



SPOTLIGHT ON TEACHERS: EXCELLENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers make a difference. Research shows that classroom teachers are one of the most important factors in a student's success. In Kentwood Public Schools, we are fortunate to have a dedicated team of teachers who create warm and caring environments for their students and challenge and support their students to reach new heights in learning.

Kentwood Public Schools is innovating to ensure that our teaching force remains strong during the nationwide shortage of teachers. These efforts were boosted in mid-February when the district received an \$850,000 Grow Your Own grant from the Michigan Department of Education. These funds will be used to help current KPS employees go to school to earn teaching degrees and eventually join the talented team of teachers in the district. Current teachers seeking an additional endorsement and students taking part in the East Kentwood Educators Rising program will also benefit. Kentwood Public Schools is partnering with Davenport University and Western Michigan University for this grant.

This issue of Kentwood School News is dedicated to our teachers, both those serving in our classrooms today and those working toward making a difference in the classrooms of tomorrow.

"For many, going to school for initial certification or returning to add an endorsement in a high needs area, is a financial burden," says Kentwood Public Schools Executive

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THANK YOU KENTWOOD COMMUNITY: A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Families and Members of the Kentwood Public Schools Community,

On behalf of Kentwood Public Schools and our dedicated board members, thank you for your support of the Sinking Fund Proposal in February's election. The strong partnership between the district and the Kentwood community reflects our shared values and commitment to the success and well-being of every child. Your unwavering support for educational excellence is inspiring and appreciated.

Since 1996, our community has consistently approved the 10-year Sinking Fund millage proposals. These funds have been pivotal in keeping our facilities in top condition—repairing roofs, upgrading heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, remodeling traffic spaces for safer student arrivals and departures, and enhancing sports facilities, among many other vital projects.

The proposal approved last month will start next year following the expiration of the 2015 proposal, maintaining the same rate of 1.5718 mills. This continuity enables us to advance our mission by

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Spotlight on Teachers: Excellence in the Classroom *Continued from page 1*

Director of Human Resources Jamie Gordon. "The Grow Your Own grant allows us to provide financial support as well as coaching and mentorship while participants pursue their education. We have a good view of participant's passion for our students and their commitment to excellence and equity because we already work with them."

The Grow Your Own grant is part of a larger approach KPS is taking to combat the nationwide teacher shortage. The district is also part of The West Michigan Teacher Collaborative, which is a partnership with area Intermediate School Districts and Grand Valley State University to support employees in the district interested in moving into a teaching position.

In addition, students at East Kentwood High School may enroll in an Educators Rising class. This yearlong class gives students an introduction into teaching careers, offers them college credit for their work, and provides real-world learning opportunities in classrooms around the district. The end goal for students who participate is returning to Kentwood Public Schools as teachers upon their college graduation.

"I think there's something really special about students going through a school system and wanting to return and continue to create those experiences for future generations," says Jasmine Ramahi, East Kentwood teacher for the Education Rising class. Ramahi also points out that

the students of Kentwood schools today will bring diversity with them as KPS teachers in the future. "For our students who go into education, they understand how as future teachers they can be representative of, connect with, and be a role model for students who might not feel like they are understood."

Director of New Teacher Development and Curriculum, Debbie Schuitema, agrees with Ramahi about the unique perspective today's KPS students will bring as future teachers in the district. Schuitema notes, "Students will benefit not only because they will have more educators who look like them but also educators that already know the community, the values, and the strengths and weaknesses of the system in which they are operating."



Thank You Kentwood Community: A Message from the Superintendent

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focusing on enhanced security measures, upgrading our technology infrastructure to reflect the latest in educational tools, and preserving our facilities to ensure that Kentwood Public Schools remains a destination district where all students can succeed.

Our partnership with the Kentwood community is critical for student success. We are committed to honoring your trust by continuing to manage resources with integrity and transparency. Together, we continue to strive for Excellence and Equity in Education. Together, we are building a promising future for our students and our community. Go Falcons!

Sincerely,

Kevin Polston
Superintendent
Kentwood Public Schools



STUDENTS RECEIVE HONORS AT PUBLIC MUSEUM

Congratulations to students at Southwood Elementary for taking part in the Roger That! Design That! event recently held at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. The returning fifth-grade team, **Falcon 42**, tied for first place for the Judges' Award for their On to Titan! project. The fourth-grade team, **Southwood Space Crew**, took home The People's Choice Award for their Women Belong in Space! Project. Congratulations to these Southwood students on this important accomplishment!



PINEWOOD MULTILINGUAL LEARNER PROGRAM

This month, we're thrilled to shine the spotlight on a select group of teachers and staff who have been instrumental in redefining our Multilingual Learner (ML) program at Pinewood Middle School. Their passion, creativity, and commitment to excellence have not only transformed the educational experience for our diverse student body but have also set a new standard for inclusive learning environments. Classroom teachers Meghan Neal-Sienko and Lauren Smith, along with the support of Sherri Robinson (ML Interventionist), Kierra Sumrell (ML paraprofessional) and Stephanie Marshall (EL Instructional Coach), have done a fantastic job of creating a program that provides our ML students with comprehensive literacy and language development services, while building strong relationships and a sense of belonging within our student body.

The Pinewood ML team has implemented several initiatives this year that have already made a positive impact on student learning. Some of these include:

- The addition of a newcomer program for ML students who are just beginning to learn the English language.
- The creation and implementation of English Learner Development (ELD) classes. The ELD courses, which ML students take in addition to grade level English, are designed to provide language development services with an emphasis on advanced academic vocabulary and expository writing.
- The implementation of a co-teaching instructional model where ML teachers are partnering with teachers in mainstream classes to provide inclusive access to the curriculum.
- A more thorough and streamlined process for proctoring standardized assessments.

We want to congratulate the Pinewood ML Team for their innovative and creative ideas. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to create new lessons/content, evaluate curriculum, modify schedules, build rapport with students, communicate with mainstream teachers, establish connections with parents and in the community, attend professional development, collaborate with our district colleagues, and streamline processes to create a program that not only improves English language acquisition, but also fosters curiosity, critical thinking and collaboration among students coming from diverse backgrounds. We look forward to watching our ML students benefit from the foundation that this team has built.

Hats off to the Pinewood ML Team!! Go Falcons!!



GLENWOOD ART TEACHER FINDS HER TEACHING HOME IN KENTWOOD

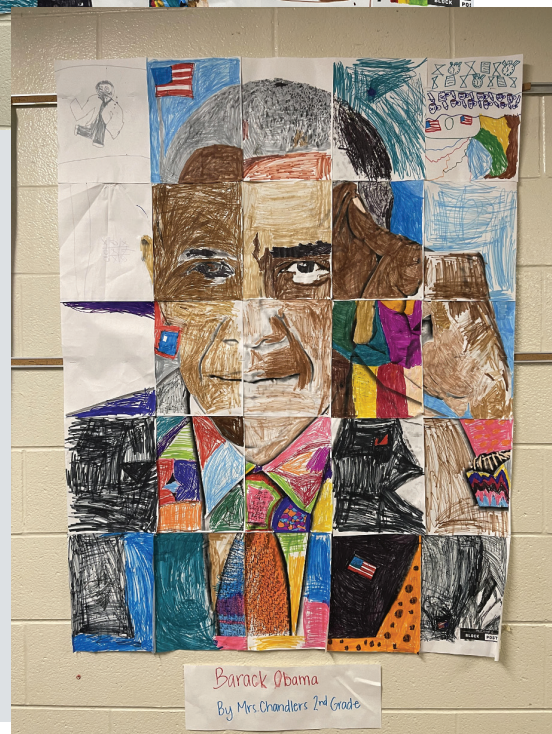
Glenwood Art Teacher, Chelsea Watts, didn't know she wanted to be an art teacher until she was in college. She has always had a deep love for art, but adults around her while growing up discouraged her from pursuing a career in art because they told her that she "would never make any money."

When she finally changed her major at Kendall College to art education, everything fell into place for her. Chelsea graduated in 2014 with a bachelor's degree, and immediately took a long-term substitute position at Pinewood Middle School. At the conclusion of that position, she was hired as a paraprofessional in an ASD classroom at Grandville High School. This position changed her life in a few different ways. She learned that she loved to work with students who had different needs, challenging her to want to learn more about how to adapt art for students with special needs.

Chelsea went on to pursue a master's degree in special education, which she completed in early February of 2024. That position is also where she met her now mother-in-law, and eventually her husband.

She went on to work in Grand Rapids Public Schools for two years, and decided to apply again at Kentwood because she missed our district. Chelsea states that Kentwood feels like home for her, and she has been "home" working in the district now for six years.

Her creativity is visible in a recent project. For Black History Month (BHM), she wanted to highlight more than one figure from different areas such as music, art, sports, activism, and science. She also wanted to highlight figures from the past and present so her students could relate to these important heroes. Another goal for this project was for students to be able to work together to make one whole piece of artwork. This can be difficult spatially if a whole piece isn't broken into smaller parts. Chelsea created black and gray images of different BHM leaders and used a program to break a single image into 10-25 sheets. She placed pieces of the image together on the floor like a puzzle so students could see what the image looked like whole. Students selected a piece to color. Once they finished their pieces, she re-assembled them to create a collaborative piece of art, honoring a variety of black history figures.



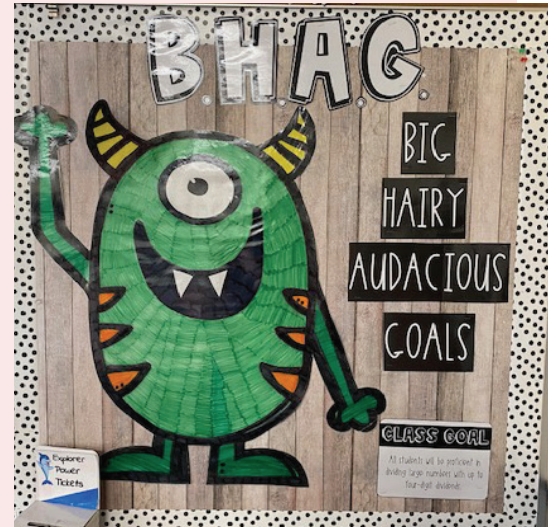
TEACHERS HELP STUDENT SET BIG GOALS WITH BIG RESULTS

The fourth-grade team at Explorer Elementary is working with their students this year on Big Hairy Audacious Goals or BHAGS. The inspiration for this came from one of the teachers attending a conference where they learned about Professional Learning Communities. When she returned, the team decided to dive in. Explorer is not the first place where BHAG's have existed, many top companies such as Apple, Boeing, and NIKE also set them.

So, what is a BHAG and where did it come from? The concept comes from the book *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras. Companies, or in this case, the fourth graders at Explorer set lofty goals, ones that some might believe are unattainable and then work as a team to achieve them. At Explorer, each class chooses its own goal by popular vote. Once they achieve a goal, they move on to the next one that the class decides on.

They have made progress on their goals! Mrs. Vavere's class goal was centered around 4 digit by 1 digit division and, at week one, 30% of the students were proficient, by the end of week three 75% achieved proficiency. In Mrs. Weatherford's class the goal was centered around multi-digit multiplication. When the class started, 25% of students were meeting the class goal. Within two weeks the number climbed to 75%. In Mrs. Walsh's class, the goal was to improve the top 20 missed multiplication facts with 100% proficiency. At week one, the class knew 3 out of 18 facts with 100% proficiency and, by week three, they were up to 8 out of 18.

The teachers state that the key to the student success is one-on-one conferencing with students that results with the student choosing a commitment to strive towards the BHAG. Commitments range from peer tutoring, extra practice at home, student elected study sessions at recess, videos, and online practice. Students are excited about helping each other so they can meet their current goal and move on to the next.



NEW CLASS MARRIES COOKING WITH SCIENCE, OPENS DOORS TO PRACTICAL CAREERS

Crossroads has introduced a new course called 'The Science of Cooking' that combines culinary arts with scientific principles. The course, led by teacher Peter Weise, aligns with the school's mission to provide students with practical skills for non-college careers. The course begins with students obtaining their ServSafe Food Handler certification, a crucial step for ensuring food safety standards. One of the highlights is an 'Iron Chef' challenge that allows students to showcase their creativity and culinary skills.

Peter Weise explains, "Our focus is on understanding the science behind cooking. It's not just about following recipes; it's about exploring why certain cooking methods produce specific results." Mr. Weise plans to enhance the curriculum further by including topics such as food history and ethics, as well as exploring the integration of technologies like 3D printing in cooking.

By combining practical skills and scientific understanding, the Science of Cooking class at Crossroads is paving the way for students to explore various career paths in culinary arts and food science.

BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT: INTRODUCING BUMBLEBEES AND HONEYBEES!

We are thrilled to unveil an exciting addition to our continuum of services at Hamilton Early Childhood Center — the pilot of two new small groups: Bumblebees and Honeybees! These groups have been carefully crafted to meet the needs of our youngest learners with developmental delays and disabilities in a small and supportive environment. Facilitated by a talented partnership of an early childhood special education teacher and a speech-language pathologist, the focus of these small groups is to teach functional communication skills, address social-emotional needs, and work on articulation and speech sounds.

We believe that this model of service will cultivate an environment that addresses the needs of the whole child. There is also a parent coaching component. After each small group, parents and caregivers are invited to join in the fun where our early childhood providers can model, coach, and teach parents skills that have been taught so they can promote the transfer of skills long after the children leave our building. We are so excited that our hive is growing, and we look forward to seeing the impact these small groups will have on our students and families.



INTRODUCING MATTHEW HAMBY, SCIENCE TEACHER AT EKHS

Prior to teaching, Matt worked in the construction industry doing mostly roofing. Once he decided to pursue teaching, Matt attended Grand Rapids Community College then transferred to Grand Valley State University for his teaching degree. He completed student teaching here at East Kentwood with Eric Page.

Matt is in his 4th year teaching; his first two years were at Gull Lake High School. Aside from teaching, Matt's passions include anime, video games, weightlifting, music, science, and his family. Matt states that his favorite thing about teaching at EK is our students and our diversity of cultures.



IT'S TIME TO SIGN UP FOR BASEBALL & SOFTBALL!

CO-ED T-BALL / 4 1/2-6
GIRLS SOFTBALL / 7-15
BOYS BASEBALL / 7-14



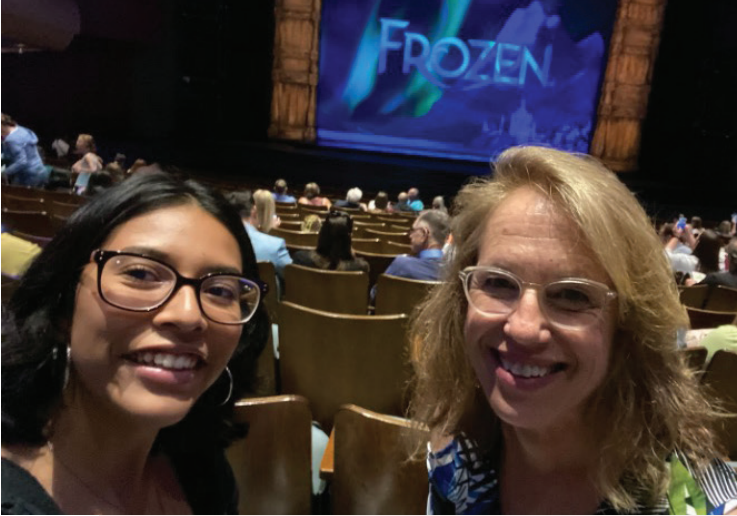
SCAN TO
SIGN UP!



WWW.KENTWOODBASEBALLSOFTBALL.COM

RELATIONAL IMPACT

Mrs. Betsy Raby, instructional paraprofessional, has served at Discovery Elementary for 20+ years, always providing a positive impact on many of the students that have come through the doors. As her time in education begins to wind down, the path of another educator is just beginning. Meet Olga Sanchez Garcia. Olga attended Discovery and is now pursuing a career in education, following in the footsteps of her mentor and friend, Mrs. Raby.



In 2011, her first year at Discovery, Olga struggled adjusting to the school environment while her teachers had difficulty understanding how to engage her. Enter Mrs. Raby, who was very understanding and patient with Olga, helping her open up and express herself in a manner that made sense to her and her teachers.

Olga is happy to share her thoughts on the impact Mrs. Raby has had in her life: "My relationship with Mrs. Raby has always meant so much to me! Mrs. Raby has always been supportive and an amazing friend/role model. I will always cherish our friendship. She's never let me down and she's helped me a lot throughout life, and she never let me fall behind even when I felt like I was falling behind. For example, like every other person applying for college, I felt lost and confused during the process. Mrs. Raby helped me during that process of applying and found different sources for me to succeed such

as a federal plan to get my first two years of college free. I will always hold onto things like that because of how much it helped me in times of conflict. I always admired Mrs. Raby's way of connecting with students, and how patient and understanding she was. Not only with me but with other students as well. Mrs. Raby is an amazing role model, and I knew at a young age that I wanted to be just like her. I want to be able to connect and support children and make them feel safe and secure."

TIME TO REGISTER FOR THE 2024 - 2025 SCHOOL YEAR

Registration is now underway for the 2024 - 2025 school year. All Kentwood Public Schools students, that includes returning students, new students, and Schools of Choice students, who plan to attend a KPS school for the 2024 - 2025 school year in grades Young 5's and Kindergarten through 12th grade, must complete an online registration. The window to register for the upcoming school year ends May 10th. The application for Schools of Choice is open from April 8 - May 10.

We appreciate your efforts to register your child during the registration window. This helps greatly in assigning teachers, creating schedules, and planning for transportation needs. If you have any questions regarding this process, please do not hesitate to reach out to the office team at your child's school for support.

To begin the online registration process, go to our website at kentwoodps.org and click on the "Enrollment" tab in the upper lefthand corner of the page. You may also access the enrollment page by scanning this QR code.

We are looking forward to welcoming our returning and new Falcons to the upcoming school year.





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Calendar 2024

- 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

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

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

No School For Students
 Half Day

* Updated 8/03/23