



BOARD APPROVES BOND PROPOSAL FOR MAY BALLOT

At its January meeting, the Kentwood Public Schools Board of Education approved a bond proposal for district residents to consider on the May 2026 ballot. If approved by voters, the proposal would adjust the district's debt millage rate from 4.0 to 4.5 mills, a rate that is consistent with the district's millage level in 2011. If passed, Kentwood Public Schools would remain the second-lowest school district in Kent County for debt millages.

The bond proposal would generate \$125 million, with the primary project being the construction of a new Valleywood Middle School.

During town hall meetings, 95% of respondents support rebuilding Valleywood Middle School rather than renovating the current facility.

The decision to build a new middle school grew out of extensive input from families, students, staff, and community members during and following the elementary redistricting process. As part of this work, district leaders conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of middle school facilities, administered surveys, and hosted town hall meetings to gather feedback.

Key findings showed strong community support for focusing future planning on middle school, with 95% of survey respondents indicating it was an important topic for the district to consider. Additional findings identified

significant facility needs at Valleywood compared to the district's other middle schools, and highlighted challenges with renovating the existing Valleywood building. During town hall meetings, 95% of respondents supported reimagining Valleywood Middle School rather than renovating the current facility.

The KPS Board of Education unanimously approved placing the bond proposal on the May ballot. "We are pleased that district leaders have been very intentional in the process leading up to tonight's Board decision," said Board of

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EKHS WE THE PEOPLE TEAM WINS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP, ADVANCES TO NATIONALS

Eighteen seniors from East Kentwood High School are celebrating another major academic achievement after earning State Champion honors at the We the People Michigan State Finals, held at the Michigan State University College of Law last month.

This victory marks EKHS's third state championship in the past four years and the 17th overall, continuing the school's legacy of excellence in the We the People program. With the win, the team advances to the National Finals in Washington, D.C. this spring, where they will compete against 47 top teams from across the country. It will be EKHS's fifth National Finals appearance in the past six years.

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Board Approves Bond Proposal for May Ballot

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Education President Mimi Madden. "Gathering input from our community members, which included families, students, and staff, has been essential, and we are grateful to everyone who shared thoughtful input and feedback over the past several months."

We are grateful to those who provided thoughtful feedback over the past several months.

In addition to a new middle school, the bond proposal includes continued safety improvements across district buildings, upgrades to elementary playgrounds to improve safety and ADA accessibility, fine arts improvements at East Kentwood High School, and construction of a smaller, district-wide auditorium to better support elementary and middle school performances. The proposal also supports expanded career and technical education opportunities, including additional real-world and STEM learning experiences.

More information about the bond proposal will be shared in the coming weeks at kentwoodps.org and elsewhere.

Election Day is May 5, 2026. Absentee ballots will be available beginning in mid-March.

CULTURE MEETS CREATIVITY AT BOWEN ARCH

In December, our school embraced innovative learning by combining cultural studies with hands-on STEM and design thinking. Students explored holidays around the world, researching traditions, symbols, and architecture from different countries. They then applied this learning by designing and building gingerbread houses that represented the cultural elements they studied. Through this festive project, students demonstrated a deeper understanding of global cultures and proudly showcased their learning in a creative, student-centered way.



PINEWOOD ARCH EMPOWERS STUDENTS THROUGH SERVICE AND CHOICE



Pinewood ARCH has been intentionally focusing on increasing student engagement, learning, and student voice. During the month of December, students participated in a variety of community service projects designed to support different areas of our local community. Students created holiday cards for seniors at Care Resources in Grand Rapids, made dog toys for local animal shelters, and decorated bags for Kids Food Basket. Our students truly enjoyed these projects and were eager to give back and help those in need.

In addition to community service, we have continued to emphasize student voice as a way to create more engaging and meaningful programming. Each month, our Youth Advisory Board (YAB) meets to reflect on past activities, discuss what went well and what could be improved, and help plan lessons aligned with upcoming monthly themes. In December, students played a key role in planning two physical activity groups for our fitness trend theme. These student-led ideas resulted in the creation of a Zumba/Dance Club and a Cardio Crusher Club, both of which have seen strong participation.

Overall, we have observed a noticeable increase in engagement among our ARCH students.

EKHS We the People Team Wins State Championship, Advances to Nationals

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The State Finals are a demanding academic competition judged by college professors, attorneys, and civic leaders, who assess students' understanding of history, philosophy, the U.S. Constitution, case law, and current events.

Team 39 delivered a standout performance, recording a program-record 310 hours of practice outside of school, earning 95% of all available points, and achieving the highest team score in program history. In addition, four units earned state championships in their respective content areas: Unit 1: Benjamin Huffine, Edwin Lopez-Garcia, Daniel Phan; Unit 3: Kian Bakri, Trinity Burch, Ahmed Elkhwad; Unit 4: Hawathiya Malual, Natalie McGuire, Charlene Otu-Konadu; and Unit 6: Soniya Bhattarai, Maribella Grzesiak, Adelaida Pablo Pablo.

Congratulations to these students and their coaches as they prepare to represent Michigan on the national stage!



EXPLORER ARCH SPARKS CURIOSITY WITH HANDS-ON LEARNING

Explorer ARCH is buzzing with innovative learning! Students are diving into hands-on STEM experiences—like our popular slime-making activity—where they explore science concepts such as mixing, measuring, and chemical reactions in a fun and exciting way. Alongside creative projects, students engage in collaborative challenges and targeted academic support that strengthen key skills and boost confidence. By blending curiosity-driven activities with meaningful instruction, Explorer Elementary ARCH inspires students to think critically, problem-solve, and develop a lasting love for learning beyond the school day.



FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: STUDENTS DESIGN THEIR OWN SALON AT CROSSROADS

Students at Crossroads High School have been hard at work this semester participating in Shani, our Workforce Cosmetology program, where they took on the exciting challenge of designing their very own salon. Students selected the name Shani's Salon as a tribute to their mentor, Ms. Hamilton, owner of Shani Beauty, whose guidance and expertise inspired their vision. As part of this comprehensive project, students developed a full business concept, including a salon name, mission, and target audience, then brought their ideas to life through branding, interior design, and service menus. All services planned and practiced were limited to non licensed, school appropriate techniques, ensuring students gained hands-on experience while staying within state licensing guidelines.



They created pricing structures, startup budgets, marketing plans, staffing models, and customer experience strategies, mirroring the real world process of launching a small business. To support experiential learning, a mini salon was set up in the classroom, complete with a salon chair, mat, and practice mannequins, giving students the opportunity to practice braiding, basic hairstyling, nail art techniques, and eyebrow mapping which, again, are only services that do not require a cosmetology license. Students showcased their creativity and entrepreneurial skills through visual digital slideshows. This experience not only strengthened their foundational cosmetology knowledge but also built confidence in business planning, design, and professional communication.

CELEBRATE PI DAY WITH A PI K

Community members are invited to celebrate Pi Day while supporting student learning by taking part in a Pi Day Pi K, hosted by the East Kentwood Math Department in partnership with the Math Medic Foundation. Participants can walk or run 3.14 kilometers (about 1.95 miles) on Saturday, March 14, starting and finishing at Falcon Stadium. Proceeds from the event directly support classroom supplies and materials for EK math students. The event is open to all ages, and each registrant will receive an event t-shirt and finisher medal in the mail. Registration is open through March 13. To get more information and to register visit bit.ly/MMFPIDAYPIK26.



INNOVATION IN ACTION: STEM SPOTLIGHT AT PINWOOD

Pinewood's STEM lab is buzzing with hands-on, real-world learning as seventh-grade students explore engineering, design, and problem-solving under the guidance of STEM teacher Mrs. Pourrabi. Through collaborative, project-based experiences, students are building critical thinking and creativity while tackling authentic challenges.

This year's standout projects include a Foot Orthosis Challenge, where students applied the engineering design process to create assistive devices focused on mobility and comfort; Automotive Clay Modeling, inspired by industry practices to help students understand how prototypes shape final designs; and a Puzzle Cube Challenge, which combined sustainability and mathematics as students transformed wood scraps into functional, marketable games.



Through these experiences, Pinewood students are developing durable skills such as communication, collaboration, and resilience, preparing them for success beyond the classroom. We are proud of the innovation, effort, and leadership our students demonstrate every day. Go Falcons!

BUILDING 21ST-CENTURY SKILLS THROUGH INNOVATION AT GLENWOOD

At Glenwood Elementary, "Innovative Learning" is more than just a theme—it's a dynamic, hands-on experience that comes to life in classrooms every day. In STEM class with Ms. Klomprens, students across various grade levels are diving into the exciting world of robotics and computer science, transforming from tech consumers into confident tech creators. Through engaging, project-based learning, students explore coding, sequencing, and logical thinking while tackling real-world challenges. Along the way, our young learners are developing essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and persistence.

Whether they are guiding a robot through its very first turn, troubleshooting errors, or debugging a complex path, Glenwood students are learning that problem-solving takes patience and perseverance. These meaningful experiences are helping students build a strong foundation in technology, preparing them with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving, 21st-century world.



INNOVATION IN ACTION AT DISCOVERY ELEMENTARY



At Discovery Elementary, innovation is not just a buzzword—it's a lived experience in classrooms across every grade. This month, we spotlight two inspiring educators who are redefining what it means to learn through technology, creativity, and heart.

🧠 Jill Thompson: Building Computational Thinkers in STEM

In STEM class, Jill Thompson guides students through the exciting world of coding and robotics. From third graders programming Dash robots to fifth graders engineering obstacle courses, students are immersed in hands-on computational thinking. Even our youngest learners start with tactile “unplugged” coding before advancing to Code.org and guiding Beebot robots.

One of the most touching successes this year involved the Indi robot, used with ASD students. By arranging color-coded tiles, students directed Indi along a path, celebrating together when it reached the purple “celebration square.” This activity beautifully taught cause/effect and shared achievement.

🎨 1st Grade Teacher Rachel Renaud: Bringing Stories to Life

Across the hall, Rachel Renaud is pioneering a different kind of innovation by using technology to empower young storytellers. Recognizing that children often struggle to translate imagination to paper; Renaud introduced an image generator that turns students' written words into custom coloring pages. These pages become the covers of their own storybooks.

Renaud also reverses the process, sometimes starting with an image and having students write a matching story. Importantly, she uses technology as a reward for effort

and creativity, reinforcing tech is a tool earned through hard work.

Though their methods differ, Thompson and Renaud share a core belief: technology should make learning more accessible, joyful, and meaningful.

At Discovery Elementary, innovation is woven into everyday learning—whether through a robot's victory spin or a child's story visualized for the first time.

HELPING BIG IDEAS TAKE SHAPE IN KENTWOOD CLASSROOMS

At the Kentwood Public Schools Education Foundation (KPSEF), we love helping teachers bring their biggest, brightest ideas to life. Through our Falcon Grants, Kentwood educators are empowered to dream big and create innovative learning experiences for their students.

From hands-on STEM projects to arts, literacy, and beyond, these grants spark the kind of classroom magic that traditional school budgets can't always cover.

One recent fall grant brought that magic to life at Southwood Elementary School with the creation of a new Learning Hallway. Located in a previously low-traffic area, the hallway was transformed into a flexible, welcoming space designed to serve both younger and older students. The grant funded flexible seating options with dedicated storage, along with a movable easel to support small-group lessons and collaborative learning—perfectly complementing a shared, mobile computer monitor from the school's collaboration center.

This reimagined space is already expanding how and where learning happens, giving students more opportunities to engage, collaborate, and thrive.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and community partners, KPSEF is proud to support innovative ideas like this across Kentwood Public Schools. If you're interested in supporting innovative ideas like these, we invite you to reach out to us at contact@kpsef.org to learn more about donating to the KPSEF Falcon Grant Program and helping Kentwood teachers bring learning to life.



STUDENTS BECOME NASA ENGINEERS IN HANDS-ON ROBOTICS CHALLENGE

Bowen Elementary 2nd grade students recently stepped into the role of a NASA engineering team during an engaging robotics activity using the Indi robot. The lesson began with an exploration of how robots are used in space to investigate environments that are too dangerous or inaccessible for humans, sparking curiosity about real-world space missions and engineering careers.

Working collaboratively, students tested a variety of Indi tiles to observe how the robot responded to different commands. As they experimented, they practiced key computational thinking skills such as decomposition—breaking a problem into smaller parts—and abstraction—focusing on important patterns and behaviors. Through trial, observation, and discussion, students deepened their understanding of how simple inputs can control complex systems.

To demonstrate their learning, students created their own user manuals that explained what each tile does. These manuals will serve as valuable reference tools in upcoming lessons when students will program the robot to navigate simulated Mars terrain and tackle a new engineering challenge. The activity not only built technical skills but also encouraged clear communication, teamwork, and creative problem-solving.

This learning experience was designed and led by Dana Meyer, a K–5 STEM teacher at Bowen Elementary. With over a decade of experience in education—including time as a 4th-grade classroom teacher, an educator in Chicago Public Schools, and an English Learner teacher and coordinator—Dana brings a wealth of knowledge to her STEM role. She is passionate about designing hands-on projects that inspire students to explore, build, and create. Dana’s goal is for students to see STEM as meaningful, approachable, and fun, and she loves watching their curiosity take off as they tackle challenges in creative ways.



WORLD DRUMMING BRINGS RHYTHM AND CULTURE TO MEADOWLAWN

Meadowlawn’s 3rd-5th grade scholars had the opportunity to be involved in an after-school World Drumming Club last month hosted through the KPS K.I.D.S. Program and taught by Holly Heddens, Meadowlawn’s music teacher. Mrs. Heddens attended the American Orff-Schulwerk Association National Conference last November, where the focus was on the Orff approach to teaching music through speech singing, movement, and play. Mrs. Heddens found the drumming classes to be quite rewarding and was excited to bring the practice back to our population of scholars.

These young musicians learned how to play the tubano drums using different hand techniques to play high and low tones and how to layer different rhythms together to create an ensemble piece. They also experimented with playing other percussion instruments including djembes, bongos, congas, cowbell and agogo bells. We were excited to showcase their learning at the Meadowlawn Music Program at the end of January where they performed a drumming piece for our families and scholars.



CODING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, AND INNOVATION AT EXPLORER

During the past month at Explorer Elementary, fourth and fifth grade students took on a hands-on robotics challenge in STEM class, programming Dash robots to navigate a maze and launch a ball into a cup.

Students applied important computational thinking skills such as debugging and decomposition as they tested, adjusted, and refined their code. By breaking the task into smaller steps and learning from trial and error, students strengthened their problem-solving skills and perseverance.

Student engagement was high throughout the activity. As one student, Wren, shared, “It takes a lot of time and coding to get the robot to work. You have to figure out your mistakes to make it better.”

Experiences like this help students build critical thinking skills and a growth mindset through meaningful, hands-on STEM learning.



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						
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31	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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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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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
KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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KENTWOOD, MI 49508

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KENTWOOD PARKS & RECREATION OFFERS PROGRAMS FOR KIDS AGES 1-15!

STARTING IN FEBRUARY:

- Chess Club
- Kids in the Kitchen
- Sports Around the World
- Wiffle Ball
- Zumba Kids
- Comic Drawing
- Hip-Hop Dance
- Moovin' & Groovin'
- MLS Go Soccer
- Fencing
- Cookies & Canvas
- Together We Dance
- Pom Dance
- Martial Arts

COMING IN MARCH:

- STEM Club
- Dodgeball Dynasty
- Young Little Artists
- Re-imagined Art
- Nerf Battle
- And More!



CITY OF KENTWOOD
PARKS & RECREATION

REGISTER ONLINE AT
KENTWOOD.US/PARKS

