



INTENTIONAL PLANNING PRODUCES POSITIVE RESULTS

Walking through the halls of Challenger Elementary and looking into the classrooms, they are buzzing with activity. Regardless of academic level or background, students are welcomed and engaged. Teachers and staff members are working hard to bring learning alive.

The continued growth in student achievement and the ongoing efforts of the Challenger staff and teachers were recently recognized as a 2022 Building the Hope School. This honor is awarded only to schools that demonstrate strong academic achievement across multiple school years for important subgroups of students. The award also highlights the welcoming nature that is evident in the school.

Challenger exemplifies Kentwood Public Schools' commitment to excellence and equity

Challenger Elementary is an example of Kentwood Public Schools' commitment to excellence and equity across the district. Excellence and equity in education is the vision statement for Kentwood Public Schools. It is clear. It is straightforward. Yet, at the same time, it is not a simple goal.

"We have high standards at Kentwood Public Schools," said Superintendent Kevin Polston. "This has been recognized across the state and across the country. KPS schools have been named a National Blue Ribbon School, a Beating the Odds School, and a 2022 Building the Hope School. These awards do not occur by accident. They come from

intentional planning and hard work."

Polston went on to note, "Our vision statement of Excellence and Equity in Education calls for continuous improvement, to pursue ambitious goals that ensure each student is successful."

Excellence and equity are top of mind as the district embarks on a strategic planning process that began in the fall and continues into the new year. This process will shape the district's direction over the next three to five years. With new goals and challenges, the strategic plan will help define what excellence and equity in education mean for years to come.



Strategic planning begins with gathering data to inform the process. The students, families, community members, and staff have been involved in this process. Thousands of individuals received and responded to surveys that were sent to the Kentwood community. In addition, focus groups for students, families, and staff members provided in-depth feedback regarding the district's direction.

"We are so appreciative of those who took the time to give us feedback and share their hopes for the future of Kentwood Public Schools..."

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BOWEN ARCH SUPERHEROES

Bowen Elementary's ARCH program has been providing physical education and art enrichment throughout November and December. ARCH encourages students to have a voice and choice in programming for club days.

Some students expressed their passion for soccer and chose to organize a soccer team that meets each week during the students' choice day (Club Day). Twelve students dedicated time each week to practice their individual and team skills. At the end of the fall season, they competed in a friendly scrimmage against their fellow ARCH rivals at Challenger Elementary. The score reflected Bowen ARCH on top, but all students demonstrated excellent sportsmanship and encouragement of each other throughout the game!

Other students had the opportunity to showcase their creativity and excellence through a variety of art projects. During one popular activity, students participated in creating their own superhero masks and imagined which superpowers they would want to have to help people in different ways. ARCH students are heroes in athletics and arts.



ARCH IS INCLUSIVE

Students in East Kentwood High School's ARCH program take equity and inclusion seriously. This fall, five representatives were elected to the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) to help plan activities and lead the afterschool program. These students have implemented a few new policies to create an environment where everyone feels welcome. Each member of the YAB is responsible for checking in with newer members of the club to ensure they feel included and have activities offered that spark their interest. The YAB facilitates a restorative circle each Monday to help build a sense of community and encourage relationship building among all ARCH participants. In these circles students discuss everything from favorite Netflix series to family traditions for the holidays, and strategies to manage stress. The YAB members

also pose reflection questions at the end of each day, providing students an opportunity to give each other a compliment or shoutout. It's so great to see these youth-led initiatives making a positive difference!

SCIENTIFIC ENDEAVORS

Endeavor Elementary ARCH students have been working hard to excel in science through engagement in activities built on the scientific method. Recently, students participated in a bottle flipping experiment. The activity academically challenged the ARCH students as they learned new science-based vocabulary. Students collaborated and developed different hypotheses for how much water they would need in their bottle for optimal flipping that would help them to stick the landing. The students were then able to test their hypotheses and predictions. At the end of the experiment, students competed to see who could land the most bottle flips.



HAMILTON EARLY CHILDHOOD RECEIVES HONOR

Kentwood Public School's Early Childhood Team was recognized by the Special Education Department, receiving a Because of YOU Award for early childhood inclusion at Hamilton Early Childhood Center. A Free Appropriate Public Education in the least restrictive environment is being optimized and more preschool students are learning alongside their grade/age level peers. Through data reviews, professional learning events, and community partnerships, our team has been able to provide authentic, play-based evaluations and expand the continuum of services for special education in natural environments and regular early childhood programs.



BROOKWOOD PROJECT ENHANCES EXCELLENCE

The idea of excellence and equity in Kentwood Public Schools is not limited to academic achievement. KPS takes great pride in the facilities across the district, striving to ensure that the buildings our students come to every day are safe, well-maintained, and up to date for the demands of 21st-century learning.

Thanks to the support of voters in the Kentwood community, several construction projects continue across the district. Here at Brookwood Elementary, students are now benefiting from a completed project of a new gymnasium, new kitchen, and an upgraded cafeteria. Students have been enjoying these new spaces which will enhance their educational experience.

Kentwood Public Schools through surveys and focus groups in recent months," Superintendent Polston said. "We value and look forward to partnering with our stakeholders to make the best possible decisions for our district."

During the second half of the upcoming school year, the district will use this feedback to help inform the new strategic plan. A team that includes district leadership, staff members, parents, and members of the community will continue the strategic planning work. As the calendar turns to a new year, Kentwood Public Schools turns to its future, with its vision firmly in place—excellence and equity in education.



EKHS STUDENTS EXCEL AT THE WE THE PEOPLE COMPETITION

EK's American Political Thought students traveled to Kent ISD to compete in the District Finals of the We the People Competition, where 21 senior Falcons finished in 2nd place overall as a team.

To prepare, the team accumulated 55 hours of practice time with coaches outside of the school day in addition to time spent preparing for those sessions on their own.

Special thanks to the many coaches who volunteer their time to help prepare the team for the variety of aspects of the competition - which includes presentation and public speaking skills along with an incredible depth of knowledge in constitutional law, philosophy, politics, American history, and current events.

We The People - EKHS Team 36

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Bianca Bancifra	Dewaynia English	Dependra Bhattarai
Maggie Fisher	Sophie Gemmen	Mollie Croskey
Keaton Nguyen	Amira Hamilton	Rishta Tamang
Sarah Shapin	Connor Shaw	Collin Terry
Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6
Drew Dame	Elleana Strehl	Lucy Fornetti
Rebecca Moore	Ebise Tarekegn	Mary Johnakech
Mika Nguyen	McKenna VanOveren	Owen Lawrence



Volunteer Coaches:

Ahjah Bailey-O'Conner, Tyler Buck, Ava Chatlosh, Eric Dubois, Branden Graf, Taylor Nixon, Ken Ozanich, Justin Robbins, Tyler Thompson, Avalon Wiczorek

Standout Unit performances included:

1st place:

Unit 6 - Lucy Fornetti, Mary Johnakech, and Owen Lawrence for their analysis of the American version of rule of law and international perceptions of the system.

2nd place:

Unit 1 - Bianca Bancifra, Maggie Fisher, Keaton Nguyen, and Sarah Shapin for their explanations of the philosophical underpinnings of American constitutionalism.

2nd place:

Unit 4 - Andrew Dame, Rebecca Moore, and Mika Nguyen for their understanding of the evolution of Congress' powers and limitations on them.

The performance earned the team a trip to the State Finals in early January which is held at Michigan State University's College of Law. The first-place team at this event will travel to the national finals in late April.



CHALLENGER EARNS BUILDING THE HOPE AWARD

Congratulations to Challenger Elementary for being named a 2022 Building the Hope School by The Education Trust - Midwest. Challenger is one of only five schools in the state of Michigan to receive this honor.

Challenger was selected as a Building the Hope School because its Black students, students from low-income backgrounds, and English learners all demonstrated significant academic growth above the state averages in both English Language Arts and math for three consecutive years. In addition, Challenger was highlighted for its focus on data as well as the supportive and welcoming relationships the staff foster for students and parents. The school's principal, Teresa Gatza, also sets the tone with her energy, excitement, and enthusiasm she has in leading the school. Of the five schools in Michigan to receive this honor, Challenger is the only one to be recognized for outstanding achievement with three important subgroups of students.



Principal Gatza sighted two main areas for the school's success: a focus on creating a positive, caring culture for students and staff and a focus on excellence when it comes to instruction and student learning. "We have a mindset at Challenger," Gatza says, "that all students are our students. We work hard to create a genuine warm and caring environment for our students so that they feel safe and welcome in our school. This is their building, and we are here for them." She adds that, once a positive culture is firmly established, then true academic excellence is possible. "We set high learning expectations for each of our students," Gatza says. "We teach grade level standards using our district's curriculum and instructional model. We understand the importance of academic discussions in the classroom, even for our youngest students. And we use data to help us understand what is going well and what needs more attention."

The Education Trust Midwest, who presents this award, works to close gaps in opportunity and achievement for all children, but particularly for those students who are from low-income backgrounds or who are students of color. Jen DeNeal, the organization's director of policy and research, stresses how much there is to learn from Challenger and the other Building the Hope Schools and their educators, stating, "Their successful prepandemic strategies can provide a roadmap, particularly as schools work to help our most underserved students who were impacted during Covid-19, recover from the pandemic."

This is the second year in a row a Kentwood school has received this honor. Last year Discovery Elementary was named a Building the Hope School.

For more on Challenger Elementary, please enjoy this video by scanning the QR code to get a look inside the school.



CROSSROAD LEADERSHIP CLASS GIVES BACK

Crossroads Leadership class partnered with The Big Give, a local 501 (c)(3) non-profit that helps West Michigan kids in need, to make an impact on our community. Every year they collaborate with social workers in local school districts to identify kids in need to create a wish list for the holidays. Armed with those lists, The Big Give organization shops at local Meijer stores for these West Michigan families. Beth Frank and Yvette Vaught and Crossroad students spent the day shopping for local families and fulfilled the wish lists for ten local children. It was a great day of fellowship and giving back to our local community.



CONGRATULATIONS TO GENESIS GIRON-AYALA AND MANUEL LOPEZ FOR BEING NAMED ROTARY CLUB OF KENTWOOD'S RECENT STUDENTS OF THE MONTH. CHECK OUT THE WRITINGS FROM THE TWO HONOREES

My name's Manuel A. Lopez, a major dream I aspire to accomplish in my life is to get accepted to a college, like MSU or U of M. I'd like to study Plant Biology, Agriculture, or Crop and Soil Science, and it's mainly because I've recently reignited this love and passion for plants, nature, and the environment. I'd like to get a master's degree in crop and soil science and minor in Environmental Science, where I can help keep the environment healthy, while also being able to modify crops and soil to make them better and more efficient. I'd love to work in a lab, while also, if possible, being able in nature. I'd also like to help the community, maybe by starting a community garden or even an organization where I teach kids and adults how to plant fruits and vegetables. This mainly stems from the fact that lately I've been getting more involved with school activities and clubs, and they've opened my eyes to how important it is to get involved with the community. Last year, I was part of a group called SALSA (Spanish and Latin Student Association), where I was just a member who went to meetings and helped with crafting flowers, creating piñatas, and coming up with ideas. It was really fun being able to talk to people who shared the same culture as me, and seeing what similarities and differences we had between each other. That's why this year I decided to become a bigger part of the organization and applied for Design Coordinator, and luckily got the position. I think what made me get the position was that before that, I'd always show up to the meetings and was prepared and open to do whatever, maybe dancing to help create a piñata. I also took initiative when needed, and wasn't afraid of talking and helping out. I also felt like they chose me because I tried to help people feel more comfortable and welcomed. Another reason why I felt like they chose me is that I'm pretty well rounded, when it comes to school, I've mainly been an A and B+ student. Some more information on me is that I was raised by my two Mexican parents, who immigrated to the USA about 25 years ago. The first language I spoke was Spanish, and didn't speak anything else until I went to school, where I struggled to actually communicate with others. This lack of communication skills had forced me to get held back in first grade, and the next three years caused me to take an English learners class.

Name : Genesis Giron-Ayala

Future Dreams: My future dreams would be to get my bachelors degree wherever I choose to go and then apply to a Physician Assistants program and receive my masters degree along the way. After obtaining my PA status I would love to work in a hospital setting especially in the trauma/ emergency department setting. After a few years of that I would love to travel the world and help people along the way.

Activities/Involvements/Volunteer: Some activities that I have been involved in would be I was apart of the EKHS Volleyball team up until junior year where I switched gears and mostly focused on soccer, I've been involved with EKHS girl's soccer for almost four years now if you add on the exception of the few weeks freshman year before Covid it, I am apart of the Kent County Health Committee, as the student voice, where we try and better the amount of resources available to those in our community, I was apart of the music group at EK called ABC, Anything But Classical, for about four years until I had to switch gears for another before school activity, I have been involved in NHS since junior year and love to help volunteer, I am the Vice President of our HOSA, Health Occupation Student Association, chapter, I've been involved in HOSA since my junior year where my team and I placed first and regionals and advanced to states but fell short of passing to nationals, I am also the president of S.A.L.S.A or Spanish and Latin Student Association where we try breaking down stereotypes and educate one another about our culture

What makes me a good leader?: What I say would make me a good leader would be that I never leave someone behind. When someone is falling behind you drop back and help them catch up with everyone else. Some things I do that have made me a good leader would be staying after school to help a classmate understand a certain subject until they got it no matter how many days we had to do it, helping a teammate get the hang of a certain skill like finishing a goal. I didn't mind staying after practice to help my teammate out because after a few tweaks here and there they had it and the smile they had on their face was priceless. I always work with my team and never have them do all the work because that's not what a leader is. I'm always encouraging everyone and allowing them to give me constructive criticism in order to improve how I do some things. I'm also someone who wants to make sure everyone on my team is okay physically, mentally, emotionally, etc because you always have to take care of yourself. I'm always someone who anyone could communicate with, go to when they need advice, or just when they need to sit in silence and have someone there with them. I'm always honest with my members and never sugarcoat anything because that's not how you improve.

GLENWOOD GRANDPARENTS HAVE SECRET POWERS

Grandparents carry secret powers that cannot be matched by anyone else! They are able to quiet a room with a glance, soothe teary, wet eyes, and share stories that capture the wiggliest of children. But not every child is lucky enough to know their grandparent, due to loss or strained relationships. For many of our multilingual families, these loved ones are still in other countries.

In the fall, Glenwood had the joy of “Granny K”, a foster grandparent from Senior Neighbors, join Mrs. Campbell’s 1st grade classroom. Every day Ms. K works in small groups, offers one-on-one support to students, and stops student behaviors in their tracks in a way that only a grandma can do. When Glenwood’s KSSN coordinator, Maddie Rhoades, started the school’s partnership with Senior Neighbors, she advocated for grandparents who were representative of the Glenwood students. Upon brainstorming with Senior Neighbors, two “Grandpas” from the Senior Refugee program were recruited to be the first ever Refugee Foster Grandparents from the organization. In January, “Grandpa Francios”, whose first language is Swahili, and “Grandpa Menyo”, who speaks Kinyarwanda, both originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, will be joining the Glenwood team!



Welcoming elders or “Grandparents” at Glenwood who are representative of our students builds equity — another one of the Grandparent secret powers. Students can converse in their first language with their classroom “Grandpa” and recognize that being multilingual is a strength, not a deficit. They may catch a glimpse of their own grandparents in the faces of their foster grandparents, hear familiar phrases spoken at home, and share food and other cultural traditions. This partnership creates a better understanding of the many ways our families come to Kentwood, and it builds multigenerational relationships where histories are learned and shared with bright futures imagined for decades to come.

A special thank you to Karen Putman, who’s quickly become an invaluable part of our team.

EXCELLENCE AT PINWOOD

Pinewood students continue to demonstrate excellence as we reach the end of the second marking period. This semester, many students have qualified for a spot on the Pinewood Honor Roll. 408 students earned a 3.0 GPA or higher, 282 students earned a 3.5 GPA or higher, and 63 students earned a perfect 4.0 GPA. Each marking period, honor roll students receive a lunchtime treat and their names are posted in the guidance office.

Three times a year we hold Operation Target which encourages and challenges students to improve their academic performance and increase learning. There are two ways to participate: students can either sign a contract with their teacher in any class in which the student wants to improve one full letter grade OR the student earns all A’s in all of their classes. Students who meet these goals are invited to a pizza party during their lunch hour. So far this year we are pleased to announce that 110 students have qualified for this honor.

Each month, students from all grade levels are nominated for a Falcon Award by their teachers. Students earn this prestigious award by leading by example and modeling our T.E.A.M. expectations of being Teachable, Empowered, Accepting and Motivated. Each winner receives a certificate of recognition and t-shirt.

We are so very proud of our students at Pinewood. Keep up the excellent work and Go Falcons!!



**Play Baseball or Softball
this summer!**

Sign Up Now!

www.kentwoodbaseballleague.com

Girls Softball ages 4-1/2 to 15	\$95/ single player \$65/ 4-1/2-6 y/o
Boys Baseball ages 4-1/2 to 14	Family Discounts \$65/ second player \$60/ third player \$55/ fourth + player

KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2022-23

Aug 22 *First Day of School

- Sep 2 No School
- Sep 5 No School
- Sep 21 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Sept 28..... Middle School Conferences- Evening (Full Day for Students)
- Sept 29..... Middle School Conferences- Half Day for 6-8 Students
- Sept 30..... Half Day for 6th-8th Student & Staff
- Oct 12 & 13.... High School Evening Conferences (Full Day School)
- Oct 14 Half Day for 9th-12th Students & Staff
- Oct 26 Elementary Evening Conferences
- Oct 27..... Half Day K-5 Students / Evening Conferences
- Oct 28 Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Oct 31 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Nov 23 Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Nov 24 & 25 ... No School - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 16 Half Day for ALL Students/KEA records day
- Dec 19 - 30 Winter Break
- Jan 2 Winter Break
- Jan 16 No School - MLK Day / PD for Staff
- Feb 14 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Feb 20 & 21 Mid-Winter Break
- Mar 1..... Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Full Day of School
- Mar 2 Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Half Day 6-8 Students ONLY / Full Day High School
- Mar 3 Half Day 6-12 Student & Staff
- Mar 27 Elementary Evening Conferences / Full Day
- Mar 28 Half Day K-5 Students
- Mar 29..... Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Mar 30..... Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Mar 31 - Apr 7. Spring Break
- May 26 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- May 29 No School - Memorial Day
- Jun 2..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:55 PM	11:55 AM
Middle	8:15 AM	3:04 PM	11:20 AM
Freshman Campus	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
High School	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
Crossroads	7:37 AM	2:29 PM	10:45 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30	31				29	30	31				

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30		26	27	28				

OCTOBER							MARCH						
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8				1	2	3	4
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
30	31						26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
27	28	29	30				30						

DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	28	29	30	31	1	2	3

No School For Students
 Half Day *check left column to see what schools have ½ days

Kentwood Board of Education
KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
5820 EASTERN AVENUE SE
KENTWOOD, MI 49508

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The KPS Education Foundation supported a first-of-its-kind event at the Freshman Campus in December. We wanted to thank the staff and students as well as the community members who made this event possible. Working with our young people in programs such as this will result in a better community and better prepared students entering the workforce in a few years. The following was supplied by the staff of the Freshman Campus.

Well done!!!

On Thursday, December 1, our young men of the East Kentwood Freshman Campus participated in its first ever Level Up conference.

At EKFC, we focus on supporting our scholars in learning about their future while focusing on leadership skills to make our community a better place. The theme for the day was to empower and encourage our young men to believe in themselves and use their resources and leadership skills all while learning about multiple career paths.

We want to thank our community members who gave their time and talents to mentor our young people: Keynote speakers Dr. Shaquille Anthony and Superintendent Kevin Polston; session speakers Eric Large, Mike Thomas, Terry Dudley, Matt Duncan, Jake Bejema, Brian Brown, Jovan Naves, and Lee Moyer; community volunteers and EK alum Emmanuel Witherspoon and Houston Glass.

Another HUGE thank you to the entire team who orchestrated the day's logistics for our scholars: Farris Withers, Tiani Smith, Jill McCatty, Erika Vann, Rob Stacey, Erik Dudley, and Christian Craft.

Finally, we want to express our sincerest gratitude to the Kentwood Public Schools Education Foundation for their generous support of our event!

The Education Foundation has several openings for its board of directors.

If you are passionate about the education of our future citizens, have deep knowledge and connections within the Kentwood Community, and are willing to roll up your sleeves and work to further the Foundation's mission, then we would like to talk to you.

Please visit www.kpsef.org and go to the "contact us" tab and send us a message with your name, your background and contact information and we will follow up accordingly.