



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

Greetings, Mustang Families,

As we strive to live out our International Baccalaureate mission of creating a better and more peaceful world through education, we regularly take time to revisit many of our Merrill school policies around our learning environment.

We believe that full engagement in learning is essential to student success. In the 2019-2020 school year, after surveying students and staff, visiting with community members, examining the latest research, and reviewing policies across our district, we moved to a personal device-free learning environment from 8:00 AM to 3:25 PM. We will continue with this policy for the 2021-22 school year.

This decision was based on a growing consensus of research that indicates that student engagement in learning is negatively impacted when personal electronic devices are present in the classroom. Areas impacted include immediate engagement, long-term retention, group learning environment, and the overall social/emotional health of our students. We also learned in our inquiry that even students who do not bring personal electronic devices to class are negatively impacted by those who do. Our policy is stated below.

Personal Electronic Devices: Personal electronic devices (cell phones, ear buds, tablets, etc.) need to be off and put away for the duration of the school day. We define “put away” as locked in a locker, checked-in to a trusted teacher at the start of the day, or left at home. We define “school day” as the time from when the student enters the building until 3:25.

Parents and families who need to contact their students during the school day should call the main office at 242-8448. Students needing to call home during the day may use the phone in the main office. Finally, students may check their personal electronic devices for messages when school is dismissed at 3:25.

We will continue to teach students appropriate technology use with laptops, iPads, and electronic devices available to them here at school. If a student is using a personal electronic device during the day, we will follow the sequence below.

1 st Incident	2 nd Incident	3 rd Incident	4 th Incident
<p>Student will give device to classroom teacher. Parent will be notified by teacher. Device will be returned at the end of the day. Re-teaching opportunity. Refusal to comply will result in admin. intervention.</p>	<p>Referred to admin. Parent will be notified. Device will be kept in office for remainder of the day. Re-teaching opportunity.</p>	<p>Referred to admin. Parent will be notified. Device will be kept in office for remainder of the day. Re-teaching opportunity. Contract will be sent home.</p>	<p>Referred to admin. Parent will be notified. Device will be kept in office until parent can pick it up and meet with administration to develop a plan for moving forward.</p>

One of our International Baccalaureate Learner Profiles is balance. Our hope is that this policy, when coupled with a few other smaller changes to the day, will support students in realizing the importance of balance (intellectual, physical, and emotional) in achieving their personal best. We hope students are filling their time this summer getting plenty of sleep, enjoying the outdoors, and reading good books.

Thank you for discussing this new policy with your student in the coming days. We will also be reviewing it with all students at the start of the school year. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to stop by and visit, send me an e-mail, or give me a call. I look forward to our continued partnership as we strive to create a better and more peaceful world.

Kate

Kathryn Panek, Principal

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