



Merrill PTA meeting minutes

Mon, Jan 25, 2021

7:00pm

Zoom online meeting

11 attendees:

Sarah W	Theresa C	Katie C	Kristen E
Kate P	Kate E	Shawna B	Tracy B
Holly KO	Patty N	Jessie G	

Principal's Update – Mrs. Panek

As described in the [1/21 Merrill Minute](#), **no failing grades** were assigned for first semester. Instead, DMPS is using “INC” – a signal that learning was incomplete during this tumultuous year. Students will have opportunity to potentially improve the grade through the second semester.

There are still challenges with **too many missing assignments** – teachers and students are both overwhelmed. Everyone is trying to balance catchup work with new assignments. Please continue to extend grace and ask questions – we will get through this together.

State legislature will likely pass a requirement for schools to **provide in-person learning to students 5 days/week** (even before teachers/staff can be fully vaccinated). The decision isn't final yet but planning is underway. Mrs. Panek expects little change except classrooms will have twice as many kids, every day (but maintaining 6' of physical distancing will be impossible). Teachers will continue to teach both virtual and on-site simultaneously. In an effort to accommodate students' needs, Merrill families can:

- request to change registration from hybrid to virtual any time (but not change from virtual to hybrid/in-person)
- continue keeping students at home even if they're registered for hybrid (just call in to attendance each day)

Stay tuned for **final plans to make up instructional time** with the least disruption (Governor Reynolds will not count this Fall's out-of-compliance virtual time toward instructional time). The plan will be submitted by Feb 1 so look for additional communication. But this is what's certain:

- Using snow days as virtual days helps minimize impact
- Spring Break (March 15-19) will not be affected

Treasurer's Report

Current balance is healthy at approx. \$21k (\$5k is earmarked for a specific program so \$16k is actually available). We like to roll over a balance of \$10k into fall. We've raised approx. \$4,500 so far this year (which is typical).

Recent PTA Accomplishments

- Winter apparel sale fundraising amount is TBD (backordered items are still in the works)
- Helping Hands event provided supplemental groceries to struggling Merrill families
- Stocked fridge and provided snacks in the teacher's lounge

PTA Discussion Highlights

State funding for public schools/DMPS is now at extremely high risk due to:

- [Senate File 159](#) is Governor Reynold's education bill ("school voucher bill" formerly SSB 1065) that diverts public funds to private schools via "student first scholarships." This bill is moving quickly and will likely go to a final vote (and likely be passed) by end of the week.
- Fewer students enrolled in 2019-20, which directly impacts funding for 2020-21.
- Years of inadequate funding that has not kept pace with inflation.

>> *The Merrill PTA encourages families and community members to **contact Republican IA Senators TODAY and ask them to vote NO on SF 159.** It's our position that public funds should be used for public schools. Iowans already have the choice to attend private/charter schools. Any school that accesses public funds MUST be held to the same standard as public schools – at minimum full oversight and accountability + access/accommodation for any/all students. Bottom line: public funds are for public schools.*

Also discussed:

1. The [homework check-in sheet](#) has been useful/helpful – parents recognize and appreciate the extra effort of consolidating assignments in one place
2. **Teacher appreciation ideas** including coffee bar, food truck, etc.
3. **Spring fundraising ideas** with emphasis on community building/celebrating students and teachers (possibly yard signs)
4. Planning for **8th grade promotion** is TBD, based on whether in-person events will be feasible by May.
5. Support for **incoming 6th grade student orientation** TBD
6. In an effort to support DMPS's commitment to anti-racism and equity, PTAs from TRHS feeder schools are considering **pooling PTA funds** to help schools with less/no PTA funding. Will explore further.

Upcoming/Ongoing PTA Events + Opportunities to help

Please continue to support teachers by:

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

More ways to help:

- Consider purchasing needed supplies via the [Merrill teachers' Amazon Wish List](#)
- Box Tops – [Download the mobile app](#) to scan receipts
- No volunteer opportunities at this time

Housekeeping

The next PTA meeting will be on **Mon, Feb. 15, 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:

- 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

Merrill PTA Committee Members 2020-21

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](#)