



STRONG RELATIONSHIPS PROMOTE BELONGING

The day is just beginning in Mollie Walsh's fourth grade classroom at Explorer Elementary. Mrs. Walsh greets each student with a smile as they enter the classroom. After the class listens to morning announcements, Mrs. Walsh declares, "It's circle time."

Students quickly gather in a circle and focus their attention on Mrs. Walsh, who presents a prompt to promote sharing. Today Mrs. Walsh begins circle time by finishing the sentence "I feel happy at school when ..." Then, one by one, each child takes their turn to finish the sentence, both sharing their thoughts and listening to their peers.

Circle time is not unique to Mrs. Walsh's classroom. Circles are taking place in every classroom, at every grade level and in every building across the district. The circles provide students an opportunity to voice their thoughts, practice listening skills, and develop relationships.

Restorative Practices are designed to "strengthen relationships between individuals as well as develop social connections within communities."

The circles are a part of Restorative Practices, a new district-wide initiative. According to the International Institute for Restorative Practices, the system is designed to "strengthen relationships between individuals as well as develop social connections within communities."

When asked to reflect on the importance of Restorative

Practices, Superintendent Kevin Polston said, "School safety begins when students feel a sense of community. At KPS, Restorative Practices help our students and staff develop strong relationships while creating a positive and welcoming environment."

School safety begins when students feel a sense of community. At KPS, students and staff develop strong relationships while creating a positive environment.

Andy Tevlin, KPS Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Coordinator and another of the district's Restorative Practices leaders, puts it this way, "Restorative Practices are really about promoting belonging within the classroom and the building."

Although circle time is only one component of Restorative Practices, it doesn't take a lot of time, and provides multiple benefits. Sarah Weir, Student Services liaison notes, "It's an easy way to build community. It's a way to get everyone involved."

Explorer teacher Mollie Walsh agrees. In fact, she feels that establishing community leads to better student learning. "I think learning flows better after we come together as a family," Walsh explains. "As strong relationships are built, kids take risks, trust others, and anxiety goes down."

Students are already positively responding to this effort. When discussing circle time, Explorer fourth grade student,

Continued on page 2...

Continued from page 1

Chhetize observed, "I feel like I'm with a family and that we are all having fun and laughing." Chhetize's classmate, Ava, chimed in "It's kind of like a chance where we get to be ourselves and open up to our honest feelings," Chhetize added, "I think it's important to express how you feel, and we can learn more about each other."

When students feel they belong to a caring community and that their voice is valued, it leads to excellent outcomes, academically and emotionally.

Superintendent Polston commented, "Restorative Practices are also a means of achieving excellence and equity in the district. When students feel they belong to a caring community and that their voice is valued, it leads to excellent outcomes, academically and emotionally. At KPS, every student matters."



BUILDING: TRUST, RELATIONSHIPS AND TOWERS!

The beginning of the school year has been all about building relationships. Here at Crestwood, we want all students to have a feeling of belonging because they matter. Teachers filled the first few weeks with team-building activities that allowed students to build trust, while focusing on communication and



social skills developed through teamwork. Throughout the building students have practiced active listening and effective speaking when working together to accomplish a common goal.

In Mrs. Peterson's PE class, the students embarked on a scavenger hunt that required student collaboration to find items. Once located, students snapped a quick photo of the item and all the members of their team. Students could be seen cheering on teammates and giving high fives.



Students had to Limbo their way into Mr. McClanahan's class. Once inside, the team building did not stop. Students formed a group in front of the room as each student had the opportunity to show off their limbo skills.

How about stacking cups, easy right? Well.... Mrs. Yarnott's and Mrs. Boehm's students had to work together to build a cup tower using either a rubber band or string. That's called teamwork!! The staff and students at Crestwood truly ROCK as they build relationships and communication skills!!



CONGRATULATIONS TO EKHS TEACHER OLIVIA MILLER

Congratulations to East Kentwood High School teacher Olivia Miller for being named a 2023 National Education Association Global Learning Fellow. Miller is the only teacher in Michigan to receive this honor.

Miller joins teachers from across the nation for a year-long fellowship that will allow her to immerse herself in the study of global learning. This work culminates in a trip to South Africa in the summer of 2023.

To learn more about Miller, the NEA Global Learning Fellowship, and her work at EK, please read [this In the Spotlight article that highlights her and her accomplishments.](#)

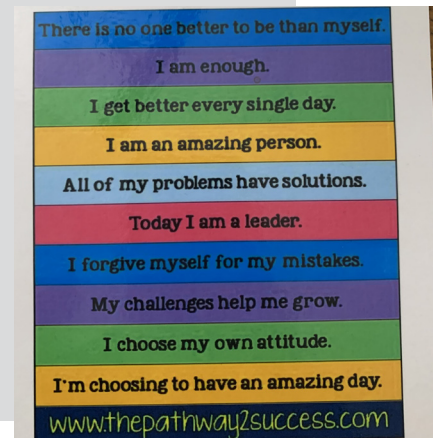
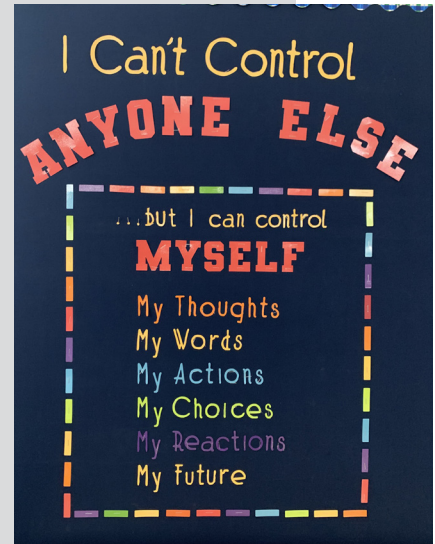
START THE DAY RIGHT - BY TIM CAMINITI - 5TH GRADE INSTRUCTOR

Fifth grade is off to a great start here at Meadowlawn! Part of that is due to beginning each morning with a focus on building each other up. In my classroom we start with our Capturing Kid's Hearts program of sharing good things. This is a great way to help the students focus on the positive things happening in their lives rather than the negative. Starting the day this way helps teachers learn to know the students and the students to know each other. This is a first step in developing community in our classrooms, which then fans out to the rest of the school.

Another step is reading affirmations chorally, individually, and in small groups. In my classroom, we have taken each affirmation separately, discussing why it is on the list and how it might enrich our lives. Sometimes, we read it all together and I then ask, "Is there an affirmation that we read today that you really needed?" This question helps students to not just read, but also to internalize these truths each day.

One day as we were lining up to go home, I noticed a student had the list of affirmations in her hand. I asked her, "Why are you taking that home?" My chief concern was that it was going to be destroyed or lost. I was surprised by her response, "I just want to take it home so that when I wake up, I can read it!" I decided to print copies for both home and for school. Our students are starving for affirmation and need to know that they are important...that they matter both at school and at home!

At Meadowlawn we are working at building up our students, and our relationships with them and one another. When our students realize they are safe and valued, they begin to take risks in their learning, which in turn grows them socially and academically.



Welcome to our first edition of the KPS Education Foundation Corner! Over the coming issues of the KPS Newsletter, we are excited to share with you the work and impact of the Foundation in our schools with photos, letters from grant recipients, and tips for how the community can become involved in our mission.

The Foundation was founded in 1986 as a community funded, volunteer-driven organization whose mission is to increase the value of our community's public education through:

- Educational Grants to Kentwood Public Schools Faculty
- Corporate and Memorial Scholarship Opportunities
- Partnering Business Giving with Classroom Needs

The Education Foundation is looking for individuals to fill several openings for its board.

If you are passionate about the education of our future citizens, have deep knowledge and connections within the Kentwood Community, and are willing to roll up your sleeves and work to further the Foundation's mission, we would like to talk to you.

Please visit www.kpsef.org and go to the "contact us" tab to send us a message with your name, your background and contact information, and we will follow up with you.

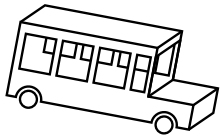
SOUTHWOOD CREATES A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

For the first three weeks of this school year, Southwood has intentionally established a welcoming community for students and staff in a variety of ways.

The staff started their first day back on August 17th with team-building initiatives and learning about integrating restorative circles into their school routines. Engaging in time to practice group circles as a staff proved valuable. The staff learned through positive interactions and supporting one another—an awesome example to our students and a reflection of the type of community we are trying to cultivate.

Abbey Schuen, Southwood's new first grade teacher, has initiated daily 'get to know you' circles with her students. The students are learning the value of sharing their voice as well as the importance of listening to others respectfully as they build relationships. Kadi Pagan, 5th grade, created a new social contract with her students. The contract remains in the front of the room and is referenced daily in their conversations.

Southwood's PBIS team runs a weekly awards program for classrooms that demonstrate our core S.T.A.R. values. The staff observes classrooms throughout the week and announce the winners on Friday. They are awarded a large trophy which they display in their room for the week. If a class accumulates a certain number of trophy awards throughout the year, they receive a grand prize.



VALLEYWOOD VALUES RELATIONSHIPS

Valleywood Middle School is SOARing! We value and practice Safety, Ownership, Achievement and Relationships on a daily basis. One of those four main goals for staff and students is to build trusting relationships which are valued both in and out of the classroom. The Valleywood community is doing this in a multitude of ways, including creating social contracts, utilizing restorative circles and developing purposeful, engaging activities, allowing for student ownership and creating connections.

Growing relationships takes time and effort and the Valleywood team is working hard to develop these relationships with each other and our students every day. By the end of the third week, each classroom has posted a social contract written by the students. Each contract is a living document that defines expectations for how we treat one another and creates a positive classroom climate.

Restorative circles are helping to develop trust and relationships inside the classroom. Students and staff participate in circles where everyone is encouraged to be open and honest with each other. Often a circle will revolve around a simple question or a reflection. Everyone in the circle is invited to share. Restorative circles are helping students practice respectful listening skills and self-expression, as well as building classroom relationships.

Teachers have begun the year developing team-building lessons and working to get to know each and every student that enters their classroom. Relationship building is never easy but making the effort shows our students that they are safe and valued. Valleywood staff and students will continue to SOAR this year!



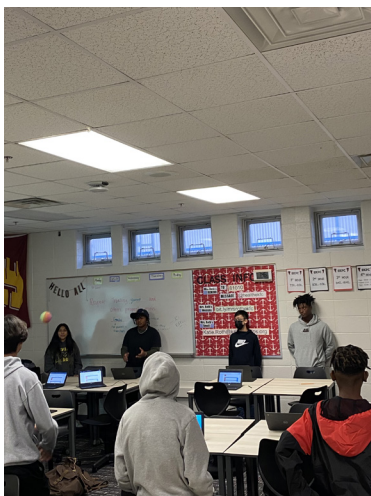


ENDEAVOR HOLDS BACK TO SCHOOL BASH!

Endeavor Elementary was thrilled to have our Back to School Bash again this August before the start of school. It was an amazing evening with hundreds of students and families at the Whitney Young Village. Building strong relationships and establishing community is the foundation of everything we do. Check out [this article from School News Network about the event!](#)

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, BUILDING P.R.I.D.E.

In the opening weeks of school, the students and staff of East Kentwood Freshman Campus have enjoyed establishing relationships. This summer, our staff trained in Restorative Practice, an evidence-based system shown to promote a positive school culture where students feel a strengthened sense of belonging. One of the ways Restorative Practice builds connections is with Opening Circles, where students have equal opportunities to share about themselves with their classmates. Students are prompted with questions which may range from “Tell us your favorite food” to “What’s your favorite memory of summer?” No matter the question, students grow familiar with their classmates and form lasting relationships within each classroom. Throughout the first three weeks, students have engaged in dozens of circles in various learning communities, offering many opportunities to create connections and form friendships with students and staff.



Over the first week of classes, our students also learned about how to show Falcon P.R.I.D.E. (Preparedness - Respect - Integrity - Dependability - Effort). Students participated in short lessons and activities in each of their classes to have fun, learn about expectations, and set up for success. The week concluded in a full school rally, where our 9th graders joined the students at EKHS for a celebration of being back together for what will be their BEST year ever!

Students who are meeting their academic and behavioral goals are rewarded with Falcon Fridays, an “open gym” providing them an opportunity to get their wiggles out during their lunch period. The first Falcon Friday was a huge success and the students commented how much fun it was to enjoy being active during their lunch!

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXCEL

Kentwood Public Schools is proud to announce that four of our East Kentwood High School students earned honors from the College Board’s National Recognition Program, helping them stand out in college admissions. Congratulations to: Chisom Okogbue, Ebise Tarekegn, Kyle Sanders, and Luisa Orozco for their achievements in school and on college board assessments.

Our students earned this recognition by excelling on their AP exams and in the classroom. Students are eligible to apply if they have a GPA of 3.5 or higher, have excelled on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, or earned a score of 3 or higher on two or more AP exams; and are African American or Black, Hispanic American or Latinx, Indigenous, and/or attend school in a rural area or small town. Students are invited to apply during their sophomore or junior years and receive awards at the beginning of the following school year



Left to right: Yara Barbosa (Ap Coordinator), Ebise Tarekegn, Kyle Sanders, Luisa Orozco, Omar Bakri (Principal)



RELATIONSHIPS RAISE SPIRITS

EKHS's first week concluded in a full school rally, where our students and staff celebrated being back to school by competing in relays and games to win the Spirit Belt. The goal is for students and staff in each grade to come together throughout the year to engage in friendly competition. Points are earned by attending sport and music events and participating in classroom activities. These events help students and staff build relationships and come together for what will be a great year!

TEAMWORK + AFFIRMATION = STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

The staff at Townline embraced the essence of keynote speaker, Baruti Kafele's "We Are One" theme song to capture the spirit of unity as we kicked the school year off on the gridiron of our EK fieldhouse. This is especially meaningful in a time of change in leadership and staff.

In the classroom, 4th and 5th grade teachers created fun yet challenging team-building activities to develop class relationships. New 4th grade teacher, Delona Davis used the Cre8 challenge which is a social studies community building activity. Each group receives eight random items and must work as a team to build something. In the process they discuss the importance of working as a team and what teamwork should look like, sound like, etc. so as they continue throughout the year, they understand how to work as a group.

Third grade teachers took to the timeless art of game boards as one of their many ways to build relationships across the grade-level. Even the ARCH coordinators brought the concepts of circles into this year's program utilizing the structural shape of the Gaga pit with the ball as their talking piece. Sidewalk chalk was taken to a whole new level in September with our upper elementary students spreading words and phrases of affirmation across the campus.

As a school, the Townline Tigers have started their year by learning how to activate their P.R.I.D.E. powers. With the implementation of daily Google Meet announcements, the school has been able to "virtually" enjoy TL family time that builds upon the PBIS reminders and reinforces proactive ways to help our students be successful in all areas of the building. One special addition to the school-wide announcements is a daily student affirmation that is spoken loudly and proudly by all students and staff each day



KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS School Calendar 2022-23

- Aug 22 *First Day of School
- Sep 2 No School
- Sep 5 No School
- Sep 21 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Sept 28..... Middle School Conferences- Evening (Full Day for Students)
- Sept 29..... Middle School Conferences- Half Day for 6-8 Students
- Sept 30..... Half Day for 6th-8th Student & Staff
- Oct 12 & 13.... High School Evening Conferences (Full Day School)
- Oct 14 Half Day for 9th-12th Students & Staff
- Oct 26 Elementary Evening Conferences
- Oct 27..... Half Day K-5 Students / Evening Conferences
- Oct 28 Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Oct 31 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Nov 23 Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Nov 24 & 25 ... No School - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 16 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Dec 19 - 30 Winter Break
- Jan 2 Winter Break
- Jan 16 No School - MLK Day / PD for Staff
- Feb 14 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Feb 20 & 21 Mid-Winter Break
- Mar 1..... Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Full Day of School
- Mar 2 Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Half Day 6-8 Students ONLY / Full Day High School
- Mar 3 Half Day 6-12 Student & Staff
- Mar 27 Elementary Evening Conferences / Full Day
- Mar 28 Half Day K-5 Students
- Mar 29..... Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Mar 30..... Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Mar 31 - Apr 7. Spring Break
- May 26 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- May 29 No School - Memorial Day
- Jun 2..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:55 PM	11:55 AM
Middle	8:15 AM	3:04 PM	11:20 AM
Freshman Campus	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
High School	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
Crossroads	7:37 AM	2:29 PM	10:45 AM

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

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4
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		26	27	28				

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

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

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

No School For Students
 Half Day *check left column to see what schools have 1/2 days

* Updated 8/15/22