

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, 2025-2026, will be my 10<sup>th</sup> year at Merrill and my 8<sup>th</sup> year as the principal. I am so very pleased to be a part of Des Moines Public Schools serving our exceptional students and families.

We always enjoy getting to know the students and families at Merrill and are profoundly moved by how Merrill is a microcosm of the world; our students are a remarkable group of hard working, interesting, and curious learners. We see the future in our students, and we know it is bright.

The Merrill team has plans in place to be sure our incoming 6<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> (Hanawalt, Perkins) and March 5<sup>th</sup> (Windsor, Hubbell) a team from Merrill will visit the feeder elementary schools to provide an overview of 6<sup>th</sup> grade and answer any questions students have.
- Merrill Visits: On April 30<sup>th</sup> (Perkins and Windsor) and May 2<sup>nd</sup> (Hanawalt and Hubbell) elementary schools will bring students to Merrill for a tour of the building with our student leaders.
- April/May: We will be offering Jump Start to 6<sup>th</sup> Grade through Community Education, an after-school program aimed at rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders to help them prepare for middle school. Stay tuned for more information!
- Family Night: On Tuesday, May 6 from 5:00 – 6:30 PM we will be hosting rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families for 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Family Fun Night. This is a chance for families to visit Merrill, meet other 6<sup>th</sup> grade families, and learn more about a day in the life of a 6<sup>th</sup> grader at Merrill.
- Summer: If you are out and about this summer, please stop in and say hello.
- Mustang Day: On Thursday, August 14, we will host Mustang Day. The school will be open all day and into the evening for students to get their schedules, walk the halls, and have their school picture taken.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Day of School: Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup> is the first day of school and is a full day of team building activities as we help students become familiar with the building and staff here at Merrill.

As we prepare for next year, the only item we need you to think about 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 music course selection with us when we visit on March 3 and 5. Thank you for discussing with your student their preferred course selection – vocal music, orchestra, or band.

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://www.merrillpta.com/>) who walks alongside us and is always there with great ideas, monetary donations, and acts of kindness that bring joy to all. Don't hesitate to call, email, or stop by 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. Go Mustangs!

*Kathryn Panek*

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