Building Your School’s Innovation Portfolio

Mount Vernon Presbyterian School

Imperative
At Mount Vernon, our imperative to innovate stems from our Mission. We are a school of inquiry, innovation, and impact. Beyond the baselines of foundational knowledge and skills, we also seek to nurture results in Six Fundamental Mindsets. Creative Thiers, Solution Seekers, Ethical Decision-Makers, Collaborators, Innovators, and Communicators.

These Four Dimensions of Purpose, Results, Culture, and Design Reinform One Another in What We Call the Mount Vernon Continuum.

IDEA
Our summit idea originates from our Mission—that we are a school of inquiry, innovation, and impact. Beyond the baselines of foundational knowledge and skills, we also seek to nurture results in Six Fundamental Mindsets: Creative Thiers, Solution Seekers, Ethical Decision-Makers, Collaborators, Innovators, and Communicators.

To establish and nourish a culture for our community to build and utilize these mindsets together, we strive from our Norms: Start with Questions, Fail Up, Share the Work, Assume the Best, and Have Fun.

To guide our design of daily excursions in purposeful learning, we depend on our Principles and Practices: Relationships are Foundational for Learning, Curiosity and Passion drive Learning, Learning Demands Interactive and Flexible Spaces, Empathy Influences Learning, and Learners Apply Knowledge to Make an Impact.

Collectively, these four dimensions of our purpose, results, culture, and design reinform one another in what we call the Mount Vernon Continuum.

IMPLEMENTATION
At Mount Vernon we implement our summit idea by progressively and iteratively building an Innovation Portfolio—leading and managing a collection of interrelated prototypes to advance the capabilities and capacities of our learners and our community.

We think of Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three Innovations:

Tier One: Those that incrementally move us forward
Tier Two: Those that create breakthrough opportunities
Tier Three: Those that transform the very way that people think about “school”

Just like in an investment portfolio, we look for a particular mix and ratio of multiple items. Additionally, because we are practitioners of Design Thinking, we “build, build, build, test, gather feedback, iterate, and plan further.”

We lead and manage complex, ambiguous situations by working through phases of Discovery, Empathy, Experiment, and Produce. What’s more, we have created a dual operating system with synergy among our operations of Mount Vernon Presbyterian School and our future-making R&D Lab known as the Mount Vernon Institute for Innovation (MVIFI).

Consequently, all of our faculty and staff at Mount Vernon are Dual Agents—both practitioners and researchers/designers.

We have developed these interconnected components and the continuum over a number of years, by connecting the dots looking backwards while ambitiously researching and designing how we might innovate school to meet the needs of the future. Most recently, our Three Design Drivers are expressed in their questions:

Shared Vision and Shared Language make our collaborative efforts productive and our pace of innovation invigorating. And to reach our most ambitious summits, we know that we must vary our routes as explorers and pioneers of first-accounts.

Three Design Drivers:
1. How might we make school more reflective of real life?
2. How might we empower all learners to be seekers and explorers?
3. How might we inspire one another—our the larger world—through the work we undertake together?

Resources

SCHOOL WEBSITE
Mount Vernon Presbyterian School

SCHOOL TWITTER
@MVPSchool

MVIFI FACEBOOK
Facebook.com/MountVernonPresbyterianSchool

MVIFI WEBSITE
Mvifi.org

MVIFI TWITTER
@MVIFI

MV INFLUENCERS
mvifi.org/influencers/