



Merrill MS Virtual Learning Schedule

Greetings, Mustangs,

Big News! With an **all virtual start** to the school year, all middle school students will be served by neighborhood schools. In other words, there will not (at this time) be a K-8 virtual school. Instead, **ALL Merrill students will be in virtual classes with other Merrill students and served by Merrill teachers**, regardless of the original model (hybrid or virtual) students and families selected.

All ten DMPS middle schools worked together to develop a somewhat similar virtual experience for all students across our district – offering 5-6 periods per day, limiting screen time to 3-5 hours per day, offering ELA and Math daily, and building in time for student breaks. On the second page of this document, you will find the Merrill daily schedule. Here are the key components of our daily schedule:

- Students are enrolled in ELA and math class daily in alignment with our DMPS board goals.
- As an International Baccalaureate World School, we believe that all eight IB subject groups are equally important. In this schedule, students will still rotate through all eight subject areas throughout the year. We also believe this honors the various interests of our students.
- We have included an extended lunch hour for students who may need to walk, or have their family drive them, to the nearest meal site for “grab and go” lunch.
- We have a later start to accommodate adolescent sleep schedules and teacher collaboration time.
- Class periods will be 40-minutes in length and will be chunked into **synchronous virtual whole class instruction, virtual small group/individual instruction, and independent work and practice.**

A few definitions to get us started:

Synchronous Instruction: Students engage in instruction in real-time (live) with a teacher and a class of students. This is the primary mode of instruction in our Merrill schedule.	Asynchronous Instruction: Students engage in instruction at a different time than when the instruction is delivered. This could include, but is not limited to, recorded video lessons.
---	--

Synchronous Virtual Whole Class: Each 40-minute period will begin with virtual whole class instruction held in a *synchronous* fashion using Microsoft Teams. This time will allow teachers to check in with all students, review previous learning, introduce new learning, engage students in classroom discussions, and model strategies for students in a live setting using the Teams platform.

Synchronous Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction: Teachers and students will also engage in small group or individual instruction during the 40-minute period. Teachers will provide targeted instruction and support, discuss progress, and allow for small group collaboration and learning in a live setting using the Teams platform. Depending on student need, students may also receive additional instruction and support through ELL, GT, and SpEd programs during the class period.

Independent Work and Practice: At some point during the 40-minute period and/or earlier or later in the day, students will also engage in independent learning experiences & practice activities that are shared and posted by the teacher in the Canvas platform. Independent learning and practice will be a blend of online and offline experiences and activities to be conscious of student screen time. Online experiences and activities might include, but are not limited to, practice within online programs, video instruction and response, online math practice, etc. Offline experiences and activities might include, but are not limited to, independent reading and writing, game play, exploration, etc.

Grades 6-8 Virtual Schedules

Students at Merrill will be enrolled in a 6-period day that includes the four core classes - Language & Literature, Math, Science, and Individuals & Societies – along with two extended core classes. The following extended core classes will be offered on a 6-week rotation: Physical Education, Health, Visual Art, Performing Arts, Business Technology and World Language (Spanish).

Students are scheduled in classes of approximately 25-28 students each period of which 8-9 students are from the Monday/Tuesday cohort, 8-9 students from the Thursday/Friday cohort, and 8-9 students from the virtual cohort - allowing a smooth transition back into the hybrid model where classes of students must remain below 10 to ensure physical distancing and students must remain within the same pod of kids to slow the spread in case of infection. It is confusing, but the main thing you need to know is that schedules will NOT change drastically when we transition back to hybrid. *We anticipate schedules being available on Infinite Campus by the end of the day on Tuesday, September 1.*

Daily Virtual Schedule (40 min. class, extended lunch, no conflicts w/ district wide programs)

8:00-9:30		Teachers Available for Individual Support and Questions M/T/Th/F Wednesday – Merrill Faculty Professional Learning (This time could be flexed to evenings to support student need/availability.)
Advisory	9:10-9:30	M/T/Th/F Advisory will be held daily (except on Wednesdays) until students are settled into the routine of school, but we will phase it out to a few times per week.
1	9:30-10:10	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
		10 Min. Break
2	10:20-11:00	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
		10 Min. Break
3	11:10-11:50	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
11:50-12:50		Lunch Break – “Grab and Go” meals available throughout the neighborhood.
4	12:50-1:30	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
		10 Min. Break
5	1:40-2:20	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
		10 Min. Break
6	2:30-3:10	Synchronous Virtual Whole Class Instruction followed by... Independent Work & Practice, Virtual Small Group/Individual Instruction
3:10-3:45		Student Feedback/Possible Clubs and Activities M/T/Th/F Wednesday – Merrill Team Mtgs.

Prep and Central Academy

Students enrolled in 8th Grade Central Academy will join Merrill virtual classes for 1st – 3rd periods before transitioning to Central Academy virtual classes from 12:30-3:30. Students enrolled in 7th Grade Prep Academy will join Prep Academy virtual classes from 8:30-10:00 before transitioning to Merrill virtual classes for 3rd – 6th periods.

More Information Soon

We sure appreciate your patience during this time. It has been a very fluid situation all summer long with a Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, etc. I understand that this schedule is far from perfect and may cause further burden for some students and families. We are here to help you troubleshoot issues as they arise.

We will be communicating with you in the coming days a plan for technology distribution (all students will be issued a DMPS computer), virtual orientation (this will not occur until late August/early September), middle school clubs and activities, and community resources that are available to meet your needs, among other topics.

Creating a Better and More Peaceful World

Our mission as an IB School remains the same, "To develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world." The Merrill team has demonstrated a profound sense of responsibility to this mission, especially in the midst of a global pandemic. Teachers have been hard at work all summer developing Canvas course materials, thinking through and problem solving new challenges that we have never before encountered, and developing a plan to strengthen our learning community and engage our students in a virtual world.

I have faith in you, in us as partners, in our Merrill staff, and in our larger Merrill community. We are better together. Thank you for your continued support, questions, feedback, and partnership.

Yours in a virtual start to the school year,

Kate

Kathryn Panek

Merrill Middle School, Principal

Kathryn.panek@dmschools.org