

Welcome to Merrill Middle School!

My name is Kathryn Panek and I am honored to serve all of you as the principal of Merrill Middle School. This upcoming school year, 2023-2024, will be my 8th year at Merrill and my 6th year as the principal. I am so very pleased to be a part of Des Moines Public Schools serving our exceptional students and families.

I have enjoyed getting to know 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 is a microcosm of the world. Our students are a remarkable group of hard working, interesting, and curious learners. Every day I am here I see the future in our students and know it is bright.

We have plans in place to be sure our incoming 6th grade class has a smooth transition from elementary to middle school. The plans begin in March and will continue through the first days of school.

- Elementary Visits: On March 1st and 2nd, a group of Merrill staff will visit the feeder elementary schools to provide an overview of 6th grade and answer any questions students have.
- Merrill Visits: In April, feeder elementary schools will bring students to Merrill for a tour of the building.
- Family Night: On May 4 at 5:00 PM, we will be hosting rising 6th graders and their families for 6th Grade Family Fun 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.
- Success for 6th Grade: This is a summer opportunity for rising 6th graders to spend a day at Merrill in August, prior to the start of the school year. We enjoy almost a full day together getting to know each other, playing games, competing in a scavenger hunt around the school, and continuing to strengthen our learning community.
- 1st Day of School: Wednesday, August 23rd is the first day of school and is a full day of team building activities and helping students become familiar with the building and staff here at Merrill.

As we prepare for next year, the only item we need you to complete now is your child's music selection. Please click [here](#) to view a presentation, meet our music teachers and learn more. Students will be making their course selection during music class the week after spring break.

There are several avenues of communication that will help answer many of your questions about Merrill in the coming days. Our website, <https://merrill.dmschools.org/>, is updated daily and is full of information. We have a very active and supportive PTA (<https://merrill.dmschools.org/parents/pta/>) who walks alongside us and is always there with great ideas, monetary donations, and acts of kindness that bring joy to all. I hope that you will e-mail with any questions that you have, and when we are able to gather, I hope you will 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

Kathryn Panek, Principal
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