



2021-2022

MERRILL MIDDLE SCHOOL FAMILY & STUDENT HANDBOOK



*An International
Baccalaureate School
Middle Years Programme*

Merrill Middle School
5301 Grand Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50312
(515) 242-8448

Twitter:
@MerrillMustangs

Merrill Website:
merrill.dmschools.org

District Website:
dmschools.org

We Are The Heartbeat of Merrill.

Caring, Principled, Reflective

Des Moines Public Schools Mission

The Des Moines Public Schools Exist So That Graduates Possess the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities to Be Successful at the Next Stage of Their Lives.

Des Moines Public Schools Vision

Becoming the model for urban education in the United States.

IB Mission

The International Baccalaureate® aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Welcome to Merrill!

Schools are so often the hub of communities, and I believe that this is true throughout our great city. Thank you for all you do on behalf of all of our students...both at home and throughout the community. From transporting your kids and their friends to and from school activities, voting in school elections, making sure students get a good night's rest, and communicating with us about how things are going for your child, we appreciate you! To have everyone working toward the same goal---improved learning for all students---can only be a positive for our students and community.

We hope that you will e-mail, call, and stop in and visit. Our partnership is very important to what we do here. We will strive every day to ensure that your student is prepared for whatever comes their way. Let's have a great year!

Kathryn Panek, Principal

*Note: This is the Merrill specific handbook. Please click [here](#) to access the DMPS Middle School Handbook.

Merrill's Website: merrill.dmschools.org

Please check our website for dates, times, and details about all events and activities at Merrill. The webpage, which is updated daily, includes our calendar of events, the daily announcements, an electronic bulletin board with the latest news, and parent and student tabs full of information to help you navigate middle school. Save us to your favorites for quick access!

We use Infinite Campus to send out important and urgent information. Please make sure your contact information is accurate and you've checked "yes" to receive information from us.

Administration & Main Office Contact Information

Phone – 515-242-8448

Fax – 515-323-8656

Email: merrill@dmschools.org

Hours: 8:00 AM – 3:45 PM

Principal – Kathryn Panek
kathryn.panek@dmschools.org

Office Manager – Jane Schumann
jane.schumann@dmschools.org

Attendance – Joyce Grace
Email: joyce.grace@dmschools.org

School Nurse – Kelli Luft
kelli.luft@dmschools.org

Associate Principal – Kristen Kennedy Anderson
kristen.kennedyanderson@dmschools.org
(Last Names A-L)

School Counselor – Kimber Foshe
kimber.foshe@dmschools.org
(Last Names A-L)

Associate Principal – Sara Triplett
sara.triplett@dmschools.org
(Last Names M-Z)

School Counselor – Caitlin Foshe
caitlin.foshe@dmschools.org
(Last Names M-Z)

Student Engagement Coordinator – Martin Luft
martin.luft@dmschools.org

Success Case Manager – Andrew Pavelka
andrew.pavelka@dmschools.org

MERRILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Breakfast	08:05 - 08:25
1st Period	08:30 - 09:26
2nd Period	09:30 - 10:25

6th Grade 7th Grade 8th Grade

3rd Period Lunch/Mustang Min. 10:25 - 10:55 Mustang Min./Lunch 10:57 - 11:27 4th Period 11:29 - 12:25 5th Period 12:29 - 01:25	3rd Period 10:29 - 11:25 4th Period Lunch/Mustang Min. 11:25 - 11:55 Mustang Min./Lunch 11:57 - 12:27* 5th Period 12:29 - 01:25	3rd Period 10:29 - 11:25 4th Period 11:29 - 12:25 5th Period Lunch/Mustang Min. 12:25 - 12:55* Mustang Min./Lunch 12:57 - 01:27
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* 7th and 8th lunches overlap slightly. Merrill staff will help direct hallway traffic during this time.

6th Period	01:29 - 02:25
7th Period	02:29 - 03:25



MERRILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Morning Arrival: Students may arrive at the school beginning at 8:00 AM. School hours are 8:30 AM to 3:25 PM, with the first bell ringing at 8:25 AM.

Walkers: Please use the crosswalk near the east end of the building to cross Grand Avenue.

Bikers: Please park your bikes at the bike rack near the west end of the building.

Riders: This year you may drop your student off at three different locations:

- Main entrance loop in front of Merrill
- In front of Merrill in the lane along Grand Ave.
- Shriver: This year the northeast doors will be unlocked in the AM.

All students arriving via yellow bus will be dropped off on the west end of the building in the bus turnaround. Please check the Parent Portal on Infinite Campus for routing information.

Upon arrival students may take a “grab and go” breakfast at the door and then head directly to their 1st period classrooms. Students may come to the main office after 8:05am for any business before school starts.

Breakfast: A “grab and go” breakfast is available for students each morning. Students may take a breakfast from the breakfast stations located at each door before then proceeding to their 1st period classrooms.

Dismissal: School dismisses at 3:25 PM. This year you may pick your student up at three different locations:

- Main entrance loop in front of Merrill
- In front of Merrill in the lane along Grand Ave.
- Students may walk a short distance to Shriver or the Temple B’Nai Jeshurun for pick up.

All students departing on a yellow bus will be picked up on the west end of the building in the bus turnaround.

Unless students are under the direct supervision of an adult (homework help, clubs, activities), all students need to exit the building by 3:45 PM. If you are looking for an after-school option, please click [here](#) to learn more about Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Iowa.

Caring, Principled, Reflective (CPR)

Our mission at Merrill is to create a better and more peaceful, liberated world. In doing so we partner with students to establish a culture that supports improving social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students. Our guiding principles include being CARING, PRINCIPLED, and REFLECTIVE or CPR.

Students are introduced to CPR during the first few days of school where we converse with students about CPR and teach and practice CPR in our common areas including hallways, restrooms, busses, cafeteria, and recess area. In addition, students will engage in dialogue regularly about CPR in the classroom. Throughout the year we will continue to strengthen our learning community and celebrate student success!

<i>CPR in the Classroom</i>	<i>CPR in the Hallway</i>	<i>CPR in the Restroom</i>	<i>CPR on the Bus</i>	<i>CPR in the Cafeteria</i>	<i>CPR at Recess</i>
<p>Caring – Respect the learning environment.</p> <p>Principled – Take responsibility for your actions.</p> <p>Reflective – Did you do your best and allow others to do their best?</p>	<p>Caring – Value others’ space.</p> <p>Principled – Walk on the right side of the hallway.</p> <p>Reflective – Did you help keep traffic moving?</p>	<p>Caring – Keep the restroom clean.</p> <p>Principled – Wash your hands.</p> <p>Reflective – Did you leave the restroom clean for others?</p>	<p>Caring – Use appropriate language</p> <p>Principled – Remain seated.</p> <p>Reflective – Were you a positive leader?</p>	<p>Caring – Interact positively.</p> <p>Principled – Remain in your seat until you are dismissed.</p> <p>Reflective – Did you clean up your area?</p>	<p>Caring – Include others. Resolve conflict by talking or ask for help.</p> <p>Principled – Stay in boundaries and away from trees.</p> <p>Reflective – Did you have fun?</p>

Anti-Bullying/Harassment: Bullying and harassment is against federal and state law, and against the policy and procedures of the District. The District is committed to maintaining an educational environment free of any form of bullying or harassment by or toward students, parents/guardians, employees, and volunteers while in school, at a school sponsored activity, or at any school sponsored function. The District prohibits harassment or bullying based on the student’s actual or perceived race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, marital or familial status, ethnic background, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attribute, political party preference, political belief, or socio-economic background or familial status. Click [here](#) to read DMPS policies and procedures.

Mustang Minutes: Our mission at Merrill is to create a better and more peaceful, liberated world. Mustang Minutes provides additional time to establish a culture that supports improving social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students. During Mustang Minutes students will be engaging in community building, reading and writing, using the time to productively in service of their academic and social-emotional needs, and practicing and applying the IB Learner Profiles.

Teachers: Teachers are available between 8:00-3:45 at the school. The best way to contact a teacher is via School CNXT or e-mail. If you would like to schedule a meeting, please don’t hesitate to reach out.

Lockers: Each student is assigned a locker to share with another student. Students have time between classes to go to their lockers to get what they need for their next class. Students may carry a backpack, binder, pencil case, or a small purse if needed. Students must keep their locker combinations confidential and should only use the locker assigned to them.

Computers: All students will be assigned a computer and charger that they will carry with them both to and from school, as well as throughout the day. Students should be sure that the computer is charged and ready to go each day. We will not have loaners available for students who forget the computer at home. If students need to leave their computer at school overnight, we will develop a plan with those individuals.

Phones and Personal Electronics: Personal electronic devices (cell phones and personal tablets, etc.) are not to be brought to the classroom or cafeteria. These devices need to be put away all day. We define “put away” as off or on silent AND placed in a locker, in a backpack, in a pocket, checked-in at the front

office, or left at home. We will continue to teach students appropriate technology use with the laptops, iPads, and electronic devices available to us here at school. Students struggling to keep the phone “put away” will receive additional support.

Parents and families who need to contact their student(s) during the school day should call the main office at 242-8448. Also, there is a phone for student use in the main office.

P.E.: We encourage students to wear comfortable clothing and tennis shoes on PE days, as well as have some anti-perspirant/deodorant. Students do NOT change clothes for PE due to lack of time and supervision in the locker rooms.

Tardy Policy

Students who arrive after 8:30 will need to check-in with Mrs. Grace in the main office.

Students have 4 minutes to move from class to class and are expected to arrive to each class period on time. Students arriving late to class without a pass from another staff member will be marked tardy in IC. This data will be used to provide additional supports for students.

Restrooms

Students are encouraged to use the restroom before school, during passing periods, and during lunch. For students needing to use the restroom during classroom instruction, students will sign-out on the clipboard and take the hall pass/lanyard from the classroom. Gender neutral restrooms are available on both the first and second floors.

Dress Code and Bags/Backpacks

Dress Code: Students may dress in a way that expresses their gender identity, cultural, and religious beliefs. The following guidelines are meant to assist students and families in determining appropriate attire for school. Tops and bottoms must cover all undergarments. Students are permitted to wear head wraps, headbands, hats, hoods, and durags as long they allow staff to still recognize students. For engagement and safety reasons, the following items are not allowed: hoods tied so tight that staff can't see faces, sunglasses, slippers, and blankets.

School officials may intervene if the health, safety, or positive educational environment of students is in question.

Backpacks: Students may carry an organizer, a purse, and/or a backpack to class.

Student IDs

As part of the protocols in place to maintain a safe and secure school environment, DMPS is requiring students 6-12th grade to wear their student identification card (ID) when on any school campus and when using school provided transportation. Having IDs visible will allow students to be identified quickly by staff in order to maintain a safe and orderly environment. Students will need their ID to gain school entry, lunch, school provided transportation, and entrance to extracurricular events. The ID also provides free access on DART transportation on evenings and weekends.

A lanyard and holder will be provided along with the ID to every student at the beginning of each school year at no cost. Lost or damaged cards can be replaced for \$1.00. A temporary ID may be given to a student while the replacement ID is being printed. The temporary ID will need to be turned in at the time of receiving the new ID.

Food and Water Bottles

To maintain safety and cleanliness, food and drink should only be consumed in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch hours. Hallways, classrooms, and the gymnasium should be free of food and drink items throughout the day.

The following times have been designated as snack times for each grade level:

- 6th Grade: 6th Period – 1:30 PM (6th lunch is from 10:30-11:30)
- 7th Grade: 3rd Period – 10:30 AM (7th lunch is from 11:30-12:30)
- 8th Grade: 4th Period – 11:30 AM (8th lunch is from 12:30-1:30)

The approved snacks include fresh or dried fruits and vegetables, cheese, beef sticks, crackers, pretzels, or similar items.

We encourage students to stay hydrated throughout the day by bringing a water bottle. Water bottles should only contain water.

There is a student vending machine available for students to purchase healthy snacks before and after school only.

SRG

DMPS is committed to providing fair, accurate, specific, and timely information regarding student progress toward learning goals. Merrill teachers update Infinite Campus gradebooks at a minimum of every two weeks. To learn more about SRG guiding practices, please click [here](#). Under the “parent” tab you will find a step-by-step guide to navigating the parent portal. Under the “teacher” tab you will find the DMPS SRG Handbook. For additional grading questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to a specific teacher.

Assessment

Students will participate in a number of surveys and assessments throughout the school year. Click [here](#) to access the DMPS middle school assessment calendar for the 21-22 school year. For more information about each assessment, please visit data.dmschools.org and click on the “testing” tab.

7th Grade Prep Academy:

Prep Academy provides equity of access to accelerated coursework for students in under-represented populations as recognized by the federal government. Students in this program attend Prep Academy for English and math with a focus on building upon their early readiness for advanced coursework and meeting their social and emotional learning needs. More information regarding 7th Grade Prep Academy can be found [here](#).

As is true every year, the schedules of the home middle schools and Central don't line up perfectly when we take into consideration travel time to and from Central. Below is the plan for Merrill Prep Academy students for the '21-'22 school year.

7th grade Prep Academy students will attend the first half of their 3rd period class (10:29-11:00) at Merrill before heading to the cafeteria around 11:00 to eat lunch. They will depart for Academy on the bus at approximately 11:30 from the west bus turnaround. Please be aware that students will miss the last 20-25 minutes of 3rd period at Merrill in order to have time to eat lunch before heading to Central. We will work with students to make up any opportunities/content missed during those 20-25 minutes.

While at Prep Academy, students will take both English and Math before returning to Merrill at approximately 1:50. When students return to Merrill, they will have guided study time with a base camp

teacher (see below for explanation of base camp teacher) for the remainder of 6th period and will head to their 7th period class at 2:25.

For guided study and for a few days throughout the year when Academy students stay at Merrill - celebrations and special events, inclement weather, or other circumstances - we help each Academy student identify a “base camp” teacher of their choice where they can work quietly during guided study and on days of special events when they don’t attend Central.

8th Grade Academy:

The purpose of the 8th Grade Academy program is to meet the needs of students who have demonstrated preparedness for advanced coursework and will respond to academic press that is outside of the school or district norm. Students in this program attend 8th Grade Academy for English and two other core class based on their needs (Math, Science, or Social Studies). More information regarding 8th Grade Academy can be found [here](#).

Eighth grade Academy students will board the shuttle bus to Academy at 8:20 each morning. The bus will be located on the west end of the building and will depart promptly at 8:25. We strongly recommend, for safety reasons, that 8th grade students ride the yellow shuttle bus from Merrill to Academy in the morning. If parents of 8th grade students choose to drop their child off at Academy before school, please keep in mind that doors open at 8:15 and parents will not be able to stop curbside on Grand or use the drive way in front of Academy to drop students off.

While at Academy, students will take 3 classes. Please see their Academy schedules to find out which courses they are registered for. Students will return to Merrill at approximately 11:30. Their 4th period class at Merrill begins at 11:29. Due to this tight time frame, we know students will be arriving a few minutes late to 4th period. We will accommodate their needs accordingly. Following 4th period, 8th grade Academy students will eat lunch at Merrill with the rest of the Merrill 8th grade class.

There are a few days throughout the year when Academy students stay at Merrill - celebrations and special events, inclement weather, or other circumstances. For these situations, we will help each Academy student identify a “base camp” teacher where they can work quietly if they don’t attend Central that day.

We are looking forward to the upcoming school year! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Merrill at 515-242-8448. Thank you for your partnership.

