong support for the projects. Approximately 55% of the 47 people preferred building a new elementary and 34% preferred renovating. The remainder of the participants provided neutral ratings.

Financially, the \$3.3M increment dollars that MVCSC will be losing from its Operations Revenue in 2023 will create space in the Debt Service Fund, possibly allowing MVCSC to finance the construction within annual budgets. However, that loss of funding compiled with the new fire territory deficit of \$1M will have a substantial impact on the Operations Fund. The Debt Service Fund and Operations Fund directly impact each other because both are funded mostly by local property taxes. Any project above the threshold of \$16M is subject to a referendum if the public were to petition for one to appear on a ballot. Absent a successful petition, MVCSC could move the project forward within the annual budget as mentioned previously, though the revenue would be subject to property tax caps. Additional details are shared in the Finance article. The administration is planning to provide more detailed information regarding the future of school budgets in the coming months.

A demographer's report in 2019 shared that enrollment will increase from roughly 4,000 students in 2019 to roughly 6,000 by 2029. MVCSC Superintendent Dr. Jack Parker shared, "We will not build until we see the whites of their eyes in our buildings. We need to build at just the right time, and we are prepared to alter the timeline of the Future Growth Plan to accommodate any changes in future projected enrollment."

The community can stay up to date on the Future Growth Plan through that website page located under the "Community" tab. To share your thoughts with the MVCSC School Board, view their contact information on [mvcsc.k12.in.us/board](http://mvcsc.k12.in.us/board).



# Finances Update

**DESPITE THE HARDSHIPS AND UNCERTAINTIES OF THE PANDEMIC, OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM HAS REMAINED FOCUSED ON BEING FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE WHILE MEETING THE UNPRECEDENTED NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY. MVCSC IS ON PACE TO MEET ITS SAVINGS GOAL AS PART OF OUR SUSTAINABLE BUDGET PLAN, WHICH IS AN AMOUNT EQUIVALENT TO 8% OF OUR ANNUAL EDUCATION AND OPERATIONS EXPENSES.**

The winter break brings about the closing of one fiscal year and the beginning of the next. For MVCSC, 2020 is shaping up to be a good year as we continue working towards a sustainable budget. Despite the hardships and uncertainties of the pandemic, our leadership team has remained focused on being fiscally conservative while meeting the unprecedented needs of our students, staff, and faculty. In particular, our Operations Department has maintained safe working environments in our buildings and buses despite the increased costs related to COVID-19, which have surpassed one-half million dollars. MVCSC is on pace to meet its savings goal as part of our Sustainable Budget Plan, which is an amount equivalent to 8% of our annual education and operations expenses.

These savings are needed to hedge against potential losses in revenue, specifically losses in local taxes such as personal and commercial vehicle excise taxes. These, along with other local sources, could be impacted by the economic slowdown due to the coronavirus. In addition, 2021 will be year one of a multi-step approach needed to offset a significant loss of Operations Fund revenue in upcoming years.

The corporation has recently lost as much as \$1.7 million in local tax revenue to property tax caps. New, higher tax rates from other units within our district will raise the percentage of residential property taxpayers at their cap of 61%. With the new fire territory in Vernon Township, Mt. Vernon will see an additional \$1 million income loss. In 2023, Mt. Vernon will also see the loss of \$3.3

million in revenue to the Operations Fund; this is due to the expiration of the increment dollars received from the 2012 debt refinancing which was enacted by state statute and allowed debt revenues to be directed to our Operations Fund expenses. Although the expiration of this provision has allowed Mt. Vernon to take on long term debt for capital improvements within our current tax rate, it will reduce the Operations Fund revenue significantly. To help compensate for the \$6 million revenue loss in our Operations Fund, MVCSC will be redistributing property tax cap losses across multiple funds, building cash balances in its Debt Service Fund, and taking advantage of state approved additional funding specifically targeted to increased transportation expenses. These measures will gain one additional year of budget stability before the large deficits take hold.

The state's biennium budget will be approved during the winter session of the Indiana legislature. Our local representatives have expressed support for maintaining our current levels of funding; however, a decrease in state revenues could result in fewer dollars in the per-pupil funding for the 2021-22 school year. MVCSC is working hard to anticipate and strategically prepare for any possible Education Fund decreases.

The corporation is also continuing to implement its 2020 Stewardship Project. Approximately \$5 million of funds were appropriated towards expanding the performing arts, fine arts, and cafeteria spaces at the middle school, with an additional \$16 million allocated for repairing and replacing roofing and mechanical systems district-wide. This funding was done within our annual budget structure with no increase to our debt fund tax rate.

MVCSC is committed to taking care of the resources that we already have. As part of our Stewardship Project, the middle school architectural designs for the expanded band and choir rooms have been approved and contractor bids are set to be received in early January. The roofing bids and mechanical upgrades throughout the district will begin this winter as well. These investments will improve the quality of our middle school arts curriculum and make our buildings function at a cleaner, safer, more efficient level for years to come.

## Save the Date! MVEF Black & Gold Gala

**SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 2021 | JW MARRIOTT INDIANAPOLIS**

Support the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation while enjoying entertainment, delicious food, a silent auction, and more at this semi-formal event. The MVEF has provided over \$500,000 through teacher requested grants that enhance students' education, and provide programming, experiences and opportunities.



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



# Support Grants During the Pandemic

The pandemic has caused hardships for many Mt. Vernon families; MVCSC and the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation has sought aid to help with these hardships. MVCSC recently received a \$185,000 grant from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund to improve online school instruction. Also, the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation has received a \$12,000 Central Indiana COVID-19 Community Economic Relief Fund (C-CERF) grant to help with online connectivity and to help with social-emotional wellbeing.

Mt. Vernon is one of several school districts that was selected as a recipient of the GEER Fund. This grant was applied for in partnership with the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis and the Central Indiana Educational Service Center.

The funds acquired will be disbursed over the next two years and split into two areas. Devices and connectivity is the first area, and digital instruction advancement will be the other focus. Staff chromebooks have been updated and wireless access in the school buildings will continue to be expanded.

While most Mt. Vernon students have reliable internet access at home, approximately 10% do not. "Quality high-speed internet access is no longer a luxury in our society as many more elements required to manage life are accessed through the world wide web. This is even more pronounced for the world of education," shared Dr. Jack Parker, MVCSC Superintendent. MVCSC is appreciative that NineStar Connect has provided outdoor access points covering three Mt. Vernon schools' parking lots. However, some students still struggle with access to complete their online schoolwork, which is one of the reasons why the GEER grant is so beneficial.

The Mt. Vernon Education Foundation (MVEF) received a \$12,000 Central Indiana COVID-19 Community Economic Relief Fund (C-CERF) grant to help with internet connectivity and social-emotional wellbeing of students. This grant is made possible by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. and awarded by the United Way of Central Indiana.

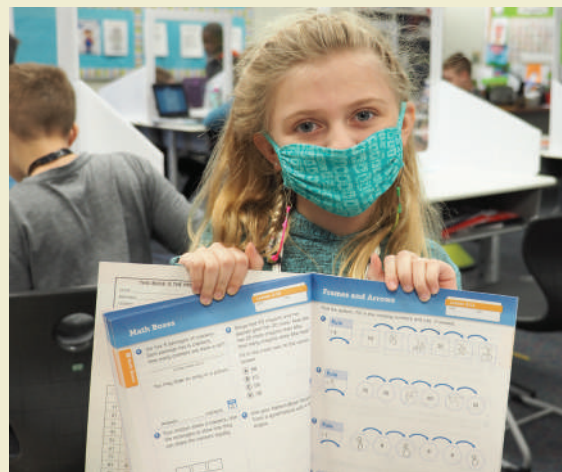
The funds given to MVEF will be used to sustain internet connectivity and/or provide services that support individuals

and families who are affected directly and indirectly by the economic impacts related to the COVID-19 crisis.

Individuals and families at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level will be prioritized.

MVCSC would like to thank MVEF and Mrs. Renee Oldham for her initiative in applying for this grant that will benefit Mt. Vernon students. Mrs. Oldham, Executive Director for the Mt. Vernon Education Foundation, states in her application for the grant, "Mt. Vernon is prioritizing a trauma-informed initiative to address childhood adversity and its effect on students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. Prior to COVID-19, roughly two-thirds of our Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation students would have experienced at least one significant trauma before graduating high school. We are anticipating and preparing for elevated issues of trauma experiences due to the pandemic, and the impact it has had and will have on our students, families, and community in the foreseeable future."

Mt. Vernon is confident that the community will continue working together to overcome the obstacles placed by the current pandemic. Although the pandemic presents unusual challenges, teachers and students' resilience is shining through. MVCSC is very thankful for all pandemic-related financial support received this past year and the partnership with the MVEF to help Mt. Vernon students and staff. For support opportunities, please visit resources listed at [mvcsc.k12.in.us/COVID](http://mvcsc.k12.in.us/COVID).





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

- Has been an Indiana Department of Education Four Star School for 18 years total
- STEM Certified by the Indiana Department of Education
- Part of an "A" Rated district
- 2019-2020 Attendance Rate -97%
- IREAD-3 Results – 2018-2019 -98% passing rate
- Strong community, PTO and outreach partnerships
- Each student has a touchscreen Chromebook
- 2 playgrounds, 3 softball/baseball fields, outdoor track
- Classrooms have interactive whiteboards, document cameras, projectors and Apple TV's
- Resource officer on-site daily
- 7 club opportunities
- Strong character education taught throughout the school year
- 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
- Title 1 school



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## MVCSC Stewardship Project

An aspect of MVCSC's future growth is making sure the current Mt. Vernon school facilities are taken care of. In the April 2020 Mainstream Newsletter, MVCSC shared that approximately \$18,000,000 of work was prioritized as an urgent need to repair critical infrastructure throughout all of the school buildings. The work project was named the Stewardship Project, representing that MVCSC strives to be good stewards of tax dollars by taking care of our existing facilities.

In 2019, Emcor analyzed all of MVCSC facilities in regards to three primary categories: maintenance and efficiency; code compliance, safety and accessibility; and educational adequacy. All areas were graded and Mt. Vernon staff that works in those facilities helped identify the most urgent areas. Roofing and HVAC updates/improvements were among the critical list to fix immediately, as well as increasing the size of the Mt. Vernon Middle School band and choir rooms that are grossly undersized for those programs.

### STEWARDSHIP PROJECT UPDATE:

MVCSC is pleased to share that the roof repair is moving forward and will begin very soon. The HVAC project is ready to begin with the project site manager in place. MVCSC is starting with replacements of water softeners and hot water heaters in the elementary schools. The middle school band and choir room expansion

## Superintendent Calls for Special

MVCSC's first snow day was declared an eLearning day for MVCSC students and staff; however, Superintendent Dr. Parker had a special assignment for students.

*"All students and staff will experience virtual learning from their homes. Today will be dedicated for review and catch-up on assignments. All students have only **one new assignment** today. Students will use the scientific process in planning appropriate clothing to remain warm and dry while spending time outside. Once this hypothesis has been identified, and appropriate attire has been secured, students will be expected to test their theory by going outdoors and playing in the snow.*

**Step two** of this assignment will be to practice the skills of estimation and measurement when throwing snowballs at one another while maintaining a minimum of 6' of distance with



## FEATURED MT. VERNON SCHOOL: McCordsville Elementary School Snapshot



- Attendance Rate: 2019-2020 -97%
- STEM Certified by the Indiana Department of Education
- IREAD-3 Results: 2018-19 -93%
- Indiana Department of Education Four Star School -2020-2021, 2019-2020, 2018-2019
- Indiana Department of Education has rated MES an "A" school every year since 2017
- Strong community and PTO partnerships
- Each student has a touchscreen Chromebook
- Outdoor track, soccer/football field, baseball/softball diamond, 2 full playgrounds
- 3D printers
- Classrooms have whiteboards, projectors and Apple TV's
- Resource officer on site daily
- Strong character education taught throughout the school year
- 7 club/extracurricular opportunities available
- Multiple school programs and activities
- Media Center - Over 13,000 books organized by reading level
- English Language Learners program
- Speech/language, special education, high ability & social worker programs
- Video surveillance and high-tech safety features



Photo taken prior to the pandemic.



drawings are completed and final pricing is nearing completion. After all those steps are approved, the process will start.

In order to create funding space for the Stewardship Project, the corporation refinanced two existing bonds, saving the corporation \$560,000 in 2020 and \$7 million over the life of the debt. In addition, MVCSC took advantage of a short-term financing option to generate up-front cash for this project which saved \$500,000 in interest payments.

MVCSC has a commitment to our tax payers to make conservative and transparent financial decisions that provide our students and staff with the environment they need to thrive and learn each day.

## Assignment on First Snow Day

*others outside of their household. When being hit with said snowball, students are expected to practice their social skills and to use their good words. Extra credit can be earned by helping to shovel sidewalks and/or driveways."*

The assignment was received by all with astounding favor. It's the simple things in life that need to be celebrated during challenging times. Sometimes, getting back to the basics can provide much needed brain-breaks and pure joy.



**STEPHANIE MILLER, PRINCIPAL**  
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# MT. VERNON

COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

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## MVCSC Board Members Step Down

MVCSC would like to recognize long-time MVCSC Board Members Mike McCarty (since 2013) and Beth Smith (since 2017). They have made the decision to step-down from Mt. Vernon School Board of Trustees after their most recent term. Their dedication to Mt. Vernon students, staff, and the community have been nothing short of inspirational. Both have brought unique talents and perspectives to the leadership of MVCSC, and the school district has benefited from their wisdom and guidance.

At the December 2020 School Board Meeting, McCarty and Smith were presented with rocking chairs that had a personalized plaque labeling their years of service. All school board members shared their gratitude for McCarty and Smith's commitment to Mt. Vernon and shared how much they have enjoyed their time with them on the board.



MVCSC would like to thank Mike McCarty and Beth Smith for their leadership and instrumental roles in guiding the district. Through their unique expertise, guidance, and love for the Mt. Vernon community, the district has been able to further the mission of engaging, educating and empowering students to seize tomorrow's opportunities.