



FROM ALGERIA TO ZIMBABWE: EAST KENTWOOD'S CLASS OF 2026 CELEBRATES A WORLD OF ACHIEVEMENT

The East Kentwood High School Class of 2026 crossed the graduation stage on May 20 before a packed Falcon Stadium, marking the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, and growth for 615 graduates.

Surrounded by proud family members, friends, staff, district leaders, and members of the Kentwood Public Schools Board of Education, graduates were celebrated not only for their academic accomplishments, but also for the unique community they helped create during their time at East Kentwood.

The evening highlighted the remarkable achievements of the graduating class. Among the graduates, 72 students earned Cum Laude honors with grade point averages between 3.5 and 3.79; 38 students graduated Magna Cum Laude with GPAs between 3.8 and 3.99; and 82 students earned the distinction of Summa Cum Laude with grade point averages of 4.0 or higher.

*"Run your race," Emeott told the graduates.
"Grow every day. Create your own
accomplishments. And remember, tonight, you
leave East Kentwood, but East Kentwood will
never leave you."*

Throughout the ceremony, speakers reflected on the relationships, opportunities, and experiences that helped shape the graduates' journeys. Student speakers expressed gratitude for the support they received from family

members, friends, teachers, and staff while also reflecting on the unique opportunities East Kentwood provided throughout their high school experience.

Co-Athletic Director and longtime Track and Field Coach Dave Emeott delivered remarks that resonated with graduates and families alike, sharing lessons he has learned throughout his life. This year's celebration has special significance to him as a parent of a 2026 EKPS graduate.

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RELIVE THE CELEBRATION: EK GRAD CEREMONY PHOTO GALLERY

The East Kentwood High School Class of 2026 graduation ceremony was filled with memorable moments, heartfelt celebrations, and plenty of Falcon pride. For those who were unable to attend the ceremony, or for graduates and families who would like to relive this special milestone, Kentwood Public Schools is pleased to share a gallery of candid photos from the event.

Captured by our partners at AVES Films and East Kentwood alumnus and photographer Shafi Subhan, the collection highlights many of the moments that made graduation night so special, from graduates preparing to take the stage to celebrations with family, friends, and classmates following the ceremony. [We invite you to browse this gallery and celebrate the East Kentwood High School Class of 2026 once again.](#)

From Algeria to Zimbabwe: East Kentwood's Class of 2026 Celebrates a World of Achievement

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Drawing on his experiences in track and field, Emeott encouraged graduates to focus on their own journeys rather than comparing themselves to others. He also reminded graduates that their connection to East Kentwood would remain long after graduation day.

Principal Omar Bakri, who was also celebrating the graduation of his own child that evening, reflected on the many accomplishments of the Class of 2026. He highlighted students who excelled in academics, athletics, fine arts, leadership, and service, emphasizing that the class's success could be measured in many ways.

One of the evening's most memorable moments came as Bakri reflected on the diversity that makes East Kentwood and Kentwood Public Schools so special. He spoke about the unique opportunity students have to learn alongside classmates from around the world and how those experiences prepare them for success in an increasingly interconnected society.

Bakri then invited graduates to stand as he called out the countries represented by members of the Class of 2026. Beginning with Algeria and continuing through Zimbabwe before concluding with the United States, graduates rose as their countries were recognized. The powerful visual representation of East Kentwood's global community drew thunderous applause from the crowd and served as a reminder of the strength that comes from learning, growing, and succeeding together.

As the ceremony concluded, graduates tossed their caps into the air and celebrated a milestone reflecting years of hard work. While each graduate leaves with a unique story, the Class of 2026 shared a common experience, one shaped by excellence, opportunity, diversity, and community.

Wherever their paths lead next, the members of the East Kentwood High School Class of 2026 will forever be Falcons.

GORDON NAMED TO GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kentwood Public Schools Executive Director of Human Resources Jamie Gordon has been appointed to serve on the Grand Rapids Community College Board of Trustees.

Gordon was officially welcomed as the board's newest trustee during a recent meeting of the Grand Rapids Community College Board of Trustees, adding another leadership role to her longstanding commitment to public education and community service.

Through her work at Kentwood Public Schools, Gordon has played an important role in supporting students, staff, and families while helping attract, develop, and retain talented educators and employees who serve the district's nearly 10,000 students. Her appointment to the GRCC Board of Trustees extends that commitment beyond Kentwood Public Schools and provides an opportunity to help shape educational opportunities for students and community members throughout West Michigan.

The appointment reflects Gordon's dedication to educational excellence, leadership, and service, values that have defined her work throughout her career.

Kentwood Public Schools congratulates Jamie Gordon on this well-deserved appointment and looks forward to the positive impact she will continue to make in both Kentwood and the broader West Michigan community.



Photo courtesy: Grand Rapids Community College

A STORY WORTH READING: EAST KENTWOOD VALEDICTORIAN'S REMARKABLE JOURNEY

Among the many accomplishments celebrated by the East Kentwood High School Class of 2026 is the inspiring story of this year's valedictorian, Ahmed Elkhwad. Recently featured by School News Network, the article highlights Ahmed's extraordinary journey from refugee to valedictorian and the perseverance, determination, and commitment to learning that helped him achieve this remarkable accomplishment.

We invite you to read his story and learn more about one graduate whose experience reflects the resilience and promise found throughout the East Kentwood community.

[Read the full School News Network story here.](#)



Ahmed Elkhwad presents his immigration story at a recent event at the Grand Rapids Public Museum.



5TH GRADERS CELEBRATE ANNUAL FIELD DAY AT FALCON STADIUM

In May, Falcon Stadium welcomed 5th grade students from across the district for the annual Field Day event. With schools divided between two event days, students had the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities that encouraged teamwork, sportsmanship, and school spirit. From relay races and track events to tug-of-war and other games, students stayed active and engaged throughout the day.

Elementary physical education teachers played an important role in planning and organizing the event, while East Kentwood track & field coaches and athletes also assisted in leading activities and helping create a positive experience for all involved. The event served as a fun way for students to connect with peers from other elementary schools and celebrate the end of their elementary school years.

THE BUILDERS OF DISCOVERY ARCH

As we wrap up another successful year in Kentwood Public Schools, the next generation of "builders" are working hard in ARCH at Discovery Elementary. Every day our students create and innovate, using new and existing ideas that we have discussed as a team. Some students built model bridges and ramps to explore the physics and structural integrity of their creations. Others used straws and connectors to make jet packs, motorcycles, skyscrapers, and even space suits!

Our students have built more than just bridges, ramps, or skyscrapers. In March, students worked on entire solar systems with only our art supplies and our imaginations. We made 2D and 3D models of our planets, and we created our own unique constellations. Together, we were able to build our own ARCH universe.

In April, we focused on building up ourselves and others, both within and outside of ARCH. We wrote positive messages all over the sidewalks at Discovery to lift others up during the stressful weeks of state testing. Our students wanted everyone at Discovery to feel welcomed and encouraged from the moment they got to school to the moment they left for the day.

We are building our own community, full of friendships, determination, and curiosity. As our year comes to a close, our students keep moving forward and looking ahead for what's to come. ARCH at Discovery is truly out of this world!





FREE DROP-IN PROGRAM FOR KIDS
JUNE 14 - JULY 22

Calling all kids ages 7-15! Get ready for an unforgettable summer of outdoor adventure with **Play in the Park**, our mobile activity program. Kentwood Parks & Recreation staff will bring exciting games, creative art projects, and engaging nature activities to parks throughout the summer. No registration is required - just stop by and join the fun!

WHERE TO FIND US:

DAY	TIME	LOCATION
Mondays	9:30 - 11 a.m.	Veterans Memorial Park 355 48th St SE
Tuesdays	9:30 - 11 a.m.	Old Farm Park 2350 Embro Dr SE
Wednesdays	9:30 - 11 a.m.	Jaycee Park 1088 Gentian Dr SE



ACTIVITIES ALL SUMMER LONG!



CITY OF KENTWOOD
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
CITY OF KENTWOOD
PARKS & RECREATION

PROGRAMS FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES!

- Art
- T-Ball
- Day Camps
- Dance
- Basketball
- STEM
- Improv
- Soccer
- And More!
- Cooking
- Martial Arts
- Music
- Pickleball
- Fishing
- Tennis



REGISTER ONLINE AT [KENTWOOD.US/PARKS](https://kentwood.us/parks)

Kentwood Parks and Recreation Department · 355 48th St. SE Kentwood, MI 49548 · 616.656.5270 · kentwood.us/parks

CELEBRATING STORIES THAT SHAPE OUR COMMUNITY

Several East Kentwood High School students recently had the opportunity to share their voices and family histories as part of Our Composite Community, a special partnership with the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

As part of the project, students researched their family's journey to West Michigan, exploring stories that spanned countries, cultures, and generations. The project culminated in a public presentation at the museum, where students shared their findings and reflected on how their families' experiences have shaped who they are today.

The stories presented were inspiring, moving, and hopeful, highlighting the diversity that makes East Kentwood and the broader West Michigan community so unique. Through their research and presentations, students demonstrated the power of storytelling to build understanding, foster connections, and celebrate the many experiences that contribute to our shared community.

The project provided students with a meaningful opportunity to honor their family histories while helping others gain a deeper appreciation for the people and stories that make our community stronger.



EKHS AND EKFC STUDENTS EXPERIENCE POWERFUL PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION AT GRAM

This spring, students from East Kentwood High School and the East Kentwood Freshman Campus visited the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) to experience *As We Rise: Photography from the Black Atlantic*, a powerful exhibition featuring more than 100 photographs from artists representing Black communities and cultures from around the world.

Mrs. King's freshman art students participated in a guided tour and hands-on artmaking workshop, while Mr. Vriesman's AP African American Studies students explored the exhibition independently, connecting the artwork to themes and historical perspectives they have studied throughout the year.

Organized by Aperture, the exhibition includes work by acclaimed artists such as Carrie Mae Weems, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Deana Lawson, and Jamel Shabazz, highlighting themes of identity, joy, beauty, belonging, and self-representation.

The visits also provided students with opportunities to strengthen observation, reflection, and visual analysis skills while engaging with meaningful cultural and artistic perspectives.

The trips were made possible through the GRAM Field Trip Fund, which covered admission, transportation, and workshop costs for all students.



CROSSROADS HIGH SCHOOL CELEBRATES THE CLASS OF 2026

The celebration of the Class of 2026 at Crossroads High School was filled with pride, reflection, and excitement for the future as 76 graduates officially received their diplomas during a heartfelt ceremony held at the East Kentwood High School Fine Arts Auditorium.

Surrounded by a packed audience of supportive family members, friends, Crossroads staff, Kentwood Public Schools Board of Education members, and district administrators, graduates were recognized not only for completing their high school journey, but also for the perseverance, growth, and determination that brought them to this milestone moment.



The evening highlighted the unique and student-centered opportunities available through Crossroads High School's programming. In addition to earning diplomas, many graduates were also recognized for completing valuable workforce credentials and career-focused learning experiences designed to prepare students for success beyond high school. These accomplishments reflect Crossroads' commitment to helping students identify their strengths, pursue their goals, and build pathways toward college, careers, and lifelong success.

Throughout the ceremony, there was a strong sense of celebration for the individual journeys each student took to reach graduation day.

Crossroads High School continues to provide flexible and innovative learning opportunities that support students academically, personally, and professionally while helping them prepare for the next chapter of their lives.

Kentwood Public Schools proudly congratulates the Crossroads High School Class of 2026 and looks forward to seeing the many ways these graduates will continue to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

CRESTWOOD HOSTS 2ND ANNUAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Crestwood Middle School hosted its 2nd Annual Cultural Festival, centered around the theme “Crestwood Puzzle: Many Pieces of One,” celebrating the diverse cultures and backgrounds that make up the school community. In the weeks leading up to the event, every 1st-hour class participated in a schoolwide cultural activity, creating displays that represented each student and staff member as an important “piece” of the Crestwood puzzle.

The festival featured engaging student performances that showcased cultural pride and talent, along with a Global Fashion Show highlighting traditional and modern attire from around the world. Hallways were filled with student-created displays, and the event brought the building together in a celebration of unity and inclusion. A big thank you to the Cultural Committee for their dedication and hard work in planning a meaningful celebration!



DISCOVERY ELEMENTARY CELEBRATED AN AMAZING SCHOOL YEAR WITH END-OF-YEAR TRADITIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The final weeks of the school year were filled with celebration, school spirit, and memorable traditions at Discovery Elementary as students, staff, and families came together to mark another successful year of learning and growth.

The festivities began with the 4th Grade Year-End Ice Cream Social, giving students an opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments and look ahead to their final year at Discovery Elementary.

Students also enjoyed the annual PBIS/PTC End-of-Year Celebration, which transformed the school grounds into a fun-filled event featuring bounce houses, ice cream, and opportunities to celebrate a year of positive behavior and hard work. Families later gathered for the ARCH Family Night and Talent Show, where Discovery students showcased their talents and creativity. In addition, members of the Student Council completed a mural for Discovery’s Reading Garden, creating a lasting contribution to the school community.

School spirit was on full display during End-of-the-Year Spirit Week, which featured themed days and activities that brought students and staff together for one final week of fun. Students also participated in the annual All-School Field Day, enjoying relay races, teamwork challenges, and friendly competition.

The school year concluded with special recognition for Discovery’s fifth-grade students. Families gathered to celebrate the Class of 2025 during the 5th Grade Graduation Ceremony, honoring students as they prepared for the transition to middle school. The following day, Discovery’s halls were filled with applause and excitement during the annual 5th Grade Clap Out, as students and staff lined the hallways to cheer on graduates during their final walk through the school.

Through these celebrations and traditions, Discovery Elementary continued its commitment to creating a joyful and supportive learning environment where every child can discover their potential. Go Falcons!



KPS SUMMER KIDS CAMPS OFFER FUN, AFFORDABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Summer is underway, and Kentwood Public Schools still has a variety of exciting KIDS Camps available for students throughout the season. Designed to keep students active, engaged, and learning, the camps offer opportunities to explore new interests, develop skills, and connect with friends in a fun and supportive environment.

This year's lineup includes a wide range of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, dance, outdoor camps, and more. Many camps are available for just \$10, making them an affordable option for families looking to keep students involved in meaningful summer experiences.

While some camps have already begun, additional camps will continue to start throughout the summer. Families are encouraged to explore available offerings and register for upcoming sessions.

Kentwood Public Schools would like to thank our partners at Corewell Health and the KPS Education Foundation for their continued support of KIDS Camps and their commitment to providing enriching opportunities for students.

[Click this link for camp information and registration details for KPS Summer KIDS Camps.](#)



UPDATED BUDGET TRANSPARENCY DASHBOARD ENHANCES COMMUNITY ACCESS TO FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Kentwood Public Schools is committed to maintaining strong partnerships with families and community members through transparency, accountability, and open communication. As part of that commitment, the district has launched an updated Budget Transparency Dashboard that provides easy access to detailed financial information about the district.

The dashboard offers community members a clear look at district revenues, expenditures, and other key financial information. It also includes an expanded section highlighting how voter-approved bond funds have been invested in district facilities, safety improvements, technology, and other projects that support students and schools.

By making this information readily available and easy to understand, Kentwood Public Schools hopes to strengthen community understanding of district finances and continue building trust through transparency.

Community members are encouraged to [explore the updated dashboard by clicking this link](#) and learn more about how resources are being invested to support student success.



CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON: EAST KENTWOOD TRACK TEAMS SHINE AT STATE MEET

The East Kentwood Track and Field teams have plenty to celebrate after closing out the season with an outstanding performance at the Michigan High School Athletic Association State Championship Meet, held at Rockford High School.

The East Kentwood boys track and field team captured the Division 1 state championship in dramatic fashion, winning the title by a single point. The championship marks the program's first state title in seven years and the ninth state championship in school history.

The East Kentwood girls track and field team also delivered an impressive performance, earning a third-place finish in the state competition.

In addition to the strong team results, several Falcons excelled in individual events. Reece Emeott won the state championship in the boys pole vault, while De-Mani Roberts earned runner-up finishes in both the 200-meter and 400-meter races. Shukuru Makechi finished second in the 300-meter hurdles, and Jhavon Alexander placed second in the long jump.

The boys 4x200-meter relay team also claimed a state championship. The winning relay team included Shukuru Makechi, Donovan Rubens, Jhavon Alexander, and De-Mani Roberts.

On the girls side, Aaliyah Bailey earned runner-up finishes in both the 100-meter hurdles and 300-meter hurdles. The East Kentwood girls 4x100-meter relay team also earned all-state honors with a third-place finish.

Congratulations to all the student-athletes and coaches on an exceptional season and a memorable finish at the state championships.

OUR LITTLE FALCONS ARE READY FOR FREDDIE!

What an amazing year it has been for our Little Falcons enrolled in a KPS Early Childhood Center! Throughout the year, our students learned and practiced our PBIS expectations of being Safe, Kind, Helpers, and Learners. They learned that being safe means making good choices and following school expectations, being kind means treating others with respect and caring, being helpers means working together and helping in our school community, and being learners means listening, following directions, asking questions, trying new things, and showing grit, continuing to work hard even when something feels challenging.

Our PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) lessons and celebrations helped keep our Little Falcons motivated and focused on being their best selves. These opportunities for learning and recognition helped create a positive culture of kindness, growth, and success across all our early childhood classrooms.

During our final month together, we focused on becoming "Ready for Freddie!" Freddie Falcon is Frankie's big brother, and our Little Falcons will meet him next year as they begin elementary school. To help prepare for this exciting transition, our Little Falcons at Hamilton, Explorer, and the Main Campus Early Childhood Centers practiced some big kid routines they will need this fall.

Students visited the cafeteria, where they practiced carrying their lunch trays and navigating the lunch line. They also participated in a bus safety experience, learning how to board the bus safely, use quiet voices, and listen carefully to the driver. These hands-on experiences helped build confidence and excitement for kindergarten. In fact, many students were disappointed when it was time to leave the cafeteria and the bus ride came to an end!

We are incredibly grateful to the principals at Explorer, Townline, and Hamilton for welcoming our students, as well as the Child Nutrition and Transportation Departments for making these experiences possible. A special thank you to Mrs. Laura Tanis for bringing Buster the Bus to our sites and teaching bus safety in such an engaging and memorable way.

To celebrate all their hard work and growth this year, our Little Falcons enjoyed a fun-filled Field Day as our final PBIS celebration. Students participated in games, activities, and time together as a school community. A special highlight was a visit from Freddie Falcon, who joined us in celebrating all that our Little Falcons have learned and accomplished this year as he welcomed them to kindergarten. Our Little Falcons had so much fun dancing, playing, and celebrating with Freddie!

We are so proud of our Little Falcons and all they have accomplished this year. Their hard work, perseverance, and positive choices have prepared them well for their next adventure.

Congratulations, Little Falcons! You are ready for kindergarten and ready for Freddie!



VALLEYWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL CELEBRATES CULTURES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Students at Valleywood Middle School came together to celebrate the many cultures and backgrounds represented throughout the school during their Cultural Festival. With students representing more than 29 countries, the event gave students the opportunity to proudly share their culture and heritage with classmates through a variety of performances and activities. The program included traditional dances, a poetry reading, and a fashion show featuring cultural clothing from around the world.

In addition to the performances, students created class displays that were showcased throughout the hallways, sharing information about different countries, cultures, foods, traditions, and other unique facts from around the world. Valleywood students and Christie Cobbson did a great job organizing and bringing the event to life!





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2026-27

- Aug 24 *First Day of School
- Sep 4 No School
- Sep 7 No School
- Sept 30..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff

- Oct 8..... ½ Day K-12 / Conferences
- Oct 9 No School

- Nov 2..... No School / PD for Staff
- Nov 25 - 27 .. No School / Thanksgiving Break

- Dec 17 ½ Day K-12/KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- Dec 18 ½ Day K-12 KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- Dec 21 - Jan 1 ... No School / Winter Break

- Jan 18 No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day

- Feb 15 & 16 No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break
- Mar 3..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff

- Apr 1..... ½ Day K-12/KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- Apr 2 - Apr 9.... No School / Spring Break

- May 31 No School / Memorial Day
- June 3..... ½ Day K-12 /KEA Records Day (staff non-report)
- June 4..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

AUGUST							JANUARY						
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
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SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
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27	28	29	30										

OCTOBER							MARCH						
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NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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29	30						25	26	27	28	29	30	

DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
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27	28	29	30	31			23	24	25	26	27	28	29
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No School For Students
 Half Day