



TOGETHER... BUILDING THE KPS LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Dear Kentwood Families, Community Members, and Staff,

Welcome to the 2025-26 school year! This past May I attended welcome events across our district. While at the new Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center, I spoke with a mother eager to enroll her child in the beautifully renovated school. She had once been a student at Hamilton, and now, a generation later, she wanted her child to experience learning in that same location in a transformed facility — at the district's 11th elementary school.

Kentwood Public Schools has a legacy of excellence built on sound strategic planning, community collaboration, and innovative instruction

That conversation reminded me that **Kentwood Public Schools** has a legacy of excellence built on sound strategic planning, community collaboration, and innovative instruction. 2025-26 marks year three of the KPS strategic plan and our focus is on three goal areas:

- **High expectations for academic success** through rigorous and relevant learning experiences that are innovative and thought-provoking.
- **Strong relationships that focus on educating and caring for the whole child** (mental, physical, and academic) in partnership with our families and community.
- **Equipping students for global success through recruiting and retaining world class educators** that create vibrant and safe learning environments.

As we start the new year, we have much to celebrate:

- Last year, enrollment increased by more than 200 students—the highest growth in Kent County and among the highest in Michigan, affirming that **Kentwood Public Schools is a Destination District**.
- East Kentwood's Advanced Placement program was nationally recognized with Silver level status on the 2024 AP School Honor Roll.
- Discovery Elementary's Sarah Kresnak was named a Regional Teacher of the Year and now serves on a statewide panel helping shape Michigan's educational future.
- Our dynamic KIDS program continues to expand, offering a wide variety of STEM learning, sports, and arts and crafts opportunities for our students. In 2024, more than 2400 students participated in the program. This year, we've almost reached that mark with several months still to go!
- Students from the East Kentwood Asian Student Union participated in a powerful 50th anniversary remembrance of the Fall of Saigon at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, sharing their voices, and the voices of their families, with the broader community.
- State championships in Esports, MITCA boys and girls team track, and individual titles in boys diving and boys pole vault highlighted another banner year of competition!

As we reflect on these accomplishments, we are energized to begin the 2025-26 school year. As school gets underway,

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Together... Building the KPS Legacy of Excellence

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please do not hesitate to contact your building principal or the administrative team if you have questions or concerns. We are here to serve and look forward to helping your student(s) get off to a great start.

Thank you for being part of the Kentwood Public Schools story. Whether you are a student or parent, a staff member or community supporter: **You belong at Kentwood Public Schools.**

Together, we are writing the next chapter in our legacy of excellence. Here's to a remarkable 2025–26 school year where strong communities and strong schools go hand in hand.

Go Falcons!

Sincerely,



Kevin Polston
Superintendent
Kentwood Public Schools



CALLING ALL KPS ALUMNI

Kentwood Public Schools is excited to introduce Kentwood Alumni & Friends, a new way for graduates, staff, and community members to stay connected with the district and with one another.

This alumni community was created to celebrate the rich history of Kentwood Public Schools, share inspiring Falcon stories, and give members new ways to stay connected and involved in Kentwood. Whether you graduated decades ago, recently walked across the stage, or simply care about the success of our schools, you are part of the Kentwood story.

Through Kentwood Alumni & Friends, you can:

- Stay up to date on news and events happening in the district.
- Connect with Falcons across the country and around the world.
- Discover opportunities to support and engage with Kentwood Public Schools.
- Share your memories, accomplishments, and Kentwood experiences.

Scan the QR code or visit kpsalumni.nationbuilder.com/ to join Kentwood Alumni & Friends and stay connected to your Forever Falcon family!



KPS TEACHER RECEIVES HONOR IN LANSING

Discovery Elementary teacher, Sarah Kresnak, was in Lansing in mid-August to officially receive her award for being named one of 10 Regional Teachers of the Year for the state of Michigan.

Kresnak received the award at the state of Michigan's Board of Education Meeting from State Superintendent, Dr. Michael F. Rice, and current State Board of Education President, Pamela Pugh. Discovery Elementary Principal, Blair Feldkamp, was also on hand for the event, representing his staff who share in this accomplishment. In addition, Kresnak was joined by her family and many colleagues from KPS who traveled to Lansing to celebrate with her.



The Regional Teacher of the Year honor is a prestigious honor recognizing top educators in the state each year. As part of this role, Kresnak will serve on a panel this year with other recipients offering input to help positively shape the future of education in Michigan.

KPS LEADERSHIP TEAM WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The new school year brings changes to the Kentwood Public Schools Leadership Team. This includes familiar faces moving into new roles in the district, as well as welcoming new members to the KPS team.

KPS is happy to share that Erin Anderson will be the new principal at the East Kentwood Freshman Campus. Ms. Anderson previously served as the assistant principal at the school. Joining her will be Mulonge Kalumbula as the assistant principal at the Freshman Campus.

Dr. Brian Gamm is joining Kentwood as the new principal at Townline Elementary. Likewise, Sarah O'Connell joins KPS as the new principal at Glenwood Elementary. And, at East Kentwood High School, Chad Nielsen will serve as a new assistant principal.

In addition, Sheree Harmon is serving as the Interim Director of Special Education. Tyler Betterly is moving into the position of Special Education Supervisor. Veola McFerrin is joining the district, also to serve as a Special Education Supervisor.

Finally, Bill McSween is now the Director of Facilities at KPS. Zsanara Jones is now serving as the Dean of Students for Early Childhood. Kimberly Addis is the new Student Services Supervisor.

We are excited to have these individuals moving into these roles for the upcoming year to continue to ensure Excellence and Equity in Education for the students of Kentwood Public Schools.



THE OPENING OF HAMILTON HIGHLIGHTS INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

The new Hamilton Elementary and Early Childhood Center is now open and serving students as the district's 11th elementary school. This marks the culmination of the partnership between the district, families, staff, and community members to reimagine the building, transforming it to showcase our \$20 million investment in neighborhood education.

Hamilton, which previously served as an elementary school prior to its closing in the late 2000's due to the national economic downturn of that time, has undergone an extensive renovation and expansion project as part of the 2021 bond passage. This includes the addition of a new early childhood center to offer another location for quality early childhood learning for families in our district.

New Hamilton principal, Ahnna Sisco, is excited as she looks ahead to the year.

"I am so incredibly thankful to be a part of such an amazing investment in our community," Sisco said. "After so much planning and preparation, it was so fulfilling to see everyone's smiling faces on the first day of school! I'm looking forward to the possibilities that lie ahead for this year at Hamilton."

Along with the opening of Hamilton, the district undertook a comprehensive revision of its elementary attendance boundaries. This was needed to create a population of students for the new school. It was also an opportunity to receive input from families on what they wanted school boundaries to look like in KPS.

"The decisions around revising elementary school boundaries were the result of three years of careful work, including three rounds of surveys, focus groups, and town halls," explained Executive Director of Strategy and Innovation Sunil Joy. "We wanted to ensure families had multiple opportunities to share their voice and be fully informed every step of the way."



Joy also was appreciative of the support offered by families throughout the process of changing school boundaries, acknowledging that changing a child's elementary school is not something to be taken lightly.

"We recognize that changes to school boundaries are deeply personal for families," said Joy. "Our goal throughout this process was to approach the work with transparency, empathy, and open communication."



KPS IS THE DESTINATION FOR SUMMER LEARNING

While the school year ended in late May, the summer months offered up a wide variety of learning opportunities for the students of Kentwood Public Schools. This included East Kentwood High School's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Squad offering a variety of engaging summer STEAM camps for students in Kindergarten through sixth grades. East Kentwood teachers led the camps with EK students playing a large role in teaching the younger participants. In partnership with Corewell Health and Bosch, the camps were, once again, well-attended by students who enjoyed these dynamic learning experiences.

"As our STEAM camps continue to grow and diversify in course offerings, I love that we have maintained the core mission of blending curiosity with fun!" said Chad VanHouten, East Kentwood AP teacher and organizer of the STEAM camps and annual EK STEAM fair. VanHouten notes that this year his team was able to offer more classes and welcomed more students than ever before.

Some highlights from this year's camps include:

Energy in Motion: Students tested forces, explored molecular energy in liquids, and launched soda geysers across the parking lot — combining science with plenty of excitement.

Paleontology: Campers hunted for dino eggs, created fossils, and excavated rock samples, taking home treasures and dinosaur facts to share.

3D Printing & Stop-Motion: Participants coded, designed, and 3D-printed projects like obstacle courses and sports fields, programmed sphero bots, and produced their own animated shorts.

Anatomy: Students measured vitals, built model lungs, and examined real specimens from EK's high school anatomy classes—sparking interest in medical careers.

3-D Art: The art studio buzzed with clay work, sculpture, murals, and spray-painted creations, culminating in a parent showcase of campers' 3D projects.

Aviation (with GVSU): Young aviators built and launched rockets, tested paper airplanes for distance and accuracy, and constructed a large model aircraft while learning about thrust, lift, and drag.

Wild World of Botany: From seed germination contests to plant anatomy labs and butterfly habitats, campers discovered the science (and beauty) of plants.

Animal Camp: Snakes, tortoises, tropical birds, and even hissing cockroaches gave students an up-close look at animal adaptations and habitats.



KPS LEGACY OF SERVICE CONTINUES WITH STUFF THE BUS CAMPAIGN

At Kentwood Public Schools, serving our community is at the heart of what we do. On August 5th, our district proudly participated in the Heart of West Michigan United Way's annual Stuff the Bus campaign, an initiative focused on ensuring students have the essential school supplies they need to start the year prepared and confident.

This year's campaign was a true community effort, with donations collected from over 70 local businesses across West Michigan. Kentwood buses and drivers spent the morning traveling to those businesses to assist with the collection process, playing an important role in making sure the supplies made it to where they're needed. The donations filled three buses and a U-Haul truck.



We're grateful for our ongoing partnership with the Heart of West Michigan United Way, whose work continues to positively impact students and families across the region. A big thank you to the KPS Transportation Department, Director Laura Tanis, and our team of bus drivers for their help and coordination. We're proud to be part of a community that comes together to support students and help them succeed.

CREATIVITY IN 3-D

For the first time in the history of Summer STEAM Camps, students had the opportunity to participate in a 3-D art camp. Students were able to tap into their creative side to do a variety of art activities during this learning experience. They made bowls, designed sculptures with clay, made



large murals, and even got to spraypaint 3-D toy sculptures. At the end of camp, the students' art was displayed in the high school art showcase and parents were invited to view the newly created gallery.

"I could not believe the amount of projects they got done (in one) week," said one parent. "The showcase was so great. The kids were beaming

about their work!"

PROBLEM SOLVING SPARKS CURIOSITY AND CREATIVITY

The Summer STEAM Camp that focused on 3-D printing and stop-motion video was a big hit with students and parents, too. It gave students the opportunity to do some real world learning and application that included coding, designing, and 3-D printing.

During the camp, students built obstacle courses, designed sports fields like golf courses, and also programmed spherobots to navigate some of these newly designed adventures. Stop-motion videos were also designed and created throughout the week.

This led to students tackling real-world problems and coming up with solutions throughout their time in this camp. This was meaningful to parents, with one parent saying, "I feel this camp helped my student see and solve some real life problems. As an engineer myself, I loved hearing her come home discussing all the times they had to "reprogram" something because it didn't work the way they wanted the first time. The sense of accomplishment she had when they were finally successful was awesome! Keep this up!"



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT LEARNING AT KPS LOCATION

The Adult Education department at the Kent Intermediate School District (KISD) is offering a couple of great opportunities for adult learning right here in Kentwood.

The first is for adults interested in the General Education Development (GED) program. This program helps adult learners earn their high school equivalency certificate. The Kent ISD offers those 18 and older a chance to prepare for the GED through in-person classes.

The second opportunity is for adults interested in learning English when it is not their native language. The Kent ISD class offers beginning to advanced students the communication skills needed for work, at home, and in day-to-day activities.

Both classes will take place on Monday through Wednesday, from 5:15 p.m. - 8:45 p.m., at Crossroads High School.

To learn more about the offerings and to register, please visit adulted.kentisd.org online or scan the QR code for registration.



Adult Education

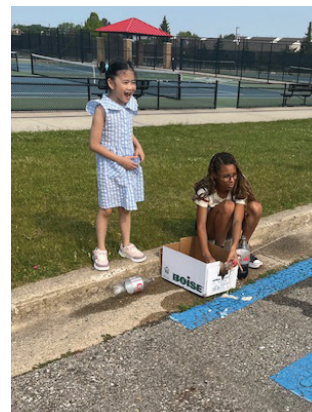
Kent ISD



MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU

Fueling students' passion for science was a big goal of the Summer STEAM Camp - Energy in Motion. Students in this class did a variety of hands-on work and science learning this summer, including testing forces, working with molecular energy in different liquids, and watching Mentos make different types of 2-liter pop bottles fizz and launch across the parking lot!

A parent in the group not only complimented the science learning her child was experiencing, but she was also impressed with the East Kentwood High School student leaders who worked with the younger students each day. "The student leaders are always so great with the students," she said. "I'm not sure if my child is coming back for the science or for their leader! Either way, they are always ready at the door first thing and reminding me we cannot be late."



READY FOR TAKEOFF!

Rockets and planes were flying all week as Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and their student teachers taught Aviation Camp! Students made rockets, learned about forces like thrust, lift and drag, had paper airplane contests, and made a huge wooden model aircraft during the week. Everyone loved having the GVSU student teachers each teach a different



lesson each day. Combining the GVSU teachers with our own Ed Rising EK student leaders allowed us to watch the next generation of teachers "practice their craft." We love partnering with the GVSU college of engineering and can't wait to see what camp they cook up next summer!

WILD ABOUT ANIMALS

Mr. Warfield's Animal Camp is a favorite each year and this summer was no exception. This summer's experience included snake adventures, feeding tortoises, talking to Armando, the green-winged macaw, as well as getting up close to other reptiles and aquatic life.

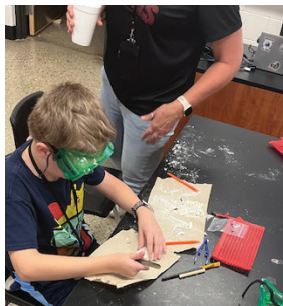
This class inspired one parent to comment, "You all do such a wonderful job of exciting kids about summer learning. My kids just cannot imagine not coming to camp. They wake up looking at the clock and counting down the minutes. Thank you!"



DIGGING IN FOR SUMMER LEARNING

Students at this year's paleontology Summer STEAM Camp were definitely digging their learning experience! It was definitely a hit for the dinosaur enthusiasts in the crowd!

During this experience, participants went on a dino egg hunt. They also worked on making their own fossils. Student work also included getting to use paleontology tools to dig through hardened rock to find the treasures inside. Said one student participant, "I LOVE digging for fossils. It's like hunting for buried treasure!"



Students went home looking like paleontologists each day, covered in dust, but with smiles on their faces and plenty of treasures and stories to take with them.



ANATOMY CAMP COMES ALIVE

Learning about body systems was front and center at the Summer STEAM Anatomy Camp. Students learned about body systems, checked their lungs and respiratory rates as well as blood pressure, pulse, and temperature. They also did multiple trials, made fake lungs with bags and straws, and, as a culminating project, they had the opportunity to see actual organs with some of the remaining dissection projects from the high school anatomy classes. This work inspired one student participant to say, "Touching the inside of the cat was the COOLEST THING I have ever done! I know I am going to be a surgeon!"

BLOOMING WITH CURIOSITY

Students shared a love for all things green in the Wild World of Botany camp. They planted seeds for a germination contest, ran a plant lab with spinach to see which plant discs could perform photosynthesis the fastest, looked at plant



anatomy under the microscopes, and got to dig in and get all messy in the dirt! At the end of camp, students were able to take home some caterpillars and milkweed so they could continue the experience throughout the summer at home, waiting for butterflies to hatch at the end of summer.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Video production camp was a hit as it made its debut during the Summer STEAM Camps this year. This gave young students an opportunity to be introduced to the talented team at East Kentwood's Falcon News Network. In this camp students worked with video equipment, made storyboards, filmed short videos, and even got to try their hand at producing some final edits. We're looking forward to these young Falcons joining the FNN crew and EK Video Club in their futures!





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						
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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						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31	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
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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
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DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
28	29	30	31				24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							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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