



## LOOKING BACK... LOOKING AHEAD: DISTRICT PREPARES TO OPEN NEW SCHOOL

**C**onstruction is in full swing on the \$20 million renovation of Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center, which will soon become Kentwood Public School's 11th elementary school. The reopening of Hamilton fulfills a promise made by the district 15 years ago, marking a significant milestone for the community.

In 2009, Hamilton Elementary was closed due to the economic downturn caused by the Great Recession. This closure dispersed Hamilton's students and families among three other elementary schools in the district. At the time, district leaders pledged that Hamilton would reopen when housing development resumed, and the community grew. Fast forward to today, with a booming housing market, Kentwood has solidified itself as a destination district. The reopening of Hamilton Elementary is a testament to the district's commitment to its promises.

*The community identified three key priorities for revising boundaries: maintaining or creating neighborhood schools, preserving the diversity present in all KPS buildings, and planning for future population growth.*

The addition of Hamilton Elementary necessitated a reevaluation of attendance boundaries across all KPS elementary schools. This complex process has been guided by the input of families, students, and staff. Through multiple surveys and town hall meetings, the community identified three key priorities for revising boundaries: maintaining or creating neighborhood schools, preserving

the diversity present in all KPS buildings, and planning for future population growth.

"We had town halls at all of our elementary schools, and we also had one at the Refugee Education Center, (plus) a virtual engagement as well," said Executive Director of Strategy and Innovation Sunil Joy. "All of the town halls had strong attendance across the board, our families and staff were very engaged throughout."

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### DISCOVERY TEACHER SHARES WORK WITH INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE

Kentwood Public Schools (KPS) embraces diversity as a strength and has established itself as a leading district in inclusivity and innovation. Recently, KPS showcased its global impact through MLL (Multilingual Learner) teacher Ruth Verburg, who presented her thesis, "Encouraging Motivation: Teaching Strategies for Multilingual Learners," at the 2nd World Language Conference in Manchester, UK. Her thesis, based on research with Discovery students, explored how self-efficacy, relevancy, and collaboration influence student motivation. It passed a double-blind peer review and made her the only U.S. presenter at the conference which took place from October 18th through the 20th.

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## Looking Back... Looking Ahead: District Prepares to Open New School

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After extensive community engagement, the Kentwood Board of Education will meet to give final approval to the new attendance boundaries in January. The next steps will involve notifying families of their school assignments for the 2025-2026 school year, with notifications set to go out in February. Online registration for the upcoming school year will follow shortly thereafter, providing families ample time to prepare for the transition.



In May, the district will host welcoming events at all elementary schools to welcome both new and returning families. These events will provide an opportunity to build familiarity with school communities, meet staff, and foster excitement for the coming school year.

KPS is dedicated to ensuring a smooth and seamless transition for all students and families affected by the boundary changes. "We've heard throughout the process that our families, our students, and our staff love their school communities. We've heard it from all 10 of our elementaries," said KPS Superintendent Kevin Polston. "That speaks to strong relationships in each school community, and if a family relocates to a new

school community, they will experience the same level of love and satisfaction at their new school as they had at their previous school."

Polston also gave a sincere thank you to KPS community members for their input throughout this process. "We thank our families, staff and students who have come to our town halls in support of this process," Polston said. "Your voice has truly informed our decisions, and your voice matters." The reopening of Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center symbolizes a new chapter of growth and opportunity for Kentwood Public Schools. As the district looks to the future, it remains steadfast in its mission to serve the needs of our dynamic and diverse community, providing Excellence and Equity in Education for each KPS student.



## AP NIGHT A SUCCESS AT EAST KENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

East Kentwood High School is celebrating a successful Advanced Placement (AP) Night held at the school in mid-December. This is the second year in a row that the school has held this event.

AP Night is an informational session for students and their families to learn more about the many AP classes offered at the Freshman Campus and East Kentwood High School. AP student ambassadors play a big role in the planning and execution of the evening, sharing their experiences taking AP classes, the many benefits they have gained, and answering questions to help encourage more students to participate in AP. Teachers who teach AP classes also take part in the evening.

This year's AP Night comes just a short time after EK received silver status on the 2024 AP School Honor Roll. The school received this honor for a combination of the number of students participating in AP classes as well as student success on AP exams.

Currently, more than 1,000 students are enrolled in at least one AP course at EK. This is up by more than 100 students from last school year and up by 300 students from two years ago. This year East Kentwood is offering more than 20 AP class opportunities for students. AP offers a more rigorous curriculum, much like classes students might encounter in college, and can result in students receiving college credit.



## Discovery Teacher Shares Work with International Audience

*Continued from page 1*

Ruth highlighted KPS's commitment to understanding and supporting the whole child, as emphasized by Principal Blair Feldkamp: "Kentwood Public Schools is truly a destination district. We embrace our diversity and work diligently to understand it. We listen and work collaboratively to meet the needs of the whole child, every one of them."

The presentation inspired international attendees, who praised KPS's innovative and inclusive approach.

Moving forward, the impact of Ruth's research will expand further, as it is set to be published in the European Journal of Teaching, allowing KPS data, including Discovery's MI Voice Student Perception Survey, to inform global educational practices. This achievement underscores KPS's dedication to excellence and equity in education.



## INTERNET ACCESS ADDED TO SCHOOL BUSES

As the second half of the school year gets rolling, students now have more opportunities to complete schoolwork thanks to an addition to the district's school buses.

Internet access is now installed on KPS buses. This will allow students to use their district-provided Chromebooks while traveling on school buses. It has the potential to be very beneficial for students with busy, demanding schedules.

"Many of our students are involved in activities after school such as athletics and fine arts practices, part time jobs or taking care of siblings at home," says KPS Director of Technology Evan Hordyk. "The bus ride to or from school, as well as the bus trips to away games and performances, is a great opportunity for students to jump on their district-provided Chromebook to complete their homework or submit their assignment in Google Classroom. Providing students with the ability to access a filtered Internet connection to complete their schoolwork while on the bus, is another way we can help students be successful learners." Hordyk points out that the same filter system that aims to protect students from undesirable content at school is also in place for Internet access on buses.

## LOOKING BACK...LOOKING AHEAD: EXPLORER ARCH

Looking back on our journey this fall at Explorer ARCH, we are filled with pride for the meaningful relationships our students have developed with one another and the dedication of our staff. The camaraderie and support that echo throughout our program have fostered a nurturing environment where every student feels like they belong and are able to thrive. Our recent talent show was a wonderful testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of our students, showcasing not only individual talents but also the collective spirit of our community, leaving a lasting impression on their families and friends.



As we look ahead, ARCH will expand our offerings by partnering with more vendors to introduce new opportunities that will enhance our curriculum and provide diverse experiences for our students. We invite all families and community members to engage with us when you are able. Your support and involvement are crucial to our success, and we are enthusiastic about what the future holds for our Explorer ARCH family. Let us continue to inspire and uplift one another as we witness the remarkable growth and achievements of our students. Together, we are building not just a program, but a community!

## FALCONS ESPORTS TEAM DOMINATES AT THE STATE LEVEL

East Kentwood High School's Esports team has, once again, soared to amazing heights with an outstanding performance in the recent Michigan High School Esports Federation (MIHSEF) State Championships! The Falcons proved their dominance by claiming state championships in an impressive five out of ten games played this season.

A special congratulations goes to Coach Bill Dixon, who was honored with the prestigious "Coach of the Year" award at the event. His leadership and dedication have been instrumental in the team's success, inspiring the players to reach their full potential.

This remarkable achievement comes on the heels of another exciting milestone: the team's move into their newly renovated esports facility at East Kentwood High School. This state-of-the-art space was made possible by the unwavering support of our community. The facility provides an exceptional environment for students to hone their skills, collaborate, and excel in the rapidly growing world of competitive gaming.

To learn more about the new facility and the Falcon Esports team, check out the video and article from our building partners, Owen Ames Kimball by scanning the QR code.

Congratulations to Coach Dixon and the entire EK Esports team on their incredible accomplishments. Your hard work, teamwork, and dedication have made us all proud. Go Falcons!



## LOOKING BACK... LOOKING AHEAD: EMPOWERING STUDENTS AT PINWOOD

Our Pinewood Middle School students and staff have once again demonstrated their commitment to making a positive impact on the world. This year we have implemented some new initiatives to support both local and global causes. These new programs, Project Healthy Schools and Purple Community are off to a successful start, and we are excited about the opportunities they will create in the future.

One of our key initiatives this year is focusing on promoting health and wellness. Recently, two of our dynamic new staff members, Melvin Harris (counselor) and Yasmin Mohamed (social worker), have spearheaded an effort to bring a program called, "Project Healthy Schools", to Pinewood. Project Healthy Schools is a grant-funded and evidence-based program that encourages healthy habits through education, environmental change, and measurement. Some of the key goals of the program are providing health education, increasing school-wide wellness activities, promoting healthy food/beverage options, creating staff wellness initiatives, and an overall improved culture of wellness amongst our school community. So far this year we have formed a wellness team, conducted a wellness assessment, and organized physical activities for our staff that support

a healthy lifestyle. Next semester, the team looks forward to conducting a food tasting, promoting healthy food options, and implementing social-emotional learning lessons for students.

Another new initiative we have implemented this year is the Purple Community Club. The Purple Community Club is a group of students who are showing compassion and supporting Cancer and Parkinson's research by fundraising and learning about science. The group is led by one of our talented Physical Education teachers, Heather Amr. So far this year, students in the club have organized two fundraisers to support Cancer and Parkinson's research. They also attended a "lunch and learn" session at the Van Andel Institute where they were able to take a tour of the research labs, take part in hands-on science experiments and speak with the scientists who specialize in research. Next semester the club is planning to continue to raise awareness, organize more fundraising events, and will then choose which research project they will support. By raising awareness and funds, our students are helping to make a difference in the fight against Cancer and Parkinson's.

As we look to the future, we are excited to continue empowering our students to make a difference. We encourage all students to get involved, share their ideas, and work together to make the world a better place for everyone. Go Falcons!!

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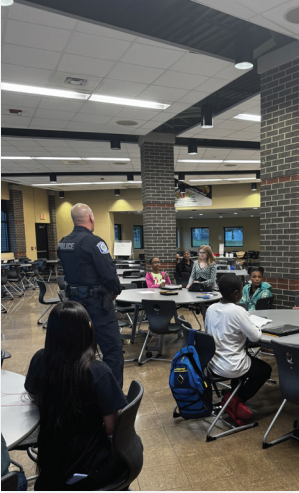
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## VALLEYWOOD ARCH - LOOKING BACK... LOOKING AHEAD

As we reach the halfway mark of the academic year, the Valleywood ARCH students have truly shone, showcasing their commitment to community engagement and personal growth. Our students have had the privilege of collaborating with several community partners, including Family Outreach, GVSU's STEM Ideas program, and the Kentwood Police and Fire Departments. These valuable partnerships have opened doors for hands-on activities and career exploration, providing our students with practical insights and inspiration.



Through these interactions, students have developed essential skills in character building and have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of community engagement. As a result, our ARCH community feels motivated to give back to the local community that has supported us so generously.

Looking ahead, our students are eagerly anticipating the start of a community service project, a hygiene drive, that will allow them to further contribute to the wellbeing of others. This initiative will involve collecting essential items for local organizations that serve individuals in need. We encourage our community members to join us in this cause, whether through donations or support, as we work together to uplift those in need. Our students are enthusiastic about continuing their journey of learning, service, and growth, embracing the many opportunities that the remainder of the year has to offer.

## KPS ADMINISTRATORS RECEIVE HONORS

Kentwood Public Schools administrators are committed to serving the students and families of Kentwood, and that commitment is being recognized. This school year, two members of the administration team have received prestigious honors for their work.

In October, Executive Director of Student Services Veronica Lake received the Role Model in Education Award by the local chapter of the NAACP. This award is given to an individual who is respected and admired for their work in education and who also possesses the qualities and values that consistently contribute to a positive culture of excellence.

Last month, Brookwood Elementary Principal Lorenzo Bradshaw was named as a Regional Principal of the Year by the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA). The organization recognizes those principals who make "outstanding contributions to their school communities as well as their commitment to colleagues within (the MEMSPA) association."

We congratulate both Lake and Bradshaw for receiving these honors and thank them for the work they do for the students and families in our district.



## GLENWOOD CELEBRATES HOLIDAY SPIRIT WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

At Glenwood, we are reflecting on our school community partners! This holiday season we were truly able to highlight the spirit of community collaboration. To fill a need for holiday support at Glenwood this year, our KSSN coordinator, Maddie Rhoades, teamed up with Lumbermen's to host a Santa Meet and Greet complete with a room full of toys for families to pick out! They came through for our families in a major way! There were enough gifts for each student to receive three gifts, with around 100 children benefiting.



Not only were there gifts, but the event also featured delicious desserts and photo opportunities with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. Besides the gifts, the Grinch made a memorable appearance, intriguing both kids and parents.

A big thank you goes out to Lumbermen's for providing the gifts, volunteers, and the Clauses! We also appreciate the Woodfield Community Center for hosting us in their space, Senior Neighbors for lending a few Elder Elves from around the world, and Providence CRC and Foundations Church for baking a plethora of sweet treats for the event! This holiday season, the spirit of community collaboration shone brightly at Glenwood, making it a memorable and joyful time for all involved.

## CROSSROADS CELEBRATES NAME CHANGE

On December 9th, Crossroads Student Council met with the Board of Education and presented their argument for changing our name to Crossroads High School and removing the term “Alternative”. At the Board Meeting Jonathan Medina spoke on behalf of the Crossroads students (pictured) and the Board unanimously agreed to adopt the name change.

Student Council member Emma Sohngren wanted to share her thoughts on the importance of the name change:

“On Monday, December 9th a group of the leadership students got the pleasure of attending the school board meeting. The

reason we attended was to ask to change the name of our school and take “alternative” out and just be “Crossroads High School.” The staff and leadership recognized that “alternative” was misleading, and a lot of students didn’t like to tell people what school they went to, because it was viewed as a school for bad kids or mentally challenged. Crossroads is different from other schools but in the best way. This school is a family and second home to a lot of our students. We are so grateful that the school board approved the name change! Now students don’t have to be embarrassed or ashamed and they can brag on this school all they want! So, thank you to the school board and thank you to Mrs. Large and Mr. Mathes for listening to and standing by the students. We appreciate you!”

– Emma Sohngren, 12th grade @ Crossroads High School



Crossroads has been at its current location since 2005. Over the break, Crossroads High School received a refresh with new paint in the hallways. The staff and students are ready to start the new year with a new name and a new look.

## PINEWOOD ARCH: LOOKING BACK...LOOKING AHEAD

Looking back on this school year, the ARCH Lights On event at the East Kentwood Freshman Campus truly exemplified the community spirit and student involvement that define our mission. Pinewood ARCH students had the opportunity to engage with local vendors—like Family Outreach, Kentwood Parks and Recreation, and Junior Achievement—uncovering valuable resources and opportunities that can significantly enhance their educational journeys. A favorite moment was the creative ‘candy salad’ activity, where students combined their favorite candies to symbolize their unique contributions to the community. This exercise beautifully showcased the diverse strengths each student brings, sparking conversations about individuality and collaboration.



Looking ahead, we are eagerly anticipating the launch of a collaborative Service-Learning Project with our fellow middle school ARCH programs—an initiative that promises to enrich our community ties in profound ways. Later this month, we’ll be hosting an engaging Cookies and Canvas family event! This fun-filled occasion aims to foster creativity and strengthen connections among our families and students alike, inviting everyone to unleash their artistic side.

As we move forward, our Pinewood ARCH Youth Advisory Board (YAB) members will play a vital role in enriching the ARCH experience, providing thoughtful feedback that echoes the diverse interests of our student body. Together, we are excited to seize the opportunities ahead, strengthen our community, and nurture the growth of every student!”



# KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## School Calendar 2024-25

- Aug 19 ..... \*First Day of School
- Aug 30 ..... No School
- Sep 2 ..... No School
- Sept 25..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
  
- Oct 10..... ½ Day K-12 / Conferences
- Oct 11 ..... No School
  
- Nov 1..... No School / PD for Staff
- Nov 27 - 29 .. No School / Thanksgiving Break
  
- Dec 20 ..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day (non-report)
- Dec 23 - Jan 3 ... Winter Break
  
- Jan 20 ..... No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day
  
- Feb 17 & 18 .... No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break
  
- Mar 5..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
- Apr 3..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day (non-report)
- Apr 4 - Apr 11.... No School for Students & Staff/ Spring Break
  
- May 23 ..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day (non-report)
- May 26 ..... No School / Memorial Day
- May 30..... 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	7:35 AM	2:19 PM	10:50 AM
Crossroads	7:34 AM	2:10 PM	10:40 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
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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	31	26	27	28	29	30	31	

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

OCTOBER							MARCH						
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NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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DECEMBER							MAY						
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
29	30	31					25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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