



## PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST: ENSURING EXCELLENCE AND ELEVATING EQUITY

**O**n a Wednesday evening in spring East Kentwood High School varsity football coach, Tyrone Spencer, is busy working with a group of football players at Falcon Stadium. The players are not high school students or members of the Falcon football team. Instead, they are energetic kindergarten through second grade students taking part in the district's KIDS program. The KIDS program offers a wide range of activities for students to participate in at all grade levels. Many activities center on sports, like football, ice skating, swimming, dance, and more, led by varsity coaches and others, but also include academic STEM/STEAM opportunities.

"Our goal is to provide first-class opportunities for our kids," comments Co-Athletic Director Dave Emeott, "like basketball camp, golf or tennis lessons, or an additional STEAM class in the summer. The KIDS program does just that, removing the financial barrier for those students who may, otherwise, not be able to have these experiences."

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Putting students first is at the heart of all things in Kentwood Public Schools. "At the core of our vision, mission, and values at Kentwood Public Schools are the students we serve," states Superintendent Kevin Polston. "As our students have demonstrated time and again, when afforded opportunities and necessary resources for success, they excel at the highest levels."

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"The KIDS Program IS the embodiment of our vision statement of Excellence and Equity in Education and extends classroom learning to teach skills critical for future success such as teamwork, goal setting, critical thinking, and creativity," Polston explains. "Our caring professionals curate these experiences to foster healthy childhood development in a safe and supportive environment accessible to each and every student in Kentwood Public Schools."

*We want our kids to be resilient and sports builds resilience inside of kids*

Emeott agrees with Polston, pointing out students receive far more from participating in the KPS KIDS program than the specific skills they are learning. "We want our kids to be resilient and sports builds resilience inside of kids," he says. Emeott adds that students who participate in learning through KIDS opportunities also gain "self-esteem, the feeling of accomplishment and learning they can do hard things."

A list of available activities through the KIDS program can be found on the district website under the "Athletics" tab on the front page. You can also access it by scanning the QR code.



Emeott points out that the students who take part in KIDS sporting activities are often working with coaches from East Kentwood High School, whom he

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refers to as “some of the very best coaches in the Midwest” which helps to create these “first class opportunities.” Polston agrees that KPS students deserve nothing less than the best.

“The students at Kentwood Public Schools are simply AMAZING!” Polston states. “What distinguishes KPS students are the experiences they have each and every day in diverse environments led and supported by exceptional professionals that lead to extraordinary outcomes. Our students are continually recognized for their accomplishments at the state and national levels for outcomes that outpace their peers. But what truly sets our students apart is the care and compassion they have for one another, our community, and others throughout the world. Our students are forged in a global environment to change the world around them, near and far, for the better!”



## CONGRATULATIONS LEGO TEAMS!

The 2024 Kentwood First Lego League Explore Festival, hosted by FRC teams 3875 Red Storm Robotics and 9566 Red Storm Rookies, celebrated the boundless creativity and innovation of young minds!

Last month, eighteen teams of kindergarten through 3rd grade students participated in this festival. Sixteen of the teams competing were Red Storm Robotics teams from nine of the KPS elementary schools. Throughout the festival, teams rotated among a variety of engaging activities. From navigating Hex Bug mazes, building in the LEGO free build session, participating in a LEGO stamping art project, to viewing robot demonstrations, participants explored a diverse range of endeavors. Teams were also given the opportunity to present their projects to attentive high school reviewers. The festival served as a platform for collaboration and learning at every step. Congratulations to all the teams at the competition!

## EK STUDENT KIMANI BRAME IS FIRST BLACK FEMALE EAGLE SCOUT

Congratulations to East Kentwood Sophomore Kimani Brame for becoming one of two first Black female Eagle Scouts in Michigan. Brame was honored in a ceremony last month that included recognition from U.S. Representative Hillary Scholten, as well as receiving a plaque from Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

EK AP U.S. History teacher KayLee Fredricks, who was also part of the recognition ceremony, says she knew Kimani was going to be a leader from her first day in class. “I saw this daily in her determination to not only accomplish her goals, but to far surpass them,” Frederick says, “never settling for the bare minimum, but trying to set a new standard all while encouraging others to do the same.”

Fredricks adds that the qualities that helped Kimani achieve this historic accomplishment as an Eagle Scout also help her to be a leader among her peers at EK. “Kimani uses her leadership and collaboration skills to push her fellow classmates to hold themselves to a higher standard,” Fredricks said. “She encourages them to come to study sessions, helps explain and review things they are struggling with, and is always trying to include others to make them feel welcomed.”



## A RECIPE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Brookwood ARCH

Brookwood ARCH is dedicated to nurturing a sense of belonging and value, essential for every student's success. Through restorative practices, we prioritize building strong relationships, recognizing that learning flourishes within supportive environments. By emphasizing empathy, accountability, and communication, we foster a tight-knit community within the ARCH program.

Offering leadership roles to all students is a powerful tool for empowerment and personal growth. Through these roles, students develop essential life skills and values like empathy and teamwork. By ensuring every student has the chance to lead, we promote inclusivity and celebrate the diverse talents within our after-school community.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) further reinforces our commitment to student success. Principal Lorenzo Bradshaw's support has been invaluable in creating a culture where students feel valued and motivated. Weekly SOAR drawings and unique initiatives like the Class Dojo auction provide fun ways to recognize student achievements, enhancing their sense of appreciation and recognition. Together, these efforts create a holistic approach to student success, guided by strong relationships, leadership opportunities, and meaningful recognition.



## “WE THE PEOPLE” TEAM RANKS 20TH IN NATION

The East Kentwood “We the People” team is celebrating results from the national competition last month in Washington, D.C. The EK team participated in an elite academic competition testing students’ constitutional knowledge against the top teams in the nation. Overall, three of EK’s six competing units ranked 15th or higher nationally in their content areas: Unit 5-Memphis Hartman, Annie Nadolski, Myonta Walker, and Bayan Zeqla ranked 11th in the nation for their knowledge of standards for cruel and unusual punishment under the 8th amendment and the impacts of technology on law enforcement under the 4th amendment; Unit 2-Robel Abebe, Adina Khun, Cristian Schneider, and Bradley Vilcans ranked 15th in the nation on their assessments of competing interpretations of the Constitutional Convention and the Northwest Ordinance; and Unit 3-Tony Pham, Paige Reynolds, and Kerim Suleman ranked 15th in the nation on their analysis of the impacts and issues emanating from the Election of 1800 and the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

We congratulate our team members, their coaches and volunteer coaches, for another outstanding season, continuing the tradition of excellence of the East Kentwood “We the People” team knowledge of history, philosophy, the constitution, politics, and current events! The EK team ended the competition ranked 20th in the nation and narrowly missed winning the Division A Championship, only 4 points behind the winning team.

## CRESTWOOD STUDENTS PRESENT SISTER ACT JR.

Crestwood Middle School recently showcased an impressive display of talent as students took to the stage to perform the musical, *Sister Act Jr.* Directed by Crestwood choir teacher Andrea Gay, the production not only entertained audiences, but also highlighted the significance of diverse opportunities for student involvement. While athletics and academic clubs often take the spotlight, the performing arts play an equally vital role in nurturing creativity and self-expression. Initiatives like musical theater offer avenues for students to explore their passions and talents beyond the confines of traditional academics.

The journey from learning parts to mastering performances was a testament to the dedication and hard work of every student involved. Countless hours of rehearsals and practice sessions honed their skills, culminating in a memorable final dress rehearsal where students had the chance to showcase their talents to their peers and the entire school community. This experience not only provided a platform for students to shine but also fostered teamwork, confidence, and a sense of achievement and cultivated invaluable life skills such as discipline, perseverance, and collaboration. As they took their bows on opening night, our young performers not only entertained, but also demonstrated the transformative power of the arts in education. Their performance was a moment of triumph, as students stepped into the limelight and shared their talents with an enthusiastic audience.



Beyond the applause and accolades, the production of *Sister Act Jr.* at Crestwood Middle School underscored the transformative power of the arts in education, providing a platform for students to express themselves, build confidence, and forge lasting friendships. As the curtains closed on another successful performance, the impact of this holistic approach to learning reverberated throughout the school, inspiring students to continue exploring their passions and embracing the magic of the stage.

## ARCH PUTS STUDENTS FIRST

East Kentwood High School offers a diverse range of extracurricular activities, including ARCH, which has become a cherished space for many students seeking belonging and support. For 10th grader Jessilyn Ash, ARCH has been instrumental in overcoming social anxiety and building confidence through connections with peers. Similarly, senior SaNia Harris emphasizes the unexpected friendships and mutual growth fostered within the ARCH community since her freshman year. Students like Jacarri Collins have found not only friendship but also personal growth and development, highlighting the vital role ARCH plays in fostering student success at East Kentwood High School.

Within ARCH, students not only receive academic support and enrichment activities but also opportunities for leadership and collaboration through the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). Senior Nina Santiago reflects on her three-year journey with ARCH, from initially joining for practical reasons to becoming deeply involved in shaping the community, particularly through initiatives like Monday Mindfulness Circles. "I joined ARCH because I needed a ride home after summer school," Nina admits. "Now, three years later, it's hard to imagine my life without it. Honestly, I don't know if I would be graduating this spring without ARCH."



## “GRANDPARENTS” ADD EXTRA SUPPORT FOR SCHOLARS’ SUCCESS

One program providing support to many elementary schools is the Senior Neighbors’ Foster Grandparents Program. Two years into the program Meadowlawn is already seeing how it makes a positive impact on scholars and the school community.

Walk into Kallie Johnson’s first grade classroom and you see Ms. Bev working with a group of students. Mrs. Johnson shared, “She not only supports their academic needs, but emotional needs as well, and has become such an important part of our classroom family. She pours so much love and care into our first graders, and they love getting to work and learning from her!” A first grader agreed, saying, “Ms. Bev is so nice and helpful. She always has a happy mood and I love that she helps our class.”

Or peek into Emma Urbanski’s classroom, and see Ms. Barbara hard at work supporting kindergartners. Miss Urbanski has appreciated her positive impact on their classroom environment and noted, “Our scholars always look forward to the days she comes in to support their learning. We are so thankful she has joined our class this year!” “Thanks for teaching me my letters and sounds and helping me with my reading!” a kindergartener expressed to Ms. Barbara.

The feeling is mutual from our foster grandparent volunteers. Beverly Brown, “Ms. Bev” commented, “I am determined to help the first graders reach their goals and be a light in their life. I enjoy helping them and they bring so much joy to my life. My experience with this program has been so fulfilling.”

We also want to thank Ms. Joann and Ms. Floretha for the support they have shown in additional Meadowlawn classrooms. We have the deepest appreciation for our grandparents and their commitment to provide additional care and guidance to support our scholars’ academic and social-emotional growth.



## CRESTWOOD ARCH MAKES LEARNING FUN!

One of the main priorities of the ARCH program is to show students that learning can be FUN! After spending all day in the classroom, many students struggle to find the drive to participate in additional educational activities after school. One of the ways the Crestwood ARCH staff members turn educational experiences into fun activities that excite students is through STEM challenges. These challenges provide students with a hands-on opportunity to utilize and improve their collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. STEM challenges tend to be more engaging to students because they can use their creativity to solve a real-world problem.

Throughout the school year, ARCH students at Crestwood have participated in multiple STEM challenges including building bridges, zoo exhibit design, marble mazes, prosthetic hands, and much more! During each of these activities, students are presented with a problem, which they work on as a team to solve.

With the rapid expansion of technology in our everyday lives, STEM-focused education is more important than ever. According to the Pew Research Center, STEM jobs have grown by 79% since 1990. STEM education increases innovative thinking, inspires creativity, and builds confidence. By providing these opportunities to students, we are setting them up for success long after they graduate!



## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AT ENDEAVOR

This year at Endeavor Elementary, Lauren Graham, one of our Multilingual Learner (ML) teachers, has started an ML Leadership Team of 4th and 5th grade students working to serve our community by educating our school about different cultures at KPS. Each month they focus on different holidays and traditions and visit classrooms to teach students and staff about the rich cultures evident at Endeavor and throughout KPS.

Recently, our KPS ML Program Director, Sanela Sprečić, came to speak to the ML Leadership Team. She talked about her experience as a refugee, fleeing Bosnia as a teenager, her perseverance to get a degree and continue to college as a multilingual learner herself, and her desire to give back to the ML community. The ML Leadership Team will continue to hear from community leaders to inspire them to pursue higher education, follow their dreams, and give back to others.



Ms. Graham is also a leader in our building within the TeachMichigan Fellowship program. This coming fall, Endeavor will host a community culture night funded by TeachMichigan. The celebration will include booths with catered food from local global restaurants as well as crafts, artifacts and music representing our students' cultures. In addition, books displaying our students' varied cultural traditions will be available for parents and students to take home, encouraging children to read and learn about their peers.

The Endeavor ML Leadership Team is empowered to use their voice and celebrate diverse perspectives and identities and will continue to foster an environment of inclusion and belonging.

## BEACH PARTY CELEBRATES STUDENT EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Students at Valleywood Middle School will be celebrating their hard work and dedication to education with a special event on Wednesday, May 29th that is sure to make waves. Throughout the 2023-24 school year, students have been diligently tackling skills, specifically tailored to their needs, on their i-Ready Personalized Path. Each student receives a unique lesson path following the completion of the i-Ready Diagnostic — a tool designed to gauge their progress in key subject areas. The results have been impressive, with many students showing significant growth and improvement in their skills.

The i-Ready diagnostic is given three times annually, and it is a valuable tool that provides teachers and students with key insights into their academic progress. By participating in the diagnostic, students are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to make informed decisions about their learning goals.

To recognize the students' energy and effort we will celebrate with a beach party rewarding them for their academic progress and growth. The party will feature outdoor games like limbo and volleyball, activities like face painting and karaoke, and beach swag like sunglasses and leis for all to enjoy. Students who have significant growth (called stretch growth on the platform), indicated by greater than average progress or beyond grade level proficiency will be treated to their choice of ice cream or popsicle from the Bumble Bee Ice Cream Cart. In addition, community business members, such as Chick-Fil-A and Celebration Cinemas, have graciously provided donations to amp up the rewards we will provide for students. Students will have the opportunity to relax, unwind, and celebrate their success with their peers.

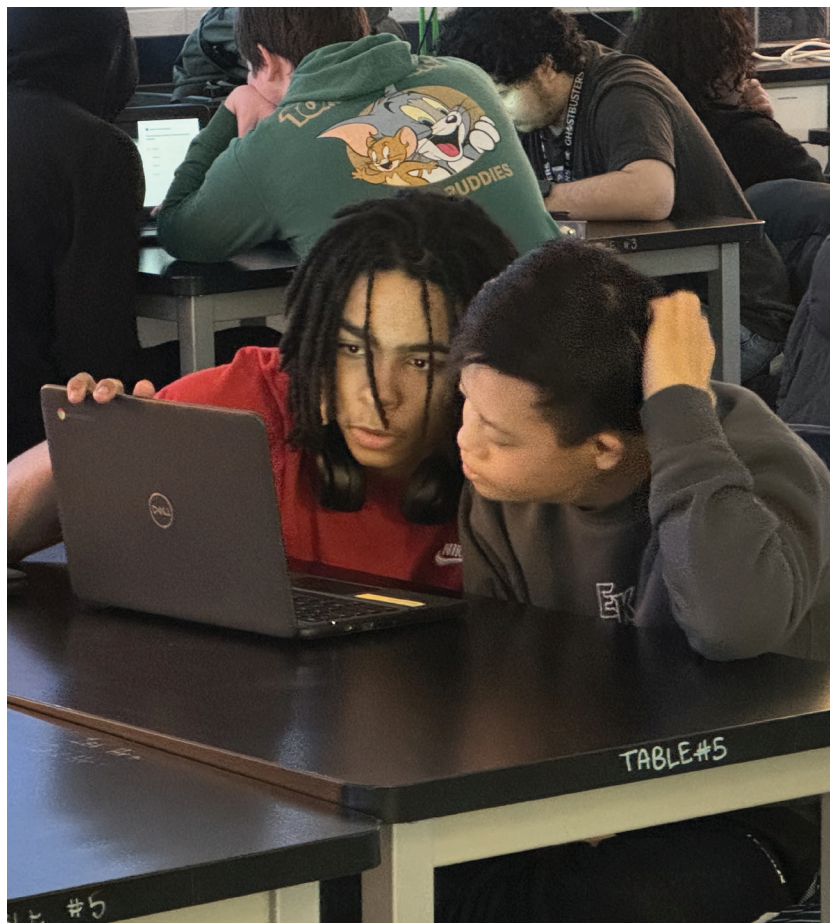


## PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST AT EKFC

At East Kentwood Freshman Campus, we are committed to providing experiences for all students to engage with their learning. All students, regardless of language barrier or ability, should be provided with a chance to attend classes where they are integrated with their peers and taught in inclusive environments. By integrating multilingual students, as well as students with disabilities, students are provided additional support in general education coursework with their peers so they can develop academic and social skills that help them belong to our learning community.

At EKFC, we have created co-taught courses for multilingual learners. Mrs. Arevalo, a Multilingual Learner (ML) teacher has provided language and instructional support for students alongside Mr. Pierson in US History. Students receive opportunities to learn US History in a general education setting with their peers as part of a Problem-Based Learning team. Mrs. Arevalo and Mr. Pierson, along with Mr. Barrett (biophysics), Mr. Miller (algebra), and Mr. Bennett (ELA) have formed a cross-curricular team to create a smaller learning community that focuses on the many ways in which we can use our learning to solve real world problems. Additionally, the team plays host to a number of our emerging multilingual learners who are growing in their English proficiency but still need some support to access the curriculum. The team-teaching environment, built on best practices for ML students, works very hard to provide meaningful experiences for all our students, especially our ML students.

Our school is also proud of our co-taught courses for students with exceptional needs. Mrs. Prielipp and Mrs. Oostindie have done a fantastic job this year of expanding access to biophysics, our on-level 9th grade course, to students with exceptional learning needs. The students have rallied around their peers to build an inclusive classroom where they may take different versions of the assessments, but they are accessing the same content and curriculum. All students gain so much experience from the class and the environment. There is so much we can learn from one another in an environment that truly values the experiences of all learners.





**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