

Merriam Park Elementary

6100 Mastin
Merriam, KS 66203
913-993-3600

Principal: Amy Simeonov
Grades Served: PreK-6
KSDE Bldg #: 8815

Feeder Pattern: Hocker Grove MS & SM
North HS



Notable School Characteristics

- Title I
- Comprehensive school serving students in grades preK-6
- Challenge Award Recipient in 2021-22, 2022-23 (Academic growth on KS assessments)
- Focus on leadership and social-emotional learning through Leader in Me
- Professional Development School partnering with University of Kansas
- Johnson County Parks and Rec wrap-around care for PreK students

KSDE Building Report Card

[Merriam Park Elementary Building Report Card](#)

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Needs Analysis

What barriers must be overcome for each student to achieve grade* level proficiency on assessments?

*Grade level proficiency is defined by state law as scoring “above level 2” on state assessments, yet actual grade level performance is most closely related to state assessment scores above level 1.

Merriam Park has a number of key barriers that create challenges for ensuring proficiency on assessments. Some of those challenges are high levels of students facing trauma, limited student and family access to resources supporting the family beyond the school day, language barriers, transient population of students, and adequate special education funding. Merriam Park has approximately 60% of our students that live in poverty. This creates multiple challenges for families including health and nutrition vulnerability, lack of economic opportunities, and access to quality housing. Our social worker supports these students and families daily by providing support within the school day and by identifying and connecting families with community resources. Several of our students also have varying medical needs that require extensive nursing and para support throughout the school day. 15% of our students have an active IEP, 12% of our students are English Language Learners, and another 3% have a 504 Plan. This requires a significant amount of the special education staff (currently 2.5 FTE), ELL staff, and the principal’s time with providing services, meetings, data collection, and documentation. Another barrier is student to teacher ratios. The students we serve in our classrooms come to us with a wide array of experiences and background knowledge, and an even greater range of learning needs. Students benefit from smaller class sizes and an individualized approach to instruction.

What budget actions should be taken to address and remove those barriers?

Our students and families face a growing number of barriers to success, and at Merriam Park Elementary, we continually work to support them. A few of the current budget changes that impact our ability to successfully remove barriers for our students are the continued addition of support staff and additional support for implementing the professional learning community approach for teacher collaboration. The most significant action that has benefited our students academically is lower teacher to student ratio, which allows for greater individualized instruction. Our students and families would also benefit from another full-time social worker. Our current social worker spends a significant amount of her time reacting to students in crisis. An additional social worker would provide Merriam Park the ability to be proactive and provide students with resources and support. We understand that the behaviors students exhibit are a manifestation of skill deficits in the area of social-emotional learning. An additional social worker could provide interventions to develop these skills, which would in turn reduce

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negative behavior. Prior to this school year, we have had three full-time interventionists. This year, we have two interventionists who work to support our students with tier 3 intervention. In collaboration with our instructional coach and grade level PLCs, our interventionists participate in frequent data reviews, serve students, and make a significant impact on student learning. Students would benefit from an additional interventionist, to support students with targeted and individualized interventions. Finally, Merriam Park would benefit from an additional full-time special education teacher (moving from 2.5 to 3 FTE) and a part-time administrative intern. Both of these positions could support the growing number of students with an active IEP, medical needs and 504 Plans at Merriam Park.

How much time will it take for each student to achieve grade* level proficiency on the state assessments if the budget actions would be implemented?

*Again, state law defines grade level proficiency as scoring “above level 2” while actual grade level performance is most closely related to scores above level 1 on state assessments.

At Merriam Park, we emphasize and measure student academic growth each year. John Hattie’s research shows that collective teacher efficacy is the number one influence on student achievement. Merriam Park staff believe strongly in working together to accomplish great things for students. Our PLCs are strong and grade levels review formative assessment data frequently and use student evidence to guide their instruction. Using Sean Covey’s *4 Disciplines of Education* model, Merriam Park staff creates school-wide, classroom, grade level, and personal WIGs each year and students and staff track their progress and hold each other accountable along the way. We have made marked progress in moving students from level 2 to 3 and 3 to 4. The area that continues to challenge our staff and students is moving our students from level 1 to 2.

Although we are proud of our progress, many factors make it difficult to estimate a time that every student will achieve grade level proficiency. Such factors include: transient student population, a high number of families in poverty, and adequate special education funding. With additional resources including a second full-time social worker, a third full-time interventionist, a third special education teacher, and a part-time administrative intern, Merriam Park would be positioned to meet the social-emotional and academic needs of all students and would see significant impact on students performing at level one and two on Kansas State Assessments in one academic school year.

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Board Rationale/Comments

The Shawnee Mission School District maintains focus on its commitment to meeting aspirational state and district education goals for every student. The district continues to budget conservatively, working to limit central administrative costs to less than 5% of the total budget. Over the past several years, the district has focused on responding to challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including learning recovery, an increase in chronic absenteeism, and an enhanced need for social and emotional support for students.

The district has used information from needs assessments conducted at each building to make focused staff allocations at the building level. These include specific needs identified by large numbers of schools, including additional teacher allocations to maintain lower class sizes at the elementary level, providing a building substitute at each building, increased paraprofessional/teacher support in special education classrooms, and higher salaries for both certified and classified staff. In addition, following a comprehensive analysis of student needs, the district continues to maintain in the district budget a full-time social worker position in every school, a full-time instructional coach in every school, and Real World Learning counselors at each of the five comprehensive high schools.

The district was able to use additional state funding, (including an increase in the at-risk weighting and an increase to the base, along with a corresponding increase in the Local Option Budget) to add positions identified in individual building needs assessments across our 48 attendance centers/specialized programs. These positions include the following:

- 10 special education teachers, 5.25 para-educators, an autism coach, 2 speech language pathologists, an occupational therapist, 2 school psychologists, and 2 special education coordinators.
- 5 elementary interventionists
- An additional instructional coach for Horizons and for Early childhood
- 4 ELL teachers
- A teacher on assignment
- 3 floating nurses and
- 2 administrative interns

The district is also maintaining the following positions in the operating funds at least for one more year:

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- Elementary class size will remain at 22 for Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 25 for 3rd through 6th grades.
- Ten additional teachers at the secondary level to support learning recovery.
- At least one building sub at each building in the district.

The district will continue to analyze budget funds for the 2024-25 school year, in order to determine the ability to maintain the positions listed above that were added with ESSER funding: additional support for nursing services; additional secondary math teachers; building substitutes for every building; and class-size reduction at the elementary level.

Merriam Park is working hard to address the needs inherent in being a Title I building, serving a large population of students living in poverty (56%). Nonetheless, the percentage of Merriam Park Elementary students performing at or above grade level on the Math and ELA state assessments (Levels 2, 3 or 4) has remained above state averages, as well as among the at-risk populations. While students experienced significant learning disruptions over the past few years, both Math and ELA state assessment improved in Spring 2023. Given the pandemic related trauma experienced by students over the past few years, Merriam Park is challenged to provide all students with the social-emotional support they need to facilitate learning growth.

In addition, the district will continue to support increased professional learning opportunities for all teachers, with a focus on Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention. We will continue to prioritize equitable allocation of resources to create a welcoming and engaging learning experience for every student - facilitating personalized learning plans, targeting career and college readiness, with the interpersonal skills for life success.

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