

The Merrill Gazette

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Merrill Middle School Gets an Upgrade

By Tessa Bitner and Harper Egge



What's It About?

Merrill Is Under Construction!

As you've probably noticed construction has started around Merrill Middle School. This has contributed to many changes around the building, such as the orchestra room/auditorium and eventually will include the other performing arts classrooms. But what is going to be different when it is done? How will Merrill look different at the end?

Why the update?

The initial reason behind the updates to the building was to ensure student safety by having a secure entrance. Students will enter the building the same way they have been, but during the school day those doors will be lock so any visitors will be required to enter through a separate entrance that leads to the new and improved central office. This office update was not supposed to happen for many years, but because of the essential need for a secure entrance, the whole project got moved up.

Another reason was to upgrade Merrill's Performing Arts Programs by getting new and improved space/materials for the classrooms. The upgrading of the FACS and science classrooms are a separate project that just happen to fall in to the same time.

What are the project details?

This project is a multi-million-dollar project (2.5 million dollars to be exact). The rooms that are being remodeled cover much of the first floor are of the school. Some renovation highlights include the offices in rooms 117--that space will be turned into new classrooms. Mr. Hoeg, Mrs. Ferring, Mrs. Short and Mrs. Foshe will relocate as those classrooms will become part of the new performing arts wing of the building. The new central office will house the Principal, Associate Principal, Attendance, and IB Coordinator's offices. In addition, the Nurse's office will have a bigger space with more privacy. The project will hopefully be complete by the first day of school next year.

Unfortunately, because of the construction, Mrs. Panek will have to work all summer and have her office be relocated to the library until the beginning of the school year. This also means that the families who come to see her will have to see different parts of the school. Things are not all bad though, Merrill does not have to pay for any of the projects directly out of the school's budget. To simplify, the district is paying for the updates using money collected from taxes; especially the one cents sales tax. The one cent sales tax is applied if you buy anything in Polk County, then you are charged an extra one cent per dollar and that money goes to schools. The school can only use that to update their building and grounds.

Overall, the construction, while a big project is going to be a great benefit to the Merrill Middle School community!

Should Public Schools Test for Depression?

Opinion Piece by Maya Ryan

There are 3.1 million students, ages 12 to 17, that suffer from depression. Sixty percent of these students are not getting treated. If public schools test for depression in students, then the percent of students with untreated depression could go up. Although testing for depression is costly for schools, it could help parents treat the depression, raise test scores for students, and decrease the number of adolescent suicides.

Testing for depression can help parents treat depression. Telling a parent, they think they have depression can be hard for the student, if schools test for depression then it could be easier for them. Having the school test for depression will help the parents get treatment and it may help teach parents more about depression. Having schools test for depression will decrease the percent for untreated depression.

If schools test for depression it could raise test scores. Students with depression usually have lower test scores because they have a hard time focusing, they are stressed out, and they don't see the point of doing the work. If schools test for depression parents could get treatment for it. If the student's depression gets treated, then their test scores could raise.

Schools testing for depression can lower the percent of adolescent suicides. Suicide is the 8th cause of death across all age groups. If schools test for depression, it can be treated and could lower the percentage of suicides. Suicide percentages will drop if schools test for depression and it gets treated.

Source:

<https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/adolescent-depression-in-schools/>



<https://images.app.goo.gl/TtHukaWNXXDHJVeR6>



<https://images.app.goo.gl/nn3jMEWCvk26LTbH7>

How to be Environmentally Conscious this Summer

by Prior VanHeukelom

We are in an environmental crisis. Global warming, extinction, and pollution are a few of the problems that we are currently facing. How can you help? Here are a few summer-themed tips to help the environment.

1. Ditch the plastic straw

Plastic straws are extremely harmful for ocean animals. Instead of drinking that lemonade with a plastic straw, go without one or invest in biodegradable paper straws or reusable metal ones.

2. Carry your groceries in a tote bag

Next time you head to the store for sunscreen and popsicles, bring a tote bag. Instead of taking your items home in plastic bags, reduce plastic waste and carry your things in a reusable, environmentally friendly bag. You can ask your checker to put your items in your tote bag at the checkout instead of a plastic bag. A lot of stores have reusable bags for sale by the checkout and they are pretty cheap.

3. Don't disturb wildlife

If you're going out in nature over the summer, don't disturb the wildlife. Littering, picking plants, feeding or messing with animals, leaving graffiti, etc. all damage the ecosystem.

4. Use a reusable water bottle

Staying hydrated is extremely important over the summer, especially with rising temperatures. According to the EPA, Americans buy enough plastic water bottles to circle the earth five times each week. That's an unnecessary amount of plastic being used. Using a reusable water bottle is cheaper over time and prevents you from having to throw away all that plastic. You can find insulated water bottles that will keep your drinks cold. These water bottles are a bit pricier, but there are plenty of cheaper options.

5. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!

This is a pretty basic one that could fit in with any time of the year, but it is still very important. Reducing your carbon footprint, reusing old items instead of buying new ones, and recycling plastic, paper, and bottles can make a huge difference.

6. Fewer car rides

Warm weather makes it a perfect time to take a walk, bike ride, run, etc. When possible, instead of going somewhere in your car, try walking or biking there. It lowers the carbon dioxide being emitted into the atmosphere and it helps save money on gas.

7. Avoid unnecessary food packaging

Sure, it would be easier to buy pre-cut watermelon in a plastic container, but watermelon comes in its own shell for a reason! Reduce your plastic usage by avoiding those containers of pre-cut produce and going for the un-cut produce instead.

8. Donate old items

Have you outgrown your pair of shorts from last year? Instead of throwing them away, donate them to a thrift store! Not only does this reduce waste, but your donation can benefit the lives of others.

9. Call your representatives

Bored out of your mind with nothing to do? Call your representatives and tell them to support pro-environment legislation! Prompts telling you what to say and what number to call can all be found online (By the way, you won't be talking directly to your representative, in case you were anxious about talking directly to them. Your message will be passed onto them later).

10. Spread the word!

Talking to a boring relative at a family event over the summer? Bring up one of the tips mentioned in this article! Not only will it shift your awkward conversation, it will help others become more informed on the environment and what they can do to help it.

Even though it doesn't seem like a lot, using these tips will help the environment. If enough people take action, the world will become a better place for us to live.



What are you looking forward to doing this summer?

Photo Collage by Tessa Bitner

