



Merrill PTA meeting minutes

Mon, Oct 19, 2020

7:00pm

Zoom online meeting

16 attendees:

Sarah W	Patty N	Kristin E	Sara A	Tracey B
Kate P	Katie C	Kate E	Shawna B	Sara V
Theresa C	Amy C	Sara OM	Brenda K	Chad O
Holly KO				

Principal's Update – Mrs. Panek

The Merrill teachers/staff are **preparing to pivot to Hybrid next week on Oct 26**. Find the revised schedule, “day in the life” examples, and more about Hybrid’s impacts in [Mrs. Panek’s Oct 16 Merrill Minute](#). Registration is evenly split with approximately 50% of students choosing Hybrid and 50% remaining Virtual.

All students – whether Hybrid or Virtual – will learn at the same pace in a similar way. Hybrid students will continue to log in and interact through Teams when in the classroom. The teacher will remain in front of the computer. Class participation/discussion will continue to happen via Teams. Teams features were discussed, including:

- Student video is not/will not be mandatory, but it’s a great way to connect with the teacher and classmates
- Teams notifications should be turned off to avoid the constant “pinging” during class
- See helpful [student technology tips](#)

Her biggest current challenges/concerns include:

1. District-wide shortage of substitute teachers – has resulted in unexpectedly asynchronous days
2. Teachers adapting to technology challenges – this affects both full-time and substitute teachers
3. Teachers nervous about returning in-person – many teachers are in higher-risk categories
4. Overload of information in an evolving time – Mrs. Panek is working to consolidate the many sources of information (e.g., DMPS emails, Merrill Minute, School CNXT, teacher emails, Infinite Campus, Canvas, etc.). Her [Merrill Minute](#) will continue to be the best source of school-wide information.
5. Parents unable to quickly/easily see “how’s my kid doing?” – Mrs. Panek and teachers are working to get consistency around how/when grades and assignments are entered in Infinite Campus and Canvas. She’s also working on a newsletter explaining [Standards-Referenced Grading \(SRG\)](#).
6. Homework completion – the pandemic has dramatically reduced students’ interest/ability in getting homework turned in, so the team is considering options. Parents indicated the Canvas to-do list has been helpful.

Please continue to show patience and grace as Merrill transitions to Hybrid. Teachers are juggling a LOT already, and Hybrid dramatically increases their workload. They must create lesson plans for in-person as well as remote, plus enforce safety protocols, and manage technology challenges... all in front of a live audience.

Important upcoming dates:

- Oct 26 – First day of hybrid classes and revised schedule
- Oct 30 – Targeted conferences (by teacher invitation)
- No school Oct 30-Nov 3 for Conferences, Professional Development, and Fall Break
- No school Nov 25-27 for Thanksgiving Break

Treasurer's Report – Theresa C

We currently have **\$13,500 in unrestricted funds available**. In a typical year, we usually raise and spend \$10,000. But due to the pandemic, the PTA did not spend money on:

- May Teacher Appreciation week
- May 8th Grade Promotion party/dance
- August incoming 6th grade treats

Recent PTA Accomplishments

- **Provided clear masks** – All teachers have a clear mask to enhance in-person communication (use is optional). PTA provided 80 masks with see-through panels + 80 regular cloth masks.
- **Provided spirit banners** – PTA purchased 3 banners to add visual appeal to the building's exterior, year after year (*pictured, right*). They were recently knocked down by heavy winds, but we hope to get them reinstalled soon.
- **Advocated** on behalf of our school/community regarding the DMPS Return to Learn plan
- **Coordinated and distributed school supply kits** in August



Upcoming/Ongoing PTA Events + Opportunities to help

Please continue to support teachers by:

- Staying in contact
- Provide feedback – they're especially interested in improvements and new ideas
- Writing a positive note of encouragement

Open 2020-21 committee positions include:

- Fundraising coordinator – need 1-2 parents to lead critical fundraising efforts
- Box Tops coordinator – need 1 parent to manage physical and digital Box Tops through the school year
- Book Fair coordinator – need 1-2 parents/families to coordinate and execute one Scholastic book fair event during Spring conferences (pending pandemic conditions; usually there are 2 book fairs per school year)
- Merrill Matters coordinator – need 1-2 parents to propose, plan, and execute 2-4 parent/community learning events through the school year (previous years have included topics like recognizing drug use, using safe online habits, talking with teens about awkward subjects, etc.)
- 8th Grade Promotion party coordinators – need 1-2 parents to coordinate food, refreshments, decorations, etc.

If you're interested in serving, please contact Sarah at [switt1509\(at\)gmail\(dot\)com](mailto:switt1509(at)gmail(dot)com)

More ways to help:

- [Donations & Giving ideas](#) including [teachers' Amazon Wish List](#)
- Box Tops – [Download the mobile app](#) to scan receipts
- No volunteer opportunities at this time

PTA Decisions/Motions

The following 2020-21 PTA board officers were voted in:

- President: Sarah Witt
- Treasurer: Theresa Chivers
- Secretary: Holly Kilborn O'Neall

Committee members were assigned:

- Communications: Kristen Erickson, Jessi Goodsell
- Membership & Community Relations: Jessi Goodsell
- School Supply Kits: Kate Evans
- Advocacy: Holly Kilborn O'Neall
- Apparel: Jessi Goodsell, Sarah Witt
- Teacher Appreciation: Katie Carlson, Shawna Boeding
- Helping Hands: Julie Hahn, Tracy Beck, Sarah Osteroff Melton

We discussed and will explore:

1. Providing a **food truck for teachers/staff** on the upcoming 10/30 Professional Development day
2. In the spirit of equity, if our PTA bylaws allow us to **provide some clear masks to other DMPS schools** as needed

Housekeeping

The next PTA meeting will be on **Mon, Nov 16, at 7:00pm via Zoom.**

The Merrill PTA generally meets on the third or fourth Monday of each month at 7pm. Upcoming 2020-21 schedule:

- Nov 16, 2020
- Jan 25, 2021
- Feb 15, 2021
- Mar 22, 2021
- May 17, 2021

Merrill PTA board 2020-21

President: Sarah Witt

Treasurer: Theresa Chivers

Secretary: Holly Kilborn O'Neall

Communications: Kristen Erickson, Jessi Goodsell

Membership & Community Relations: Jessi Goodsell

Fundraising: TBD

Apparel: Jessi Goodsell, Sarah Witt

Merrill Matters: TBD

Helping Hands: Julie Hahn, Tracy Beck, Sarah Osteroff Melton

Teacher Appreciation: Katie Carlson, Shawna Boeding

Book Fairs: TBD

School Supply Kits: Kate Evans

Box Tops: TBD

Advocacy: Holly Kilborn O'Neall

All Merrill PTA meetings are open to families and community members interested in helping Merrill Middle School.

Contact Sarah Witt, PTA President, at [switt1509\(at\)gmail\(dot\)com](mailto:switt1509(at)gmail(dot)com)

Find more information at <https://merrillpta.wordpress.com/> including [PTA meeting archives](#)

Connect with us at <https://www.facebook.com/merrillpta/>

Visit [Mrs. Panek's "Merrill Minute" newsletter archive](#)