



FALCONS SOAR TO NEW ACADEMIC HEIGHTS

Kentwood Public Schools is committed to excellence.

We are committed to fostering warm, supportive environments where authentic relationships are central to student success. Our schools feature state-of-the-art facilities that are safe and conducive to learning. Most importantly, we strive for academic excellence, offering innovative and rigorous learning opportunities to help all students achieve at high levels.

East Kentwood's success in expanding AP access is no accident

This past year, East Kentwood was recognized by the College Board with Silver level status on the 2024 AP School Honor Roll, a significant achievement based on both participation in AP classes and student performance on AP exams. The previous year, East Kentwood earned Bronze level status.

East Kentwood's success in expanding AP access is no accident. Assistant Principal Melissa Manning and Instructional Coach/AP Coordinator Molly Moschetti are among leaders at EK who have spearheaded efforts to increase student participation. They discovered through student focus groups that many students believe AP courses are only for the "smart" students or are unaware of AP options.

In response, they launched the AP Ambassador program, where current AP students share the benefits of AP

courses with their peers. "Our AP Ambassadors," Manning says, "are a very bright and diverse group of students who have worked hard to help shift the perception of what AP is and who can be successful in an AP course."

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AP AT EK — THE NUMBERS

Here are some of the growing numbers for the AP program.

2023-2024 School Year

- EK offered 23 AP courses, taught by 30 EK teachers.
- Students enrollment in AP courses increased from 732 in 2023 to 926 in 2024.
- EK students collectively took 1,735 AP exams, the most to date.

Graduating Class of 2024

- 51% took at least one AP exam during high school.
- 30% scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam.
- 15% took 5 or more AP exams during high school.

The acorn is an appropriate icon for Advanced Placement at Kentwood, symbolic of planting a small seed and the potential for growth, just as an acorn becomes a huge oak. Likewise, AP classes at Kentwood encourage student growth and prepare them for college and for life. Look for this symbol for additional stories about AP courses at Kentwood.

Falcons Soar to New Academic Heights

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They also organized an AP Night, where students and families learned about AP opportunities from both teachers and AP Ambassadors.

Beyond the opportunity to earn college credit, there are many benefits of taking AP courses. Moschetti says students who take on the challenge of an AP class realize the benefits. "They recognize in themselves that if something is difficult, it's really worth it sometimes."

She also shares that students have told her that they didn't know they could be successful at AP until they pushed themselves to try it. "We need to teach our kids that if they want something if they put their mind to it, work hard, seek out the resources...that they can do it. They can go get it in life."

Manning emphasizes the importance of removing barriers to AP access. Kentwood Public Schools

supports students by assisting with the cost of AP exams and holding exams on campus to accommodate those with transportation challenges.

There is a strong sense of well-deserved pride at East Kentwood for earning the College Board's Silver level recognition for progress and success in AP. "This achievement shows that our students are hardworking and dedicated to academic success," Manning says. "Our kids are brilliant."



MICHIGAN'S STATE SUPERINTENDENT VISITS EAST KENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Michigan's State Superintendent, Dr. Michael F. Rice, recently visited East Kentwood High School to get a firsthand look at the excellence in learning that our students experience every day. EK student leaders led Dr. Rice on a tour of the building that included coverage by Falcon News Network reporters, a presentation of a gift of art created by an EK student, and a firsthand look at some of the real world and rigorous learning opportunities at East Kentwood High School.

"It was great to mix it up with the diverse and impressive students of East Kentwood High School, student-artist Keziah Arrington, and Mr. Carl Warfield, his veritable menagerie, and his intrepid students," said State Superintendent Rice, following his visit.

To learn more, scan the QR code to watch FNN's report on Dr. Rice's visit.





A CONVERSATION WITH AP STUDENT AMBASSADORS AT EAST KENTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

The AP Ambassadors' program at East Kentwood High School has a definite impact by encouraging more students to participate in Advanced Placement classes. AP Ambassadors are students who have successfully taken AP courses at EK. Their role has helped the school to receive recognition from the College Board regarding AP success at EK. Kentwood School News recently sat down with two members of the AP Ambassadors team, Senior Mackenzie Kasiorek and Junior Kimani Brame, to learn about their role as ambassadors.

KSN: So, what does an AP Ambassador do? What is your role?

Kimani: AP Ambassadors are here to encourage students of East Kentwood to take AP classes. We know that our school is very diverse. It's about 70% people of color, but (the makeup of our) AP classes has not represented those 70% people of color. So, we're just trying to encourage students to participate and to help our APs become more diverse and get the stigma away from it, that they're too hard or they're only for certain people.

Mackenzie: We're trying to show people that anyone can take an AP class. We have so many options at EK for different classes. You can take whatever you're interested in, and we just want to challenge everybody and spread awareness.



(Photo: Senior Mackenzie Kasiorek (left); Junior Kimani Brame (right))

KSN: So what have you gained from being in AP classes? What might you say to someone else about what they would gain from being in an AP?

Mackenzie: I think the atmosphere is just really different because everyone wants to be there. Everyone signed up for this class knowing that they wanted to be there. So, I think, that in itself, is just a really valuable experience to be in a room with people who are here and ready to go and ready to learn.

Kimani: For me, taking AP history and AP English classes, my writing skills have really increased. I will be much more prepared for college. I also think taking an AP class will help you determine what you want to do in the future.

KSN: What does East Kentwood's efforts to bring AP classes to more students say about EK and Kentwood Public Schools?

Mackenzie: I feel like the culture at East Kentwood is just so welcoming and anyone can be successful.... Just give it your best. They're gonna be here to support you. There are so many opportunities with tutoring and study tables after school, and my experience is that every teacher is willing to help you with whatever you need. And so that's just been really great, especially now that I'm preparing for college.

Kimani: Kentwood is actually a school of choice for me...I choose to go here. There are so many options. The diversity and just the opportunities that we're able to get, even though it's such a big school, EK still is able to cater to so many different kinds of kids which is just amazing.



KPS TEACHER PRESENTS ON STATE PANEL

Kentwood Public Schools (KPS) was invited to participate in the Michigan Department of Education's annual Special Populations Conference in East Lansing due to its excellence in serving special populations. Endeavor Elementary was highlighted for being named a 2021 Title I Distinguished School. The award was based on multilingual learners' performance on the WIDA assessment and school accountability data. Glenwood and Discovery Elementary were also recognized for their success with multilingual learners.

Rita Pohlad, KPS Multilingual Learner (ML) Instructional Coach, represented the district on the panel, sharing insights on the co-teaching model for multilingual learners, now in its second year, and the strategies used to support KPS's diverse students.

COLLEGE BOARD RECOGNIZES EK AP STUDENTS



Several students from East Kentwood High School earned academic honors from the College Board of National Recognition Programs. To celebrate their outstanding accomplishments, a special breakfast was hosted in their honor. These honors recognize the dedication and academic excellence of our Black, Latino, and First Generation students, showcasing their hard work throughout high school. This achievement provides them with valuable opportunities to connect with colleges and scholarship programs seeking to recruit diverse and talented students.

The criteria for eligible students include:

Sophomores

- Have a GPA of 3.3 or higher
- Identify as Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, first-generation college student
- Are in the top 10% among PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT test takers in their state for their award program OR have received a 3+ score on at least 2 distinct AP Exams in 8th or 9th grade

Juniors

- Have a GPA of 3.3 or higher
- Identify as Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, or first-generation college student
- Are in the top 10% among PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT test takers in 11th grade in their state for their award program OR have received a 3+ score on at least 2 distinct AP Exams by the end of 10th grade

We are incredibly proud of these students for their commitment to their education and future success. Their achievements reflect not only their hard work but also the dedication of the teachers in Kentwood Public Schools who have been dedicated to educating these scholars. We're so proud of their achievements and excited to see all the incredible things they will continue to accomplish!



National African American Recognition Award

Alana Bailey
TerryL-Lynn Brooks
Glory Ebosele
Najma Hassan
Elijah Jones
Kaidyn Kimble
Joshua McMath
Evan Neubauer

First Generation Recognition Award

Daniela Alcantar-Nava
Sofia Cervantes-Herrera
Franklin Lape
Vy Le
Peter Luu
Nejra Maric
Evalyna Mei
Riley Mulligan
Tyler Pham
Mimi Pham
Owen Renwick

National Hispanic Recognition Award

Daniela Alcantar-Nava
Sofia Cervantes-Herrera
Keala Paramo
Madeline Vlasman

INNOVATIVE MINDS AT WORK IN STEM!

This month in STEM class at Endeavor, our students are innovating through a dynamic unit called "Build It!" Students across all grades are tackling hands-on projects that challenge them to think critically, work collaboratively, and design creatively.



In the upper elementary grades, students are designing model houses out of cardboard, facing unexpected design challenges from "challenge cards" that push their creativity to new heights. Our 4th graders are putting their technical skills to the test by designing and 3D-printing custom dice for classroom activities—combining innovation with practical application.

In the lower grades, students are mastering structural engineering as they build bridges to "cross the river." They are learning the fundamentals of balance, stability, and teamwork as they experiment with tower-building projects.

These experiences highlight and complement the inventive spirit of our students, sparking problem-solving, collaboration, and innovative thinking.

INNOVATIVE LEARNING AT ITS BEST: APP CREATORS IN ACTION!

In today's ever-changing world, innovation and technology are at the heart of problem-solving. In our STEM class at Crestwood, 7th grade students are diving into the exciting world of app creation, blending computer science with real-world challenges through our "App Creators" unit. This hands-on unit introduces students to computational thinking by developing mobile apps that address authentic issues.



Students are encouraged to choose a topic they're passionate about—whether it's health, the environment, emergency preparedness, education, or community service—and apply their knowledge to design solutions that make a difference. By focusing on real-world problems that span multiple disciplines, students even explore biomedical science concepts, deepening their understanding of the impact technology can have on different fields.

The course culminates with students bringing their app ideas to life. Popular projects include informational apps about favorite sports, creative soundboards, and fun guessing games—each representing a unique expression of their interests and skills.

This innovative approach not only introduces students to computer science but also demonstrates how technology can positively influence society. We are proud of the creativity, critical thinking, and passion our students have shown throughout this journey!

NEW PRINCIPAL TOURS CONSTRUCTION SITE AT THE NEW HAMILTON ELEMENTARY/ EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Ahnna Sisco is excited about her new role in Kentwood Public Schools. Sisco was recently named as principal for the new Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center, the district's 11th elementary school, now under construction and set to open in August 2025.

In mid-October, Sisco toured the construction site of the new school as she began to work with district leadership on the many important decisions that are being made to ensure a successful start and smooth transition for Hamilton students and families. For Sisco, that means keeping students front and center.

"I think the number one thing," Sisco says of her future students, "is that they (know) they belong here. That they are welcomed and that the entire building is for them."

Sisco comes to Hamilton after serving as Dean of Students at Endeavor Elementary and as a teacher in both Brookwood and Challenger Elementaries. This year, she is now working as an administrator at Discovery Elementary. She is there because, while decisions on attendance boundaries are still being finalized, many students from Discovery will be going to Hamilton because of their proximity to the new school.

This move allows Sisco to get to know her future students and families prior to them coming to the new school. "The opportunity of me coming to Discovery allows for me to really start to get to know the (future Hamilton) students and families, creating positive relationships so that they feel like they belong and to let them know that they are part of this process."

Sisco has also been attending a series of town hall meetings across the district as part of the larger elementary boundary redistricting process that is part of opening a new school. To learn more about Mrs. Sisco, please check out a video of her by scanning the QR code.



**A Destination
District**



VALLEYWOOD STUDENTS DIVE INTO STEM LEARNING

At Valleywood Middle School, our sixth graders are diving into the exciting world of STEM by mimicking real-world applications. In class, students are utilizing block programming to explore the technology behind smart cars currently in use.

Using the Arduino engineering platform, they are learning to replicate programming found in today's workforce. Students connect circuits on Arduino boards—an open-source electronics platform that combines hardware and programmable software.

The smart cars communicate with the Arduino boards via Bluetooth, allowing them to interpret computer inputs to activate motors or detect objects using ultrasonic sensors. This hands-on experience encourages students to envision the future of automated transportation. With an eye toward sustainability, they are also considering innovative engineering practices aimed at reducing fossil fuel use in vehicles.

For example, students are programming their smart cars to recognize commands such as, "If black color appears, then move forward." This engaging project not only enhances their technical skills but also inspires them to think critically about the future of engineering.



INNOVATIVE LEARNING IS IN FULL SWING AT THE FRESHMAN CAMPUS

As the school year progresses, we're excited to share how our 9th graders at East Kentwood Freshman Campus are engaging in dynamic, hands-on learning. Our approach ensures that education is not only rigorous but also relevant and inspiring.

This year, teachers are embracing creative methods that cater to diverse learning styles. From project-based learning that fosters collaboration and critical thinking to integrating technology that enhances lessons, our students are not just absorbing information—they're applying it in meaningful ways.

In Biophysics, students are preparing for the 4th annual Cardboard Force and Energy Fair. Teams build carnival games from recycled materials to explore energy movement and indicators. These projects combine learning with fun, culminating in a competition where students vie for a traveling trophy and bragging rights.

English students are developing scripts and recording short stories for a podcast project. Beyond improving writing skills, this task nurtures creativity, collaboration, research, and critical thinking. More recently, students have been diving into murder mystery stories, honing their deductive reasoning abilities.

Art 1 students have been exploring printmaking, crafting intricate designs on linoleum blocks. After carving their designs and applying ink, students transfer their prints onto pastel watercolors, producing stunning artwork that reflects their dedication and skill.



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						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5							1
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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27	28	29	30	31			23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER							MAY						
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
29	30	31					25	26	27	28	29	30	31

No School For Students

Half Day

STEM CLASSES SHINE AT MEADOWLAWN

In October, Meadowlawn Elementary STEM students explored building structures, focusing on how shapes affect design and function. Through digital tools and hands-on activities, they also learned about careers in architecture and engineering.

- **Fifth Grade:** Designed cars in Tinkercad, focusing on vehicle structure. Selected designs were 3D printed.
- **First & Second Grade:** Built silos to withstand tornado winds, testing which structure held up the longest.
- **Third & Fourth Grade:** Designed Skimmers, focusing on sail design to achieve maximum distance.
- **DK & Kindergarten:** Learned about communities, designed buildings, and used Beebots to navigate their cities.

Students gained valuable experience in collaboration and idea-sharing.

