

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
- Focus on social-emotional learning through the **Leader in Me** program:
 - Named a Lighthouse School in 2024
 - Designated an Academic Honor Roll recipient for the 2023-2024 school year
- Highly engaged and functioning **Student Leadership Team** who are involved in schoolwide decision-making and actively contribute to school improvement efforts including:
 - Student-led service projects
 - Student-led schoolwide assemblies
 - Student-led parent/teacher conferences
 - Peer-to-peer mentoring program
- Partnership with the University of Kansas as a **Professional Development School**:
 - Host a cohort of student interns in their senior year (average 6 students each year)
 - Host practicum students in their junior year (average 10 students each year)
- Strong staff stability and **high retention rates** contributing to a culture of collaboration
- Johnson County Parks and Recreation wrap-around care for PreK students
- Challenge Award Recipient in 2021-22 (Academic growth on KS assessments)

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KSDE Building Report Card

[Merriam Park Elementary Building Report Card](#)

Needs Analysis

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

Merriam Park has a number of key barriers that create challenges for ensuring proficiency on assessments. Some of those challenges include:

Student Needs:

- High levels of students facing trauma
- Language barriers
- Transient population
- Health and nutrition vulnerability
- Varying medical needs that require extensive nursing and para support throughout the school day
- Increase in enrollment of students with no prior formal education and increasing academic gaps
- High level of students with disabilities
- Chronic absenteeism

Family & Community Barriers:

- Limited student and family access to resources supporting the family beyond the school day
- Access to quality housing
- Lack of economic opportunities

School Support Gaps:

- Access to mental health service
- Adequate special education funding.

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- Lack of behavior support (Need for additional behavior resources and support)
- New special education team

Staffing Challenges

- Decreased fill rate of substitutes and increased staff absences
- Classified staff shortage

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 include maintaining and adding key roles to contribute to our culture of collaboration and success. Our Merriam Park students and families would benefit from the following:

- **Administrative Intern (CURRENT .5; NEW 1.0):**
 - This additional .5 position supported the growing and ever-changing needs of our students and families. The admin intern supported students with IEPs, 504s, as well as their social-emotional needs. The admin intern collaborated with teams to support academic improvement. By increasing allocation to the 1.0 position, the consistency of the day-to-day involvement of an admin intern would even better support students, family, and building-wide goals. An admin intern can flourish at Merriam Park by being a part of a school community that has effective systems and collaborating with outstanding teachers while continuing to develop as a leader.
- **Building Substitute (Maintain CURRENT 1.0):**
 - Our building substitute is an invaluable building support. This position allows our teachers to attend cadre meetings and support district initiatives. This role allows our building to cover teachers for peer-to-peer observations and team planning for instruction. The building substitute role continues to be essential given the increased staff absences this school year.
- **Recovery Room Aide (Maintain CURRENT 1.0):**
 - This role is critical to serving the social emotional needs of our students. Our recovery room aide is a key player on our response team and provides students with the reset they need to be back in the classroom quickly and successfully.
- **Special Education Teachers (CURRENT 2.5, NEW 3.0):**
 - During the 2024-25 school year, Merriam Park had an increase in resource teachers from 2.5 to 3.0. During the 2025-2026 school year, this was reduced to 2.5. Adding an additional .5 would allow a full-time, highly qualified teacher to support our students

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and provide them with the opportunity to make meaningful academic and behavioral gains.

- **ELL Teacher (Maintain CURRENT .5):**
 - In the last two school years, we've seen an increase in the number of students that are new to the English language. Providing our students with support in English language acquisition and development is essential.
- **Interventionists (CURRENT 2.0, NEW 2.5):**
 - In the 2022-23 school year, we had three full-time interventionists. For the last three years, we have had two interventionists 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 .5 interventionist, to support students with targeted and individualized instruction on prerequisite skills in math to position students to better access grade level content.
- **Social Workers (Maintain CURRENT 1.5):**
 - We currently have an allocation of 1.5 FTE social workers. Our .5 social worker is at Merriam Park on Tuesday, Thursday, and every other Friday. On those days, both social workers spend a significant amount of time responding to students in crisis. On the days when we only have one social worker, that strain impacts the entire school. An additional social worker allocation of 0.5 provides 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 provides interventions to develop these skills, which would in turn reduce negative behavior.

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?

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 high-functioning, consistent, and focused on student achievement. Grade levels review formative assessment data frequently and use student evidence to guide their instruction. 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 on Kansas Assessments. The area that continues to challenge our staff and students is moving our students from level 1 to 2.

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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 full-time administrative intern, an additional .5 special education teacher, and an additional .5 interventionist, Merriam Park would be positioned to meet the social-emotional and academic needs of all students. Merriam Park would see significant impact on reducing the number of students performing at level one and two on Kansas State Assessments in one academic school year.

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 and efficiently, limiting central administrative costs to less than 5% of the total budget. Over the past several years, the district has risen to external challenges that have impacted our students educational experiences, with an increased focus on learning recovery, chronic absenteeism, and an enhanced need for social and emotional support.

The district has used information from needs assessments conducted at each building to make targeted staff allocations at the building level. Specific needs identified by large numbers of schools, included additional teacher allocations to maintain lower class sizes at the elementary level, providing a building substitute at each building, taking extra measures to ensure paraprofessional/teacher support in special education classrooms, and higher salaries for both certified and classified staff to strengthen retention and recruitment of employees. In addition, following a comprehensive analysis of student needs, the district continues to budget for 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 (at about 1,700 students each).

Even with the incremental restoration of state general education funding, (an increase to the base, along with a corresponding increase in the Local Option Budget) we were **not** able to add any new positions identified in individual building needs assessments across our 48 attendance centers/specialized programs (in fact we cut 19.2 FTE). Our budget situation for this year was challenging given the ongoing shortfall in Special Education funding from the State and a decline in student enrollment. Through our

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individual building needs assessment, our leaders identified a need for an additional 79.3 FTE that the district was unable to fund. Some positions that were unable to be funded were:

- 34 elementary counselors
- 10 Classified Special Education positions
- 5.25 Certified Special Education positions
- 5 high school instructional coaches
- 5 Interventionists
- 3 ELL Teachers

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

- Elementary class size will remain at 22 for Kindergarten through 2nd grade and 25 for 3rd through 6th grades.
- 10 additional teachers at the secondary level to support learning recovery.
- 6 Attendance Specialists to continue our work towards curbing chronic absenteeism
- At least 1 building sub at each building in the district.

The district will continue to analyze budget funds for the 2027-28 school year, in order to determine the ability to maintain the positions listed above that were originally 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. Due to the shortfall in special education state aid, along with the uncertainty of federal funds, this recently restored capacity is tenuous.

In addition, the district will take steps to absorb cuts to state aid for professional development and teacher mentoring in order to continue support for the professional growth and retention of all teachers, with a focus on Professional Learning Communities and Response to Intervention. These types of budgetary needs to offset unfunded mandates erodes the inflationary adjustments to general education state aid. Additionally, resources will be allocated to the following items which also were identified through the needs assessment process:

- Expand implementation of iReady math resources and assessments from 6-8 to K-8.
- Continue expanding the number of LETRS trained staff (structured literacy)
- Adopt a new Learning Walkthrough platform for enhanced data collection and feedback.

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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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