



## KIDS PROGRAM OFFERS UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

Excellent learning opportunities for KPS students are not confined to the school day. Learning also takes place after school hours, in our ARCH program, through participation in athletics or the arts, and in the very popular KIDS program where our dedicated and talented staff work hard to deliver innovative, engaging, and effective instruction to students.



The Kentwood Inner District Sports (KIDS) program was started in 2000, to deliver athletic opportunities to students outside of the school day. Over time, the program has evolved to include a variety of activities far beyond athletics. "The KIDS

program is our own rec department right here inside of Kentwood Public Schools," says East Kentwood High School Co-Athletic Director Dave Emeott. "The KIDS program is really about putting positive mentors into kids' lives and teaching them about all kinds of positive things."

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- Dave Emeott

Emeott explains that the expansion of the program beyond sports began when East Kentwood science teacher, Chad

VanHouten, proposed the idea of doing STEM learning camps in the summer a handful of years ago. Since then, the idea of creating classes through the KIDS program outside of sports has taken off. Now, in addition to having opportunities in football, basketball, soccer, and gymnastics, students can participate in a wide range of classes that include things like book clubs, music, cooking and baking, and learning to crochet.

Sixth grade Pinewood student, Se'Phyra, who has participated in numerous KIDS activities, including tennis,

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## OPERATING MILLAGE ON MAY 6 BALLOT

Important information for voters to know:

- **This is not a new tax.** It is a restoration of a previously authorized millage. that has been reduced due to constitutional requirements (Headlee rollback) and a cushion for future reductions.
- **This tax does NOT apply to a homeowner's primary residence.** It applies to non-homestead properties, including businesses, rental properties, and second homes.
- **The non-homestead millage is an important part of school funding in Michigan.** These funds are used in a variety of ways: classroom supplies and technology; teacher salaries and staffing; student programs and athletics; and transportation and building maintenance.

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basketball, speed and agility, swimming, and crochet, speaks highly of what the KIDS program offers KPS students. "I think it's amazing how (Kentwood) gives you so many choices of activities you could do — I'm so happy they give us these opportunities."

The classes in the KIDS program are normally run by KPS teachers, coaches, students, and student-athletes. The cost for families to have children participate in any series of classes is minimal. Most classes cost only \$10 for an entire series, with some exceptions, but the joy and learning students receive from their participation in the KIDS program is priceless.



*"I think it's amazing how (Kentwood) gives you so many choices of activities you could do — I'm so happy they give us these opportunities."*

- Se'Phyra (Sixth Grade Student)

"One of the things that's huge here in Kentwood Public Schools is the growth mindset," explains Emeott. "We're continually trying to teach a growth mindset and that we can learn anything, and we can always get better."



Each year, thousands of KPS students participate in the KIDS program. The available classes change throughout the year.

Families can learn more about opportunities in the KIDS program by visiting the website at: <https://www.kentwoodps.org/pub/stories/view/kids-program> and by scanning the QR code to watch a video.

Sixth grade student Se'Phyra strongly encourages her peers to explore the opportunities

through KIDS. "There's so much that you could be exploring at this moment, and maybe even if you don't end up liking it, to try will always be good — just to try to see what you like."



## CROSSROADS STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM NEW PARTNERSHIP

Crossroads is excited about our new partnership with Beverlin Manufacturing. They helped us to set up our 1st semester partnership with Adventure Point's leadership program and welcomed the welding students with open arms in the 2nd semester. Niki Long, HR Manager, came to Crossroads at the start of the 2nd Semester and met with the students to set expectations, discuss safety, and help to set the students up for success.

"The welding students have the great opportunity to do job shadowing at Beverlin manufacturing company and work alongside Beverlin workers. They are learning not just how the real workforce skills in welding are used but also the core values of

the company: safety, attitude, and quality of work. Our students are very excited to attend the floor and try different machinery on their own with the assistance of great worker-leaders there.

The human resource manager Niki Long ensures that students review their safety rules, from wearing safety glasses to following the jobs requirements and paying attention to every detail at different stations each time. Some of our students are hoping to learn enough to stay for at least a summer job as they see themselves fit in the great work environment. Beverlin offers good pay, great benefits and a family-like atmosphere which the students enjoy. Thank you, Beverlin, for this wonderful opportunity!



- Mrs Beslagic

"This has been such a great opportunity for both Crossroads and Beverlin. It has given the students the opportunity to train and learn skills that are of interest to them with people who actually use these skills on a daily basis and allows for our current team members the opportunity to mentor and advise those that will be coming up into the workforce soon. I have been pleasantly surprised by the response by both parties involved and hope that this is the start of a beautiful working relationship between the students at Crossroads and Beverlin. It has been a pleasure hosting these kids and watching them grow from the classroom training to the on the shop floor training."

-Niki Long, PHR  
Human Resource Manager, Beverlin Manufacturing

## WELCOME EVENT PLANNED FOR MAY 29 - ALL KPS FAMILIES INVITED TO ATTEND



### A Destination District

Construction of Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center is on schedule, with Kentwood Public Schools set to open its 11th elementary building in August 2025. As part of this process, elementary attendance zones have been updated. In February, families received placement letters for the 2025–26 school year.

To support a smooth start, KPS will host a district-wide Welcome Event on May 29. Students can meet staff and begin building connections with classmates and families:

- **Elementary schools:** 5:30–7:00 p.m.
- **Middle and high schools:** 6:00–7:30 p.m.

Families can also visit the Our Schools section at [kentwoodps.org](http://kentwoodps.org) to view welcome videos and access a Transition Toolkit for students changing schools.

We look forward to welcoming all students this fall—see you on May 29!

## STUDENTS CODE WITH INNOVATIVE APP CREATORS PROGRAM

At Pinewood Middle School, 8th Grade STEM students are exploring innovation through App Creators, a program from Project Lead the Way that introduces computer science, coding, and app development.

Students worked collaboratively to design and code their own mobile games, practicing math, writing, and problem-solving along the way. One group created Germ Fighters, where a white blood cell battles germs—complete with custom buttons, sounds, and visuals. Students also learned to use variables and if-then statements in their coding.

“It was fun,” one student shared. “The instructions were really detailed, and it made me want to learn more about coding.”

By blending creativity with technical skills, our students are gaining the tools to become tomorrow’s innovators. Stay tuned for more app creations from our future coders!



## CRESTWOOD ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL RECEIVES HONOR

Congratulations to Crestwood Middle School Assistant Principal and 1993 East Kentwood High School Graduate Damon Johnson for recently receiving an Outstanding Alumni of Kentwood Public Schools (OAKS) Award. Johnson received the award from the KPS Education Foundation. The OAKS award is given to KPS graduates who have shown outstanding accomplishments in their careers and professions and that have greatly enhanced a particular field of profession.

Johnson was a longtime teacher at Explorer Elementary before moving to the administrative team in KPS. His commitment to students and families and his drive to make sure each student feels welcomed and successful are just some of what make Johnson an outstanding educator.

We congratulate Mr. Johnson on this important honor and thank him for all that he gives to our district, our students, and our community.

## Operating Millage On May 6 Ballot *Continued from page 1*

Kentwood Public Schools is asking voters to consider a non-homestead operating millage on the upcoming May 6 ballot. This non-homestead operating millage proposal would allow the district to continue receiving its full revenue per-pupil foundation allowance established by the state.

Since Proposition A was approved by voters in 1994 changing how schools were funded, voters in the KPS district have approved millages in 1999, 2009, and 2019. Absentee ballots are currently available. The election takes place on May 6. For more information, please scan the QR code or visit our website at: <https://www.kentwoodps.org/ourdistrict/operating-millage-ballot-proposal-information/>.



## INNOVATIVE LEARNING AT BOWEN ARCH

At Bowen ARCH, we embrace Innovative Learning by weaving lessons in disguise into our curriculum through team challenges and social-emotional learning (SEL) activities.

Last month, we welcomed the Equest Center for Therapeutic Riding as part of our Counseling focus. Students had a hands-on visit with Flicka, a miniature horse, learning how equine interactions can boost confidence, physical skills, SEL development, and even reading!

Our fifth graders have been diving into Junior Achievement BizTown, building financial literacy, business, and employment skills. They're also mentoring younger students (grades 1-4) through interactive, peer-led activities.

To enrich our program further, we've launched Survivor-style Team Challenges. Students earn points weekly for engagement, respect, and responsibility. A recent challenge tested delayed gratification, with 38 students waiting 15 minutes to earn extra marshmallows—mirroring the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment in a fun, memorable way.

At Bowen ARCH, we're proud to nurture academic and personal growth through engaging, innovative experiences!



## SOUTHWOOD ARCH FOOD TRUCK ENTREPRENEURS

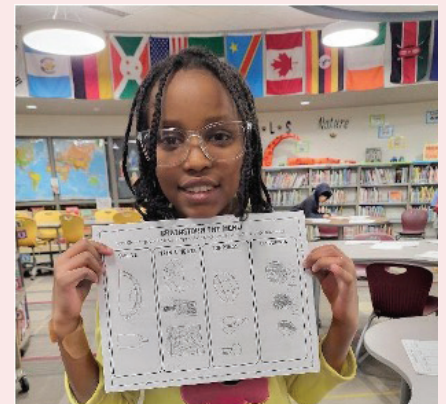
Southwood ARCH students have been exploring financial literacy, career readiness, and character education through a hands-on food truck project. Working solo or in pairs, students launched their own taco truck businesses — brainstorming names, designing logos, and crafting catchy slogans.

They created menus featuring three signature tacos, researched food costs, and calculated prices. Along the way, they tackled real-world challenges, estimated operating expenses, and practiced customer service by role-playing taking orders and calculating bills.

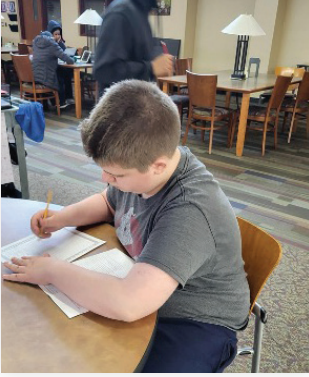
Students also applied math skills by designing interior layouts of their trucks, with older students building detailed 3D models featuring creative design elements.

Excitement is building for the upcoming Taco Truck Showcase, where students will present their trucks and menus to families and community members. Guests will receive \$5 in play money to “buy” tacos, and students will calculate earnings to evaluate their success.

It's been a fun, flavorful journey at Southwood ARCH—and we're excited to share it with you!



## BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH PEN PALS: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LEARNING ACROSS AGE GROUPS



To strengthen literacy and social-emotional learning (SEL), the EK and Southwood ARCH programs have launched a pen-pal exchange between elementary and high school students.

The activity helps both groups practice writing skills — like sentence structure, formatting, and spelling — while also building meaningful relationships. High schoolers were excited to receive handwritten letters and quickly bonded with their pen pals over shared interests like soccer and hairstyling. EK students eagerly responded to questions like, “What’s your favorite color?” and “Can you cook any good food?”

In a digital world, many teens found letter writing refreshingly personal. “I kind of forgot how to start a letter,” said an 11th grader, “but it was super fun to jump in and share.” ARCH leaders are encouraged by students’ enthusiasm and the insight it provides into their writing development.

The exchange also highlighted leadership and empathy. “I wanted them to know someone believes in them,” said a 9th grader, encouraging their pen pal to keep dreaming of becoming a musician. Many students echoed this supportive spirit, often sharing their own goals in return.

This pen-pal project is not only boosting writing and leadership skills—it’s also creating lasting, meaningful connections between students of all ages.

## SARAH KRESNAK NAMED REGIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Kentwood Public Schools and Discovery Elementary are celebrating a recent honor received by first grade teacher Sarah Kresnak. In late February, Kresnak was named as one of ten 2025-26 Regional Teachers of the Year for the state of Michigan. She, along with the other nine recipients, are now finalists for Michigan’s 2025-26 Teacher of the Year award. Kresnak is representing region 3 which includes 13 counties in West Michigan.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) organizes the Teacher of the Year program “to honor and elevate teacher voices.” The process begins with a nomination by a student, staff, or community member and then is followed up by a rigorous and competitive selection process. Regional Teachers of the Year serve on the Michigan Teacher Leadership Advisory Council for the upcoming school year. In this role, Kresnak will share issues important to students and teachers with MDE and will also provide input on state and department initiatives.



For those who know Mrs. Kresnak, it is easy to see that this honor is well-deserved. Her passion and care for her students is evident in all that she does. Her enthusiasm for her work and for ensuring student success is a driving force in her classroom each day. Her skills, knowledge, and talents as a teacher are deep. At the same time, she is a reflective learner, always looking for ways to continue to grow to meet the needs of students.

We congratulate Sarah Kresnak for this prestigious honor and offer a sincere thank you for all she has given, and continues to give, to serve her students, families, school, and our community.



## REGISTRATION CONTINUES FOR THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR

There is still time to register for the 2025-26 school year. All students, whether new to the district or returning for another school year, need to register for the upcoming year. Families may scan the QR code to start the online registration process or visit our website at [kentwoodps.org](http://kentwoodps.org) and select the “enrollment” tab in the upper left-hand corner of the page.

The district is asking all families to complete the registration process by May 16. This allows for ample time to complete important work around transportation needs, class placement, and staffing prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year.

## 3RD GRADE PEAKS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE ZOO DESIGN PROJECT

3rd grade PEAKS students recently spent an immersive week participating in John Ball Zoo's Zoo Lab. Students spent time seeking to answer the essential question: What is the purpose of a Zoo? Embedded in that exploration were ideas about habitats, conservation, and human impact. Students developed and practiced many cross-curricular skills as multiple science and engineering, language arts, and math standards are addressed.

Upon the completion of this experience at the zoo, students shared their experiences and their learning through the Zoo Exhibit Design Project. Students worked in teams of 4 or 5, following the Design Thinking process, to redesign an exhibit that meets the needs of their chosen animal, zookeepers, and visitors. Students shared their work with a group of judges who listened to their presentations, asked questions, and ultimately honored their hard work with some fun awards.



## STEPPING INTO HISTORY AT EXPLORER



In Mrs. LaDuke's 5th grade class at Explorer Elementary, students have been delving into the rising tensions in the American colonies and the key events that ultimately led to the American Revolution.

During a recent lesson, the students experienced firsthand some of the frustrations caused by taxation from a distant monarchy. Each student was given instructions on what items they needed to have on their desk, followed by a set amount of "money" (Skittles). The "King" then imposed taxes on them, collecting various amounts of Skittles. The students learned what it felt like to have their "money" taxed for both necessary items and unexpected expenses. They experienced the challenges of trying to pay the taxes or evade them, along with the consequences of doing so.

After the activity, the students engaged in a passionate discussion about how the experience mirrored the Stamp Act and the idea of 'taxation without representation.' They all agreed that, had the king needed money, they would have preferred having a

voice in the decision rather than simply being told how much they were required to pay. They later dove into the reasons the monarchy imposed certain taxes and rules, examining the role the colonists played in the establishment of those expectations.

## A "TRASHION" PROJECT TAKES SHAPE AT EAST KENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Did you know it takes 20 years for one plastic shopping bag to decompose?

Did you know it takes 450 years for a single-use water bottle to decompose?

The Sculpture and Ceramics studio at East Kentwood High School has been focusing on sustainability, recycling, reusing, and repurposing trash. 3D Art teacher Matt LaFleur's intro to sculpture and ceramics students underwent the Trashion Project, challenging each artist to create a unique piece of wearable art made entirely out of trash and recycled materials. From hats to purses, skirts and jewelry, students used plastic shopping bags, cardboard, plastic straws, and much, much more to create pieces made entirely out of things that were meant for landfill. In intercepting these materials, these artists gave new life to them, reusing plastic and other garbage in a way to highlight the potential of this trash before throwing it away.

Oh, and fisherman out there, were you aware it takes 600 years for fishing line to decompose? Now you know.



## DISTRICT IMPLEMENTS NEW MATH CURRICULUM

This year, Kentwood Public Schools has been implementing a new math curriculum for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Recently, the Kent ISD's School News Network stopped by Bowen Elementary to check out how this first year of implementation is going. Scan the QR code to read the story on the new math curriculum from School News Network.

School News Network is a valued partner with Kentwood Public Schools sharing stories and information about, not only our district, but all school districts in Kent County. We encourage you to follow School News Network to learn more about important issues, stories, and people in education in Kentwood and Kent County.



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**KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

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

No School For Students  
 Half Day

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

*Designed for kids in grades 1st - 5th grade, our camps are the perfect way to keep kids engaged during the summer break.*

REGISTER ONLINE

**WEEKLY SUMMER DAY CAMPS AT COVENANT PARK, 3724 SHAFFER AVE**

Week 1 - June 2-6: Game On Week	Week 6 - July 14-18: Lights, Camera, Action Week
Week 2 - June 9-13: Outdoor Explorers Week	Week 7 - July 21-25: Fairytale Fun Week
Week 3 - June 16-20: Messy Mad Science Week	Week 8 - July 28 - August 1: Around the World Week
Week 4 - June 23-27: Animal Adventures Week	Week 9 - August 4-8: Water Wonderland Week
Week 5 - July 7-11: Out of this World Space Week	Week 10 - August 11-15: Summer Olympics Week

Kentwood Parks and Recreation Department · 355 48th St. SE Kentwood, MI 49548 · 616.656.5270 · kentwood.us/parks