

Welcome to Merrill Middle School!

My name is Kathryn Panek and I'm honored to serve all of you as the principal of Merrill Middle School. This upcoming school year, 2019-2020, will be my 4th year at Merrill and my 2nd year as the principal. I have previously served in a number of roles in education, including special education teacher, adolescent literacy teacher, School Improvement Leader at Hoover High School, and as a middle level principal in Winterset. I am so very pleased to be a part of Des Moines Public Schools serving our exceptional students and families.

On a more personal note, my family includes two daughters, Abigail (13) and Eleanor (9), who love school, soccer, music, and being with their friends. My husband, Jeff, also serves our local community as the Assessment Manager for Des Moines Public Schools.

I have so enjoyed getting to know all of the students and families at Merrill, and I am looking forward to meeting our incoming group. We are an International Baccalaureate School, and I am profoundly moved by how Merrill really is a microcosm of the world. Our students are a remarkable group of hard working, interesting, and diverse learners. Every day I am here I see the future in our students and know it is bright.

Plans are well underway to make sure that our incoming 6th grade class has a smooth transition from elementary to middle school. Below is a list of events for you to make note of and put on your calendars.

- April 2nd - A team from Merrill will be visiting our feeder elementary schools to welcome students.
- Late April - Elementary schools will be bringing students to Merrill for a visit during the school day.
- May 9th at 5:30 PM – Merrill will be hosting rising 6th graders and their families for 6th Grade Family Night. This is a chance for families to visit Merrill, meet other 6th grade families, and learn more about a day in the life of a 6th grader at Merrill.
- June/July/August - The Merrill office, temporarily housed in the library, will be open all summer for you to stop by and visit.
- Late July/Early August – Success for 6th Grade (With a summer construction project planned at Merrill, we are still sorting out details for this event. Stay tuned for more information! <https://merrill.dmschools.org/>)
- August 23rd – The first day of school for 6th graders is full of team building activities and helping students become familiar with the building and staff here at Merrill. Families are invited to a BBQ over the noon hour.

This summer our campus will be undergoing a 2 million dollar renovation that will impact our Science, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Performing Arts classrooms, our front offices, and our drop off and pick up lanes. Even through the dust and construction noise, we will be here preparing for another fantastic year. I hope that you will e-mail, call, and stop in and visit. Your input and support are very important to what we do here at Merrill. My promise to you is to work tirelessly to sustain and grow this wonderful community that I'm so lucky to serve.

Kathryn Panek

Principal

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