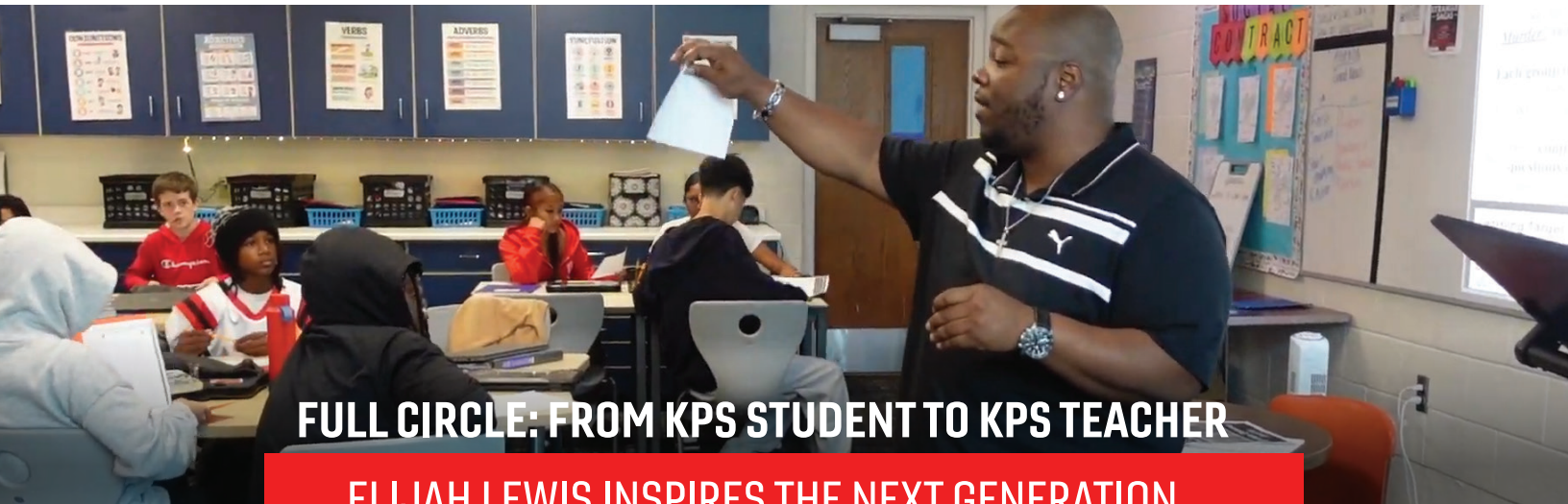




FULL CIRCLE: FROM KPS STUDENT TO KPS TEACHER

ELIJAH LEWIS INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION

When Elijah Lewis steps into his seventh and eighth grade English Language Arts classroom each morning at Valleywood Middle School, he sees a reflection of his own journey. A 2016 graduate of East Kentwood High School, Elijah is now in his second year of teaching, giving back to the same community and school district that shaped him.

"I would not be here without the support of Kentwood teachers," he said. "They worked with me differently. They didn't just send me out when I was having a hard day. They worked with me as a team, with my parents, and with me as a person. That made all the difference."

Elijah has strong roots at KPS. He began at Southwood Elementary, continued to Pinewood Middle School, and eventually graduated from East Kentwood High School. Along the way, he encountered teachers who saw his potential and invested in his growth, inspiring him to teach.

"I would not be here without the support of Kentwood teachers," he said. "They worked with me differently. They didn't just send me out when I was having a hard day. They worked with me as a team, with my parents, and with me as a person. That made all the difference."

"I remember watching my teachers in class and thinking, 'I could do that,'" he said. "The teachers I had showed patience, love, and purpose. I knew when I started teaching that I

wanted to bring that same energy back home."

Because of his time as both a student and now a teacher, Elijah realizes just how unique Kentwood is. "The diversity here is unmatched," he said. As a teacher, Elijah feels honored to guide students who are walking the same hallways. "It's an honor and a privilege to talk to students now who are growing up in the same community I did," he said. "The camaraderie here is still strong. It's a family. I'm just grateful to be part of that and to pass on the same lessons and patience that were given to me."



Continued on page 2...

COMMUNITY PARTNERS BRING BOOK FAIR TO EK

Incredible things happen here at Kentwood Public Schools thanks to the amazing connections we have in our community! On October 6th and 7th, EKHS and EKFC students were able to experience the magic of attending a book fair, thanks to a generous donation of over 8,000 books through a partnership with The Storehouse of Community Resources!

Continued on page 3...

Full Circle: From KPS Student to KPS Teacher — Elijah Lewis Inspires the Next Generation

Continued from page 1

For Elijah, teaching is more than a job. It's a calling. "I owe these kids and the teachers that had me," he said. "Every day, I try to make sure everything I do is intentional, out of love, and with purpose. I want my students to know that I've been there too, and I've got their back."

He brings that philosophy to life through connection and creativity in his classroom. "We mean business, but we also laugh and have fun," he said. "Students learn best when they're engaged when they see you taking the first step with them. I can't ask them to do something I'm not willing to do myself."

His approach has created a classroom culture that feels both rigorous and welcoming. "Our students here at Valleywood, and across Kentwood, are diverse,



dedicated, and full of potential," he said. "We have high standards, but we also have strong community support. When we come together for events, it's a celebration. That's what makes this district so special."

Despite the challenges that come with teaching, Elijah says he wouldn't trade it for anything. "I'm built for this job," he said with a smile. "This isn't busywork. It's meaningful work. I love it. Even when it's hard, I remind myself: this is what I'm meant to do."

When asked what he hopes his students will remember years from now, Elijah laughed. "They'll probably say, 'Mr. Lewis was crazy but in the best way,'" he said. "I hope they remember that we worked hard, we had fun, and that they always felt supported."



For Elijah, teaching is more than a job. It's a calling. "I owe these kids and the teachers that had me," he said. "Every day, I try to make sure everything I do is intentional, out of love, and with purpose. I want my students to know that I've been there too, and I've got their back."

Above all, Elijah sees his work as a tribute to those who came before him. "I dedicate my job to all of the teachers who invested in me," he said. "They poured so much into me, and now it's my turn to pour that same energy into my students. Every day, every lesson...I'm doing this for them." (For a video version of this story, please scan the QR code).



PINEWOOD STUDENTS EXPERIENCE FUTURE CAREERS IN STEM THROUGH COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Pinewood Middle School 6th graders recently received a powerful introduction to the future of science and technology, thanks to a community connection that brought classroom lessons to life. Our students were able to attend the Next Gen STEM Festival at Grand Rapids Community College a few weeks ago to experience a high-energy event dedicated to STEM learning and career exploration.

Our students were immediately immersed in interactive science through the dynamic displays run by the Mind Trekkers group. The Mind Trekkers is a nationally acclaimed STEM roadshow, run by Michigan Tech University students, bringing energetic, hands-on STEM festivals to communities around the country. These engaging educational activities transformed complex scientific principles into exciting, memorable experiences.

Students were also able to learn more about relevant careers available in STEM-related fields. By interacting with fun science displays, students moved beyond theoretical concepts to experience direct pathways into a possible career path. These activities encouraged students to explore the opportunities and possibilities that are available in STEM careers, showing them exactly where their current academic efforts can lead.

This amazing opportunity was made possible through the key sponsorships of several leading community partners including: The Gentex Corporation, Michigan Technological University, Grand Rapids Community College, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

We are so thankful for this amazing opportunity and so grateful that these wonderful community partners are helping to ensure our students receive the exposure and inspiration required to see themselves as leaders in Michigan's future technological workforce. Go Falcons!!

Community Partners Bring Book Fair to EK

Continued from page 1

Students arrived to discover that our Culinary Collaboration Center had been transformed as they were greeted by cutouts of childhood literary icons like Dog Man and Pete the Cat. Each student was able to select up to three books for free from a wide range of titles. And because no book fair is complete without fun school supplies, individual donors came together to provide students with a selection of items they could choose from, including stickers, scented pencils, character pens, and more. Students also received bookmarks crafted by Explorer Elementary's ARCH participants that shared messages of encouragement and belonging.

Families also were able to experience the wonder of the book fair, as well as shop at a Pop-Up Free Thrift Store brought to us through our partnership with In the Image, all while attending conferences.

The event was planned and staffed by Ashley Bartley, Elizabeth Measell, Meredith Hyde, and Kent School Services Network Community School Coordinators Julia Raap and Scott Troyer. Special thanks to Chef Ram's classes and NHS students for volunteering.



EK STUDENTS ATTEND MICHIGAN YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION SUMMIT

East Kentwood High School and East Kentwood Freshman Campus students recently represented Kentwood Public Schools at the 2025 Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Summit, joining peers from across the state to explore ways to build safer, more connected school communities.

KPS student representatives included Sin'quan Cheatham, Trinity Burch, Mariah Wright, Saige McKinney-Brown, Saturn Rodgers, Jaydin Ward, Jorden Hardiman, and Jaelyn Mattix-Ellis.

Hosted by the Michigan Office of School Safety, the summit featured opening and closing remarks from Col. James F. Grady II, Director of the Michigan State Police, as well as keynote presentations from Ryan Tillma, founder of Breaking Barriers United and California gubernatorial candidate, and Michigan-based magician and mental health advocate Anthony Grupido. Students took part in sessions on coping skills, suicide prevention, and student-led approaches to violence prevention.

Our EK and EKFC representatives did an outstanding job showcasing Kentwood's commitment to student empowerment, restorative practices, and proactive school safety.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON WITH THE ABC ORCHESTRA AT THE GRAND RAPIDS SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS POPS!

Mark your calendars for Friday, December 5, when our very own ABC Orchestra will perform in the lobby before the Grand Rapids Symphony's Christmas Pops concert! This incredible opportunity puts our talented student musicians center stage at one of West Michigan's most beloved holiday traditions.

Our orchestra members have been working hard fine-tuning their performance skills, collaborating as a team, and learning the ins and outs of event promotion and management. Now, they will have the privilege of sharing their music with a full house of concert-goers, spreading holiday cheer, and representing Kentwood with pride.

This is a ticketed event, and seats for the Christmas Pops concert quickly sell every year. Be sure to grab yours soon, and when you do, remember to use our special promo code **ABCGRS** or purchase by scanning the QR code or going to the link below. Twenty percent of all ticket proceeds from these sales will directly benefit the ABC Orchestra program, helping our students continue to learn, perform, and grow through music.



BOWEN ELEMENTARY KICKS OFF FALL WITH HIGH-ENERGY PBIS CELEBRATION

Bowen Elementary was bursting with school spirit to start the year as was apparent in September when students and staff came together for a spirited PBIS celebration. In true Homecoming fashion, the event took the form of a high-energy pep rally that had everyone cheering, laughing, and celebrating what it means to be part of the Bowen community.

Decked out in school colors, students received black and red pom poms to wave proudly throughout the event. The celebration featured a lineup of exciting “Minute to Win It” games, bringing out the competitive spirit in everyone. From keeping three balloons in the air to transforming into human mummies with rolls of toilet paper, students took on each challenge with enthusiasm and teamwork.



Adding to the electric atmosphere was DJ Nick Silver, who kept the crowd moving with hit songs and upbeat tracks. His music set the perfect tone as students emptied Kleenex boxes with lightning speed and raced against the clock in hilarious, hands-free challenges.

Not to be outdone, Bowen staff joined the fun, showing off their own game skills — shaking ping pong balls from tissue boxes strapped to their hips and attempting to move cookies from forehead to mouth without using their hands. The laughter and cheers echoed through the gym, showcasing the unity and joy that define the Bowen community.

The celebration was a spectacular reminder of the school’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) values — encouraging respect, responsibility, and making safe choices in fun and engaging ways. With unforgettable memories made and school pride on full display, the Bowen Homecoming Pep Rally was a true highlight of our strong community spirit.

EXPANDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AT MEADOWLAWN WITH A COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP

For the past three years, Meadowlawn Elementary School has partnered with Grand Valley State University’s (GVSU) educational foundation class. In this class, college students who are thinking about being teachers complete 20 hours in a classroom to observe teaching strategies and practice working with students.

This semester there are 12 GVSU students placed with Meadowlawn teachers. They are observing teaching strategies, working with students on classwork, and helping during lunch and recess. The goal is beneficial to all: teachers share their expertise and model best practices, college students are provided with hands-on learning experiences, and elementary students benefit from extra support during the school day and learn a little more about what college is like.

This community partnership started when Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, Meadowlawn’s Community School Coordinator, reached out to Dr. Terry Stockton, GVSU Professor and Course Coordinator, who she had worked with in the past. She wanted to know if GVSU would be interested in expanding their school sites and adding Meadowlawn. After talking through the details together, Meadowlawn was the first elementary school in Kentwood Public Schools to pilot the program.

GVSU students share valuable feedback with Ms. Vasquez after they have completed their classroom hours. Many have shared how wonderful their experience was at Meadowlawn. One remarked, “I just wanted to let you know that I have completed my hours! I was just wondering if it would be ok to still volunteer a couple more times? I think this is a great experience and I have really enjoyed it!” Another commented, “Thank you so much for making this possible for us all, I know I had a ton of fun and learned a lot for my schooling going forward.”



A special thank you to GVSU professors, GVSU students, and Meadowlawn teachers and staff for this successful community partnership. We are proud to be a community school where community connections make us stronger!

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS DRIVE STUDENT LEARNING AT CROSSROADS HIGH SCHOOL

At Crossroads High School, learning does not only take place in the classroom. It also takes place out in our community, with partners eager to be part of the educational experience of our students. One example of this takes place at LaFontaine Ford on Alpine.

Ten students from Crossroads High School spend their Wednesdays getting hands-on learning experiences at LaFontaine Ford on Alpine. This program is possible because of the Ford Sponsor our Students Initiative, our partnership with GRCC, and the team at LaFontaine. When approached with the opportunity to partner with Crossroads, Jordan Lawson, the service manager at LaFontaine immediately jumped on board and wanted to partner with our students. He knows the quality of the education that the students receive at GRCC and was thrilled with the level of accountability Crossroads provides for the students on site. Mr. Lawson said, "We have loved having the students and helping them get exposure to the automotive industry!"

The students are broken up into two groups. The first group will work in the Quick Service department and the second group will work in the main service department. At the semester break, they'll switch. This allows the students to get experience with a wide variety of maintenance and repair. By the end of the year, students will have experience with oil changes, tire rotations and general vehicle repairs.

LaFontaine is a family-owned automotive group that is always looking for people who are interested in starting a career in the automotive industry. Reach out to Jordan Lawson at jlawson@lafontaine.com for more information about their service department and how they're utilizing the Ford Sponsor Our Students program.



EAST KENTWOOD AP AMBASSADORS HOST ANNUAL AP NIGHT

East Kentwood High School's Advanced Placement (AP) Ambassadors are putting the finishing touches on preparations for one of their biggest events of the year—AP Night!

This year's event will take place on Wednesday, November 13, from 5:30–7:30 p.m. at East Kentwood High School. The open house is designed for students and families in grades 8–11 to explore the wide range of AP courses available at EK and learn how these classes can support college and career readiness.

Families are invited to stop by anytime during the two-hour window to meet AP teachers and student ambassadors, ask questions, and discover what makes the AP experience at EK so valuable. Food will be provided by EK's Culinary Arts students.

We encourage all interested students and families to attend and learn more about the many benefits of taking AP courses at East Kentwood!



EAST KENTWOOD STUDENTS HONORED AS ROTARY STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

East Kentwood High School seniors Samuel Hovermale and Nermina Imamovic have been named Rotary Students of the Month, recognized for their leadership, character, and service to others.

Samuel is a 4.0 student active in National Honor Society, Student Council, Athletic Leadership Council, Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble, and varsity baseball. An Eagle Scout candidate, he plans to study sports management and hopes to "train winners in life, on the field, and in their hearts."

Nermina, a student-athlete and aspiring attorney, has played soccer for over 10 years, completed an internship with Ferris State University and BAMF Health, and volunteers to support incoming students at East Kentwood. She is passionate about fairness and advocacy, saying, "Everyone deserves a fair trial and someone to stand beside them."

Both students exemplify Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self" and the spirit of excellence that defines Kentwood Public Schools.



ROTARY PARTNERSHIP INSPIRES STUDENT LEADERSHIP AT EKHS

Four East Kentwood High School seniors spent part of their summer growing as leaders thanks to the generosity of the Kentwood Rotary Club.

Through the Rotary's leadership training program, students Nermina Imamovic, Ifeatu Deborah Osiri, Mireille Banza Mwenyi, and SaMaree Williams joined peers from across Michigan for several days of immersive workshops and team-building activities. The experience focused on deepening their understanding of leadership and service, preparing them to bring those lessons back to their school and community.

Now back at EKHS, the group is already taking action. They hope to launch a Rotary Interact Club to expand service opportunities for their classmates and promote the organization's motto of "Service Above Self."

Kentwood Public Schools extends sincere appreciation to the Kentwood Rotary Club for investing in our students and helping build the next generation of community-minded leaders.



COMMUNITY IN ACTION: DISCOVERY ELEMENTARY AND KSSN MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

At Discovery Elementary, community connection is more than a value—it's a daily practice. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our Kent School Services Network (KSSN) Coordinator, Michelle Beals, Discovery continues to strengthen partnerships that support families and students beyond the classroom.

This fall, Michelle has worked closely with several local organizations—Calvin Family Assistance, Community Food Club, and St. Gianna No Cost Boutique—to ensure that our Discovery families have access to the resources they need.

Calvin Family Assistance continues to support families by providing access to emergency aid and long-term resources. The Community Food Club offers affordable, nutritious food through a welcoming, choice-based shopping experience that preserves dignity and promotes wellness. In addition, St. Gianna No Cost Boutique helps meet families' essential needs by offering free clothing and household items, allowing parents and caregivers to focus their energy where it matters most—their children.

With the help of KSSN, Discovery Elementary continues to provide our community with valuable resources that extend beyond academics. When families are supported, students thrive—socially, emotionally, and academically. By bringing together schools and community partners, Discovery Elementary fosters a network of care that uplifts the entire school community.

We're proud of the continued collaboration between Discovery, KSSN, and our community partners. Together, we're showing what's possible when schools and local organizations come together with one goal: ensuring every child and family has what they need to succeed.





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2025-26

Aug 25	*First Day of School
Aug 29	No School
Sep 1	No School
Sept 24.....	½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
Oct 9.....	½ Day K-12 / Conferences
Oct 10	No School
Nov 3.....	No School / PD for Staff
Nov 26 - 28 ..	No School / Thanksgiving Break
Dec 18	½ Day K-12/KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
Dec 19	½ Day K-12 KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
Dec 22 - Jan 2 ...	No School / Winter Break
Jan 19	No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day
Feb 16 & 17	No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break
Mar 4.....	½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
Apr 2.....	½ Day K-12/KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
Apr 3 - Apr 10....	No School / Spring Break
May 25	No School / Memorial Day
June 4.....	½ Day K-12 /KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
June 5.....	Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	4:05 PM	12:15 PM
Middle	8:19 AM	3:04 PM	11:35 AM
EKFC & EKHS	7:35 AM	2:20 PM	10:50 AM
Crossroads	7:34 AM	2:10 PM	10:40 AM

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

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
28	29	30											

OCTOBER							MARCH						
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NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	26	27	28	29	30		

DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
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							31	1	2	3	4	5	6

No School For Students

Half Day

No School For Students
 Half Day

Kentwood Board of Education
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The brochure features a young girl in a blue soccer uniform holding a blue and white ball. The text on the brochure includes 'CITY OF KENTWOOD PARKS & RECREATION', 'WINTER PROGRAM BROCHURE JANUARY 2026 - MARCH 2026', and categories like 'PEOPLE', 'PARKS', and 'PROGRAMS'. The tagline 'BETTER TOGETHER THROUGH PEOPLE PARKS & PROGRAMS' is at the bottom.

**LOOK FOR YOUR COPY OF OUR
WINTER PROGRAM BROCHURE**
COPIES SENT HOME WITH STUDENTS THIS MONTH!

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND:

- FLASHLIGHT YETI HUNT
- WINTER CONCERTS
- VALENTINE'S DASH 5K
- FREEZE FEST DISC GOLF TOURNAMENT
- SNOWSHOEING

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WINTER BROCHURE

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