



THE KPS COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE: LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARD

As the calendar flips to January, we take a moment to reflect on the first half of the 2023-24 school year, and to look ahead at some exciting events and plans for the students at Kentwood Public Schools in the coming months.



Looking back, we have many reasons to celebrate. Over the summer, the district launched a pilot program of summer learning labs, bringing hands-on, experiential learning to our students. As the school year began, a new STEM program was launched in all elementary schools, delivering engaging, innovative learning to each elementary student in KPS. In October, East Kentwood High School teacher Matt Vriesman

was named National History Teacher of the Year by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Our key to success is partnering with our community to achieve our shared vision of Excellence and Equity in Education

In November, East Kentwood Senior Elise Fennell won the state championship in golf. Later in the month, we cut the ribbon on our new culinary arts center at East Kentwood High School, upholding a promise made in our 2021 bond

campaign to create this facility to bring real-world learning to our students.

Continued on page 2...

STRONG SCHOOLS

In early December the Kentwood Public School Board of Education approved a request to voters on a sinking fund ballot proposal. Prior to February voting, we wish to provide you with an update regarding the important priorities that led to this request. Sinking fund revenues can be used for key areas such as school safety, technology, and functional facilities helping KPS create strong schools.

As you vote, please consider these three items:

SAFETY:

Our top priority is the safety of our students, teachers, and staff. To ensure a safe educational environment, the district must continue to monitor and enhance our safety and security measures.

- New safety and security tools are constantly being developed which help KPS protect our students and staff.
- Feeling safe frees students, teachers, and staff to focus on learning and excellence and equity in education.
- Community members can engage in programs at our facilities knowing they are safe, whether swimming in our pools, using collaboration centers, or cheering on our athletes.

Continued on page 3...

THE KPS COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE: LOOKING BACK LOOKING FORWARD

Continued from page 1

Other accomplishments include carrying on long standing traditions in Kentwood Public Schools, the annual “Stuff the Bus” food drive in November, and swimming with Santa at the East Kentwood Aquatic Center in December. These events highlight the bedrock support of our community and the partnership we value with the families of Kentwood.

“Our key to success is partnering with our community to achieve our shared vision of Excellence and Equity in Education,” says Superintendent Kevin Polston. “Every recognition our schools, staff, or students receive is a result of the work of many individuals. What makes Kentwood special is the intentional effort to build meaningful relationships to serve our community. Excellence is a byproduct of the exceptional daily work by our staff and students which, over time, leads to extraordinary results!”

As Kentwood Public Schools begins looking ahead to the second half of the year, there are exciting new projects on the horizon. These include the completion of the new Early Childhood Center next to Townline Elementary, scheduled to open for students in August. Our students will continue to compete and add to their legacy in nationally recognized programs like the We the People Competition in mid-January, and Red Storm Robotics with competitions in March and April. In March, work begins on the extensive renovation of the Hamilton building which will become the district’s 11th elementary school.

In addition to these large projects, important work takes place in our classrooms each day by dedicated teachers and staff, building relationships with their students, supporting them, challenging them, and helping them grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

The combination of the caring KPS staff, making intentional instructional choices to bring innovative and meaningful learning experiences to students, along with the steadfast support of families and community members, is the foundation of our district’s success. “We are so thankful for the continued support of our community that has created the conditions for successes across the district,” states Superintendent Polston. “Kentwood Public Schools is a destination district, and we aspire to continue to soar to new heights!”



NEW KITCHEN AT ENDEAVOR

Endeavor was thrilled to open our full-service kitchen this year. Thanks to the 2015 Building and Site Fund approved by Kentwood voters, our state-of-the-art kitchen serves delicious and nutritious meals every day.

Aligned with Kentwood’s Whole Child goal in the Strategic Plan and Michigan State Senate Bill 173, we provide every student with free, fresh, and wholesome breakfast and lunch options. This commitment is a crucial element in setting our students up for success in the classroom. Before the academic year, Governor Whitmer joined us for the inaugural meal, marking a momentous start to this fantastic initiative.

Today, our kitchen and cafeteria are called Mrs. Potter’s Diner. It is a place where culinary excellence meets warmth and community. Named after our beloved lead Child Nutrition Service provider, Lisa Potter (pictured on the right), the diner embodies our vision to create a sense of belonging and value for every student. Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Frias work tirelessly to serve hundreds of healthy, kid-favorite meals with joy in their hearts and smiles on their faces. Their dedication fosters a positive and inclusive environment for our students. We look forward to continuing to provide nourishing meals that contribute to the overall well-being and success of our students.

Strong Schools

Continued from page 1

TECHNOLOGY and CONNECTEDNESS:

For students to be successful in today's competitive and connected world, it is imperative that schools be equipped with advanced technology tools.

- Students will have access to the latest technology tools to ensure they are best prepared for their next phase of learning, whether in vocational school, college, or the workforce.
- Our students will have a competitive edge after receiving their KPS diploma.
- Being connected beyond the district will allow for a more well-rounded and comprehensive educational experience.
- Providing access through technology allows our community to engage in the educational process, including virtual connections for classroom presentations, new software to help students partner with business leaders and/or innovative ways for parents to help their students learn best.



FUNCTIONAL FACILITIES:

Excellence and equity in education requires students and teachers feel safe, secure, and comfortable in their physical environment. Schools function best when facilities are warm and welcoming for students, parents and the community participating in events at school. A few areas which need work include:

- Building and roof repairs
- HVAC/boiler upkeep and upgrades
- Parking lot resurfacing



If you have questions regarding the sinking fund ballot proposal, please visit our site for FAQs or call us at (616) 455-4400. In addition, more details can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

SAFE, WARM, AND DRY: BOARD VOTES TO RENEW SINKING FUND

Kentwood Public Schools is putting forth a new building and site sinking fund proposal on the ballot for voter consideration in February 2024. Sinking Funds help districts maintain buildings, upgrade technology, fix boilers, and repair roofs. They are the support system that helps students stay safe, warm, and dry. Since the mid 1990's our district, along with many districts across the state, have benefitted from these types of initiative. The fund will not increase current taxes.

Our most recent sinking fund proposal was passed in 2015 and runs for 10 years. The millage for that vote is 1.5718. If passed, the new sinking fund proposal would also be for 1.5718 mills and would go into effect in 2026 for the next 10 years.

Election Day is February 27, 2024, with the polls open from 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. Absentee ballots are available January 18, 2024, with multiple drop-off sites located in the city.

For more information, including Frequently Asked Questions on the ballot proposal and voter information, please visit our website at kentwoodps.org or accessible by scanning this QR code.

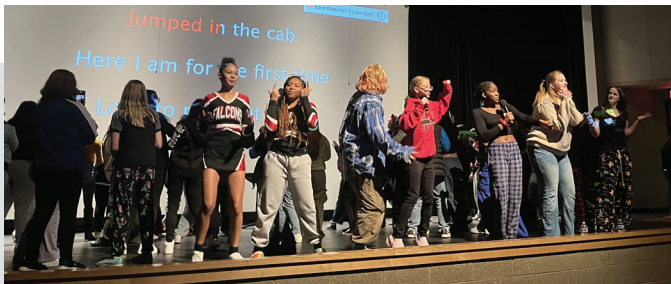


EKHS PROVIDES LEARNING EXPERIENCES

What an amazing year it's been at East Kentwood Freshman Campus! We kicked off the year with a New Falcon Camp. Our incoming freshmen came to the building for a day of team building with their new classmates. We had a great day of learning together and our incoming students built some lasting friendships. In the spring, we will welcome our rising freshmen at our Family Night - Orientation on February 27, 2024 and hope to take New Falcon Camp to the next level for the class of 2028.

This year we are recognizing our scholars for demonstrating Falcon P.R.I.D.E. (Preparedness - Respect - Integrity - Dependability - Effort). Students have received recognition throughout the fall months for perfect attendance (September), zero tardies (October), and exemplary behavior (November). We also recognize our students through activities (5th Quarter), a social mixer for students who are meeting academic, behavior, and attendance expectations. We look forward to celebrating students leaders in at our next 5th quarter event on February 23, 2024.

Learning experiences such as the Level Up (Men's conference) and Glow Up (Women's conference), have opened windows into future opportunities for our scholars. "Lunch and Learns" continue these experiences with community partners speaking to our scholars during lunch period. We also partner with Western Regional Community Consortium to send students to Western Michigan University to learn about opportunities in health careers. Scholars will partner with college student mentors pursuing health careers to learn about potential opportunities. Our scholars find the program is relevant and eye-opening each year we participate.



MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES AT EKHS

The annual Soprano and Alto Day at EKHS is a wonderful opportunity for the 8th Grade students from Crestwood, Pinewood, and Valleywood Choirs to come together for a day of music and camaraderie. This year's event took place on November 20th, offering a diverse range of activities — including performances, singing games, karaoke, and group dance sessions — creating a holistic and enjoyable experience for the students.

The 8th graders prepared two songs, "The Gift to Sing" and "Beneath the African Sky," and then performed them as a combined choir, showcasing their hard work and dedication. This collaborative effort fosters a sense of unity among the students from different choirs, providing them with a unique opportunity to share their talents and appreciate the joy of singing together.

Such events not only contribute to the musical development of the students, but also help build a sense of community and shared experience. We are looking forward to the upcoming Tenors and Baritones Day in January 2024.



KPS WELCOMES NEW VARSITY FOOTBALL COACH

Kentwood Public Schools is excited to welcome Tyrone A. Spencer II as the new head coach for the East Kentwood Falcons varsity football team.

Coach Spencer comes to East Kentwood from Detroit Martin Luther King Jr., Senior High School where he has been a social studies teacher and football coach, serving as head football coach for the past eight seasons. During his time as head coach, his team won four state championships. Spencer also has playing and coaching experience at Wayne State University.

Coach Spencer is excited to be on the job at East Kentwood. "I am beyond excited to lead the football program at East Kentwood High School," he says. "EKHS is known throughout the state for the school's commitment to excellence both on and off the field. I'm ready to get to work and build on the strong foundation in place to relentlessly pursue excellence in all we do with the Falcon football program. I am also looking forward to becoming a part of the dynamic and supportive Kentwood community."



KPS FOCUSES ON STUDENT HEALTH

The safety, health, and well-being of our students is the top priority of Kentwood Public Schools. In the district's newly implemented Strategic Plan for Excellence and Equity in Education, adopted by the board of education in the spring, Whole-Child Environments is one of four key goal areas. The district is committed to upholding a standard of excellence for school climate and environment, knowing how critical this is for student learning.

Looking back to three years ago, Kentwood Public Schools had only one nurse on staff for the entire district. That has changed. Today, through a valued partnership with Corewell Health, there are four full-time RN's on staff at KPS. There are seven health aides now on the team, as well. In addition, there are ten other health aides to support students receiving special education services in the district.

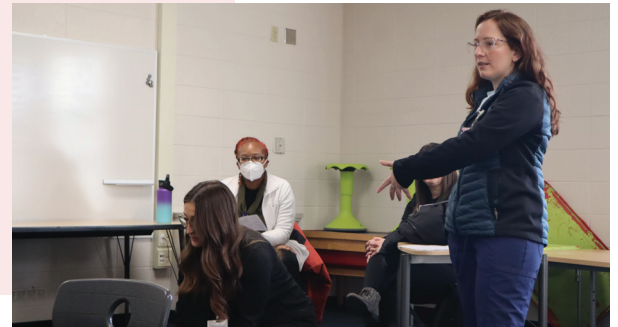
This dedicated team of healthcare professionals is making a difference. Executive Director of Student Services, Veronica Lake, explains that this larger team can now more effectively and efficiently take care of students' health needs, coordinating with their physicians, and ensuring that the students are able to be in school and actively participating in their learning.

One of Kentwood Public Schools' student vision statements is: "I know we all belong and are valued." The district is committed to making sure all students feel this. "We're not just simply saying you belong," says Lake. "We're saying you belong here so much that we are going to make the connections and put the supports and conditions in place for each student to be as successful as they can be when they are in school."

Looking ahead, Lake is excited about opportunities to work with more community partners to continue to build environments and services to best support our students.



WHOLE-CHILD ENVIRONMENTS



STUDENT COUNCIL LEADS THE WAY AT MEADOWLAWN

Student voice, empowerment, and belonging have been proven to have significant effect on scholar learning and engagement. As we look back, our Meadowlawn Student Council leaps out at me as not only a success from 2023, but a powerful force moving forward into 2024.

Led by Lindsey Greenfield (3rd Grade) and Jessica Vogler (5th Grade), our student council began with our candidates running for office, preparing and delivering speeches, and then holding mock elections that mirrored the idea of democracy. Since the election, our student council has run school-wide fundraisers, they have raised money for a playground buddy bench, and our president and vice-president are now in charge of our Monday morning announcements and PBIS trophy winner deliveries.

Moving forward, the Meadowlawn student council will be meeting with the Leadership Team to review and give input on our school-wide behavior matrix, which outlines the way we agree to act in all common areas of the school. We will also be working with the council to develop student perception surveys, volunteer opportunities, and Tier I celebrations. We are so excited to bring more opportunities for student voice to be heard and valued at Meadowlawn. It is our goal to have the student council leading the charge with us to create a school family in which all children know they belong!

SHARED EXPERIENCES AT CHALLENGER

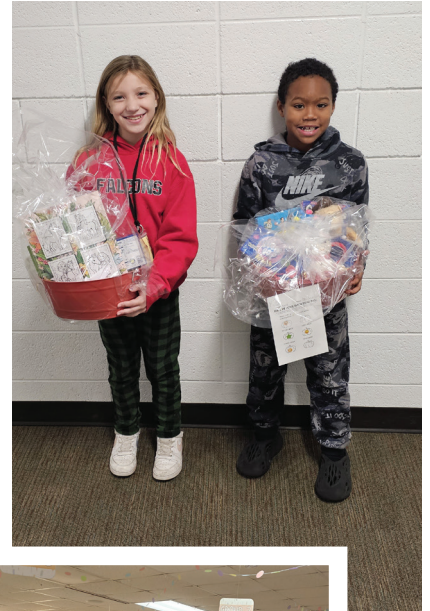
In August, Challenger staff and students returned for the 2023-24 school year. Like most years, the first day was bustling and full of excitement. Parents dropped their students off and waved goodbye to summer. Students greeted their friends, old and new and teachers embraced the unknown, preparing for new opportunities. A new principal was in place and ready to lead the Champions. Since that time, there have been many shared experiences. As we enter the winter months, now is a great time for looking back and looking ahead!

One of our first shared experiences was the PTC Fun Run. This was launched during the week of September 18. PTC members and the Challenger school community helped plan and prepare for the event. The week was filled with excitement that included an all-school assembly, student prizes, and a student run around the school's soccer field. This event helped raise money for the students of Challenger.

The Challenger Family Night was another of the school communities' shared experiences. This event had a theme of Fall in Love with Reading. Each grade level had a reading game or activity that parents and students engaged in as they sought to collect participation stickers. Student participation allowed their entry into a prize drawing. More than 300 people that attended this event and three were lucky prize winners.

Another shared experience was our Fall SCORE Store. At Challenger we ask our students to be safe, in control, organized, show respect, and give their best effort. When they do this, they are demonstrating our SCORE expectations. We reward students with tickets for meeting these expectations and offer a few opportunities to shop at our SCORE Store with those tickets. This fall students shopped and were able to purchase items such as squishies, stuffed animals, chips, and fidgets. The students loved their shopping experience!

We are looking forward to more shared experiences throughout the remainder of the school year and beyond as it grows our school community and helps to build a positive school culture. We want to ensure that students, families, and staff benefit from effective communication, ongoing outreach, and engagement opportunities. Please continue to be on the lookout for upcoming events and opportunities for shared experiences!



GLENWOOD ARCH MAKING MEMORIES

Looking back to August, Glenwood's ARCH program has been filled with fun activities and opportunities for students to learn new things. One of our greatest highlights was our Lights On event, which took place on October 26th, 2023. Families were invited to join their students at Glenwood for a fun night of reading and fort building, thanks to our community partner Kent District Library. Our students and families had a great time working together to build their own perfect and unique fort. We also had a raffle for our families at this event for a gift card donated by Salted Cupcake.

Another highlight in recent months was starting our Healthy Community Program. This program promotes healthy engagement in activities and decisions when it comes to exercise and nutrition. This is a school wide initiative at Glenwood, but ARCH has taken extra steps such as teaching students how to create their own healthy snacks and learning the importance of making healthy food choices. Our students also enjoy participating in the Mileage Club. Students can run laps and add a foot charm to their lanyard after each mile they run. An engaging craft that our students really enjoyed was creating stress balls from balloons and rice. We talked about how to use the balls as a resource during stressful times.

Looking forward, our ARCH program is focusing on more STEAM activities. So far, our students have enjoyed working on their "Around the World" project. For this project each student picks a country they want to research and learning about different cultures around the world. Students are also able to choose how they want to share the information learned to their peers at the end of the project. We are looking forward to creating more great memories with our students and growing together here at Glenwood.

EAST KENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL: A YEAR IN REVIEW

As we conclude the first half of the school year at East Kentwood High School, we take a moment to look back at the remarkable achievements that have come to define our 2023 school year. This year was an embodiment of diversity, talent, and excellence, as our students reached new pinnacles of success and set high benchmarks for the future.



In academics, our “We the People” team set the tone for the year by clinching the district championship. Their dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to excellence was on full display, and we couldn’t be prouder of their achievement. Several of our African American and Hispanic students received recognition from the College Board for their outstanding academic performance. Their hard work and dedication are testaments to the inclusive and nurturing learning environment at EKHS.

The spotlight shone brightly on Nuha Hussein, our talented filmmaker who bagged first place in the annual Mosaic Mobile Film Contest. Nuha’s unique perspective and storytelling skills are truly inspirational, and we are excited to see what she creates next.

Our theater department had a stellar year, captivating audiences with two remarkable Fall shows “Falcon Night Live” and “Clue”. The performances reflected the hard work, creativity, and talent of our students, who continually go above and beyond to bring stories to life on stage.

One of the standout moments of the year was the grand opening of our newly designed Culinary Arts Center. This innovative culinary space will undoubtedly serve as a launchpad for many aspiring chefs and culinary artists in the years to come.

In the world of sports, Elise Fennell swung her way to victory, winning the MHSAA Girls Golf State Championships. Her triumph is a testament to her skill, determination, and unwavering focus.

Finally, a special mention to our unstoppable eSports team, who secured their fourth straight State Championship! Their consistent performances are a testament to their teamwork, strategic thinking, and commitment to their craft.

As we look back on an extraordinary first half of the year, we thank our students, faculty, and parents for their relentless pursuit of excellence. Here’s to creating more remarkable memories in 2024!



In the world of sports, Elise Fennell swung her way to victory,



GORDON AND CARTER TO RECEIVE GIANT AWARDS

Congratulations to Kentwood Public Schools Executive Director of Human Resources, Jamie Gordon, and former head coach, Jimmy Carter, for being named 2024 GIANT Award Recipients. The GIANT Awards recognize members of the African American community “for their exceptional contributions, going above and beyond to shape the history, culture, and quality of life” of those in the greater Grand Rapids Community.



Gordon is receiving The Phyllis Scott Activist Award. This award is given to an individual who has shown a “strong commitment for promoting and improving the lives of youth.” We can think of no other honor more fitting for Gordon.

Jamie’s commitment to making fundamental improvements in systems to impact, not only today’s students but future

students in Kentwood Public Schools and beyond, is unmatched. Her genuine care and concern for our students, and her steadfast belief in them, drives her work, and we are grateful for the contributions she continues to make as a leader in Kentwood Public Schools.

In addition, we also congratulate Jimmy Carter, former head coach of the East Kentwood High School girls’ basketball team, and father of Gordon, for being named a GIANT Award recipient. Coach Carter is receiving the Walter Coe Public Service Award. Jamie and Jimmy will receive the awards at a ceremony in early February.



BOWEN ARCH LOOKS FORWARD TO MORE HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

At Bowen ARCH, a community of excited learners share about their home cultures and venture out to try new things. In October, Bowen’s ARCH soccer team played Meadowlawn ARCH in a friendly intramural game and led an award ceremony to recognize the MVP and Best Defender from both schools. Families also celebrated our talents and artistry in our “Lights On” event to showcase the importance and necessity of afterschool programming.

In November, students showcased their creativity by making paper maps, cardboard topographical maps, clay buildings, flags, currency, and art to tell the story of their “discovered islands.” Every evening there are at least 5-10 students highlighted to be circle leaders, supply guides, reflection referees, clean up captains, and more helper roles. These hardworking students presented this month-long project to their peers and celebrate their accomplishments with a food party, sampling a variety of foods from around the world.

As Bowen ARCH welcomes new students, staff, and seasons changing, this small community has big dreams for the future. In the coming months, students will participate in team games and hands-on activities about learning new skills, developing a growth mindset, celebrating others’ brave moments, and how to be a true friend. Through recreational activities, important life lessons are learned. Through creative challenges and communication tasks, students practice being mindful with their words, choices, and reactions in a community context.

ARCH ENDEAVORS TO LEARN AND GROW

The Endeavor elementary ARCH program has had many fun activities since the beginning of school. Each day is an adventure for our scholars. One of the days that stands out the most, was our “Lights On” family event! We had the opportunity to celebrate that night with many of our parents. We had art stations, board games and enjoyed a magic show! Our scholars have also been learning about building community inside/outside of ARCH and about different life skills. ARCH has also been spending some time discovering things about different cultures and learning about different forms of art.

Our ARCH students are excited about the rest of the school year and are looking forward to learning more about STEAM opportunities, world exploration, black history, and women’s history. With even more new students joining our ARCH family our possibilities for learning and growth are endless! We are looking forward to are participating in activities and learning to make recipes for healthy snacks through our new healthy kids club in the new year! During this club time our scholars learn about nutrition and try new foods, then do fun, physical activities.





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2023-24

- Aug 21 *First Day of School
- Sep 1 No School
- Sep 4 No School
- Sept 27..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff

- Oct 12..... ½ Day K-12 / Conferences
- Oct 13 No School

- Nov 1..... No School / PD for Staff
- Nov 22 - 24 .. No School / Thanksgiving Break

- Dec 22 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Dec 25 - Jan 5 ... Winter Break

- Jan 15 No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day

- Feb 19 & 20 No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break

- Mar 6..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
- Mar 28..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Mar 29 - Apr 5.... No School for Students & Staff/ Spring Break

- May 24 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- May 27 No School / Memorial Day
- May 31..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:59 PM	12:15 PM
Middle	8:20 AM	3:04 PM	11:35 AM
EKFC & EKHS	7:41 AM	2:31 PM	10:48 AM
Crossroads	7:30 AM	2:18 PM	10:46 AM

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

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

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

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

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

No School For Students
 Half Day

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

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT NO.278



HALFTIME VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

A halftime show would not be complete without some video highlights. Kentwood Public Schools Communication Department is committed to telling the many great stories of our district, highlighting our exceptional students and hard-working staff. Success is not by accident. The work between students and educators, coupled with the support by our community, is directly responsible for the successes we enjoy on our mission to provide Excellence and Equity in Education for our students. Please take a moment to sample some first half video highlights by scanning this QR code.