



IT STARTS WITH RELATIONSHIPS

Townline Elementary third grade teacher Stacey Beck greets her students each morning with a smile, high fives, and hugs. Her students can depend on her warm and genuine welcome each and every day. Beck, who is in her twenty-fourth year of teaching third grade at her school, is not alone. If you walk up and down the hallways of Townline, you will see her colleagues engaging with students in a similar fashion. In fact, warm welcomes are standard practice in classrooms throughout Kentwood Public Schools.



Building positive relationships plays a crucial role in student success. KPS has made building relationships a cornerstone of its work. Beck summarizes how genuine relationships with students in class positively impact student learning, "When students feel connected to adults, when they feel valued by adults, there are usually fewer behavioral problems," she says. "The students are then more willing to accept help in times of struggle. Positive relationships set the stage for academic and emotional success."

Positive relationships set the stage for academic and emotional success.

Building relationships is not only friendly greetings in the morning, although warm hellos can be a perfect way to

start the day for young learners. Instead, a good deal of intentional work goes on throughout the day to help foster positive relationships in Kentwood Public Schools.

A focus on relationships will truly prevent a lot of bad things from happening in schools.

WELCOME TO HAMILTON! NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLANNED

Kentwood Public Schools is excited to announce two new construction projects that are in the beginning stages. In late September, district leaders presented plans to the Board of Education to do an extensive renovation of the current Hamilton Early Childhood building, turning it into a new elementary school, and also plans for a new indoor multipurpose building that will be utilized by athletic teams, student groups, and members of the community, among others.



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It Starts with Relationships

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WHOLE-CHILD ENVIRONMENTS

Just down the hall from Beck's room, students in Fathiya Mohamed's second grade classroom are busy taking part in a circle. They gather on the floor, sharing greetings with each other, and intently listening as each student answers a thought-provoking question. Circles are part of Restorative Practices, a larger initiative the district began last year, aimed at building community and also helping those who experience conflict rebuild trust.

In addition to Restorative Practices, Capturing Kids' Hearts (CKH) is a long-time program embraced by staff at Kentwood Public Schools. CKH also promotes a strong community, with students and staff working together to create a positive atmosphere for learning. Kentwood Public Schools consistently has several buildings named as Capturing Kids' Hearts National Showcase Schools because of the dedication our staff has for building positive relationships.

Finally, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is a system implemented in all schools to promote and reward positive behavior choices by students. This, along with the other initiatives mentioned, are important components in meeting one of the goals of the district's strategic plan— creating whole-child environments for students.

While playing a big role in students' academic success, building relationships also impacts safety and security in the district. Jason Russell, CEO of Secure Education Consultants, a national firm based in Grand Rapids that supports schools in safety and security, stresses the important role building positive relationships plays in keeping schools safe. "One of the things that has always impressed me about Kentwood Public Schools is the focus that is put on building strong relationships at all levels," Russell says. "A focus on relationships will truly prevent a lot of bad things from happening in schools."

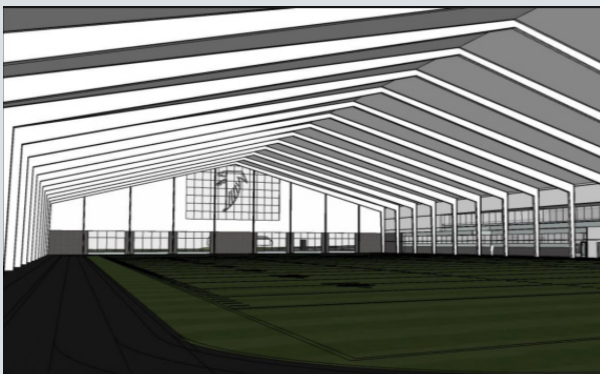
This intentional focus on relational best practices, along with hellos, high-fives, and hugs in the morning and throughout the day, help to make Kentwood Public Schools a warm and welcoming place for each and every student, creating whole-child environments so crucial for student success.

WELCOME TO HAMILTON! NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLANNED

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The new Hamilton Elementary School will be the eleventh elementary school in the district. Kentwood is one of only three school districts in Kent County to show an increase in student enrollment, having the second highest percentage of increase during the past ten years. Enrollment will continue to expand as more homes are being built in our community, and even more are planned for the near future. The new school will have a dedicated space for an early childhood center to continue at the site, in addition to the new early childhood center under construction near Townline Elementary. District leaders will soon reach out to students, families, staff, and community members to get input on the many details that go into building and opening a new elementary school. The new Hamilton Elementary is tentatively set to open in the fall of 2025.

The Indoor Multipurpose Building will be constructed on the East Kentwood High School campus. It will include a large indoor field and track around the field that will be utilized in many ways. Sports teams, the marching band, fine arts groups and physical education classes will all be able to practice in the space. The indoor track will also be open to use by community members who are looking for a warm place to walk or run on those cold Michigan winter days!



The projects are funded through the 2021 bond proposal approved by the Kentwood community. "We are thankful to our community for their ongoing support of KPS," commented Superintendent Kevin Polston. "Stewardship of resources is a core value of KPS, and we take great pride in providing high-quality school facilities for our students and community. Our next projects will continue to provide exceptional learning environments for our students and community assets open and accessible for the entire Kentwood community."

Both projects are in the earliest stages of design. More details will be shared with you as plans develop in the coming months.

BOWEN'S BACK TO SCHOOL BASH

It all starts with relationships... in the classroom, our office, and in our Bowen community. When we genuinely care about one another and work together, amazing things can happen – like our recent Back to School Bash.

On Saturday, September 9th, roughly 90 Bowen families gathered in our back lot and field for a time of fun, sunshine, connection, and kicking off our school year together. Coordinated and funded by our Parent Teacher Committee (PTC), the Bash featured attractions including a bounce house and inflated obstacle course, dunk tank, carnival and yard games, balloon art, giveaways, a cereal walk (where each winner won a box of Kellogg's cereal), and photo booth. Our PTC also sold lunches and coordinated a drawing with items from sponsors, including Celebration Cinema, Meijer, Crumble Cookie, Peppino's and more. Kentwood Fire and Police Departments visited the event, as well as our local KDL Mobile Library.



Thank you to everyone who planned, volunteered, took photos, and attended our event. It was a huge success because you showed up and lent a hand. We're so grateful to everyone who contributed and made it an awesome time for our families. Bowen is better because of you!

BUS DRIVERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Building relationships and warm welcomes do not only happen in the buildings at Kentwood Public Schools. The district's transportation team also works hard to connect with our students as they do the very important work of bussing students to school and back home safely each day. Below are a few examples of the dedicated bus drivers in KPS, each a representative of our transportation team.

Debbie Albrecht has been driving buses for Kentwood Public Schools for 21 years. She loves her work, especially getting to know the students in her care on her bus. She asserts, "They all are like my own kids." In addition, Debbie has a love for her coworkers, and the transportation team and highlights how supportive they were when she went through breast cancer during the pandemic. In addition to bus driving, Debbie is a proud mom of three sons, all of whom are Kentwood graduates.

Mirela Sehovc Hasovic is another important member of our transportation team. She immigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2001 and is a daughter, wife, and mother to three handsome boys, Mirela is now a proud citizen of the United States. Ten years ago, she came to Kentwood Public Schools to interview for a bus driver position. Mirela, as a Muslim and wearer of a hijab, was nervous and wondered if she would be accepted. Despite her fears, Director of Transportation, Laura Tanis immediately made her feel "secure, safe, and at home." At that point, Mirela knew Kentwood was where she wanted to be. She feels welcomed and respected by parents, students and coworkers. "It is truly a blessing getting kids safely to school and back home," she notes, "and, at the same time, getting to know all of them. Each one is unique and precious in their own way."

Shontay Featherson is a new driver for Kentwood Public Schools; however, he is familiar with the profession. He comes to Kentwood with 14 years of experience safely transporting students to and from school. Shontay loves watching the kids as they grow throughout the years, moving from kindergarten through all the grades until their graduation following their senior year of high school. He loves being a part of the Kentwood transportation team and our very diverse district.





THE P.O.W.E.R. OF RELATIONSHIPS AT EXPLORER

At Explorer Elementary School, we have had a great start to our school year! Our students have been working hard to demonstrate the P.O.W.E.R of an Explorer student: Positive, On target, Willing, Engaged, and Respectful. This month we had our first assembly to celebrate all the hard work, sense of community, and relationship that we have been building this year. We pulled P.O.W.E.R tickets that students have been awarded at random, and those students participated in a game of Plinko for prizes. As an extra special twist, staff were also selected at random to play Plinko as well.

We also had our first P.O.W.E.R machine pull for students. Students that demonstrate what it means to have Explorer P.O.W.E.R can be selected to come down and put a token in the P.O.W.E.R machine. Students can win a prize and even a chance to win multiple prizes!

At Explorer, we are so excited and optimistic about what this year holds! We are very proud of our students and staff who have done a great job demonstrating what it means to have P.O.W.E.R!

BUILDING BONDS WITH MUSIC AT GLENWOOD

Music is often a great equalizer. Music can bring together many different people from different backgrounds and create a space of common language amongst all people. Every day at lunch, Ms. Hoskins and Mr. James play different genres of instrumental and/or re-arranged music for students. The students become more knowledgeable about music and enjoy listening while eating and socializing with their friends.

Students love walking into the lunchroom to hear what music is playing that day and eagerly anticipate the opportunity to make a request for their favorite songs to be played. Recently, Ms. Hoskins turned on the popular song "Cha Cha Slide" and invited students who wanted to do the dance to join her. It was so much fun seeing many of our students and staff join in, along with others who quickly learned the dance and joined in on the fun, too!



A SENSE OF BELONGING AT CROSSROADS

At Crossroads, each day starts with an Advisory class where students participate in a program called "Get Your Mind Right." This program aims to ensure that everyone is mentally prepared for the day ahead and to create a sense of belonging for staff and students. Students have a variety of activities to choose from during this time, such as enjoying a coffee bar with staff, playing corn hole, exploring their artistic side through crafts, engaging in E-sports, recording music, studying, or simply spending quality time building relationships with their peers and staff members.



BUILDING COMMUNITY AT DISCOVERY

The start of every school year at Discovery Elementary is a fantastic opportunity to witness teachers' creative efforts to intentionally build a sense of belonging within their learning environments. This school year was no exception as classroom after classroom shared their experiences with fellow teachers and staff. Here are just some of the many activities that were done on behalf of our students, old and new, to build our classroom communities:

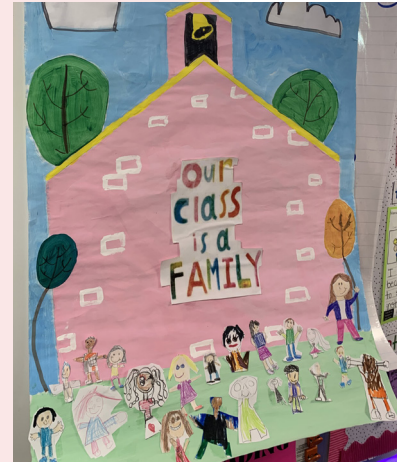
3rd Grade Teacher - *"Today, my class read a short Wonders informational text called "Sharing Polkas and Pitas." The text is about how each city in the U.S. is home to people from many different countries and cultures. The text highlights a couple of cities and traditions they celebrate. We circled up and discussed the different traditions that each student in my class celebrates and how special each family is. My students enjoyed listening to one another share their similarities and differences."*

2nd Grade Teacher - *"Here is something I did during Open House to include all my students in our classroom environment. They each wrote a couple of songs they like on this chart paper. It will become a kid-friendly playlist of music that we can listen to during different classroom activities."*

1st Grade Teacher - *"We read "All Are Welcome Here" and talked about how we have people who look different from us and come from all over the world. Each student got their own part of the poster to decorate, not knowing how it would all connect. I put it together and even my perfectionist students said "I didn't think I would like the colors not matching but it looks really cool" and we are going to talk about in the circle how we might think we don't like something but we won't know until we try."*

5th Grade Teacher - *"The fifth graders listened to the story, A Bad Case of Stripes and talked about the overall theme of the story. The students shared how important it is to be yourself and to be proud of the things that make you who you are. We continued the discussion by sharing the important things about ourselves, whether it is something we like or something we struggle with in order to feel a sense of belonging within the classroom community. Some student highlights: 'I like vegetables like broccoli,' 'I struggle with math,' and 'I care about others.'"*

Again, these are just a few of the many examples of the intentional effort put forth within the first few days of school. From circling up, sharing music and family cultures, to embracing our differences to strengthen our relationships, our dynamic team of Discovery educators continue to show the time and sincere work that goes into building and sustaining strong classroom communities. Thank you, Discovery Team! Our students and families appreciate you!



COVID FUNDS DASHBOARD NOW AVAILABLE

Since 2020, schools have received funds from the federal government to support efforts to address the impacts on education of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kentwood Public Schools wants to make sure it is transparent with how those funds are being allocated to support the needs of our students. Our district has created a COVID-19 Relief Budget Transparency Report dashboard available on our website so that community members can see where those funds are going. [You can access the dashboard by clicking this link.](#) The dashboard will be updated consistently. We encourage you to check it out!

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The moment students walk into the doors, the Pinewood staff is ready to greet each and every child with waves, smiles, high-fives, and encouragement to empower them through their school day. Our Pinewood team greets students as they walk into the building and stand outside of their classrooms to welcome students at the start of every hour. This is more than a simple warm welcome each morning. It's not only a way to show we care, but can be a great motivator, and a foundation for building strong relationships with our students and enhancing overall academic achievement.

This month, we would like to recognize a teacher who takes the time to build foundational relationships with our students. Through her leadership with our student council team, Mrs. Ashley Conley has inspired her students to be leaders at our school by setting a good example and being good role models. She also strives to create a sense of community and school ownership amongst her team, directly impacting our student body.

The Pinewood Student Council is involved with the organization and implementation of our incentive programs, which celebrate student achievement and create a positive environment for learning. Our student council is also responsible for running our TEAM store, planning school dances and activities, reading the morning announcements, and numerous other activities.

Thank you to our amazing student council members and to their leader, Mrs. Conley, for making Pinewood an extraordinary place to learn!



Cherry Health

Kentwood Public Schools will again partner with Cherry Health this school year to offer dental services for our students. These services will include an exam, x-rays, cleaning, fluoride, and sealants, if needed. The opportunity for these services was one of the options during the online registration process for your child. This is a wonderful opportunity to have preventative services completed at school if you do not have a dentist and need a dental home or are already a patient with Cherry Health.

If you would like these services and are unsure if you are registered, please call Cherry Health School Linked Health programs at 616-776-2345.



KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2023-24

- Aug 21 *First Day of School
- Sep 1 No School
- Sep 4 No School
- Sept 27..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff

- Oct 12..... ½ Day K-12 / Conferences
- Oct 13 No School

- Nov 1..... No School / PD for Staff
- Nov 22 - 24 .. No School / Thanksgiving Break

- Dec 22 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Dec 25 - Jan 5 ... Winter Break

- Jan 15 No School for Students & Staff / MLK Day

- Feb 19 & 20 No School for Students & Staff / Mid-Winter Break

- Mar 6..... ½ Day K-12 / PD for Staff
- Mar 28..... ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- Mar 29 - Apr 5.... No School for Students & Staff/ Spring Break

- May 24 ½ Day K-12 / KEA Records Day
- May 27 No School / Memorial Day
- May 31..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:59 PM	12:15 PM
Middle	8:20 AM	3:04 PM	11:35 AM
EKFC & EKHS	7:41 AM	2:31 PM	10:48 AM
Crossroads	7:30 AM	2:18 PM	10:46 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30	31			28	29	30	31			

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
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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		

OCTOBER							MARCH						
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30

NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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DECEMBER							MAY						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

No School For Students
 Half Day