Michael Zoerhoff ***Office of Superintendent***
Superintendent of Schools

Kentwood Public Schools
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Dear Staff,

For many of us the tragic passing of our Art Teacher, Eric Vales, has hit us hard. During difficult times like these, we are reminded of the importance of strong relationships and taking the time to make a positive difference in lives of others. As this school year begins, we will again have opportunities to transform the lives of our students. We often think about big events as being transformative, but students and parents frequently highlight small ongoing behaviors as making a difference.

Listen to what Jessica Morgan, a Discovery Elementary parent, said, *"Even the smallest things can make the biggest difference. Our school does a good job paying attention to the little details, like noticing a child might be more down one day than normal. Someone will do something and that is all it takes to change their whole day."*

The fact is that we never know what contribution, big or small, is life changing. One transformative program that provides our district with the tools to engage our students is the *Capturing Kids' Hearts* program. This year we will train over 800 staff members in the *Capturing Kids' Hearts 2* and *Capturing Kids Hearts 1* programs. Many thanks to the Michigan Department of Education for funding a large grant to underwrite this training.

As a point of celebration, four KPS schools were recognized as National Showcase Schools in the *Capturing Kids' Hearts* program. **This recognition reflects the power of our culture and fires our passion to provide *excellence and equity for all*.** This commitment to excellence and equity was also made visible last June as our senior class received over $6 million in academic scholarships.

Again, our parents say it best, Aresha Moore, an Endeavor Elementary parent said this: *"I send my children to school every day knowing they will be held not only to high academic standards, but high moral and character standards as well. From the moment school begins every single day our teachers and staff are not just teaching academics, they are teaching our children what it means to be a person of great character."*

As we prepare for another year, here are the 2019-2020 themes that we will emphasize:

1. **We are a transformative community:** Our commitment to excellence and equity for all transforms lives and prepares all students for success.
2. **We build positive relationships with a growth mindset:** Our staff and students build relationships leading to growth and resilience.
3. **We create and sustain strong partnerships**: KPS values partnerships with parents, civic leaders, and area businesses leading to student achievement and a stronger community!

This year the All Staff Kick-off will be on Wednesday, August 14. The opening day agenda and the professional development activities for your first week back are included with this letter. On Monday, August 19 we welcome back our students for their first full day of school.

Thank you for your commitment to our students and our district. Thank you for the prayers and support that you have shown to the family of Eric Vales. I am grateful for your tireless work and look forward to serving together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Michael Zoerhoff
Superintendent