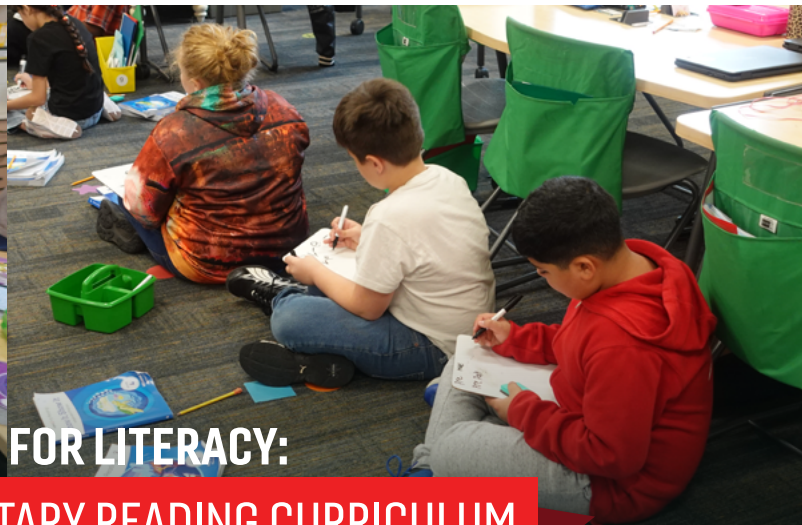




A STRONG START FOR LITERACY:

KPS LAUNCHES NEW ELEMENTARY READING CURRICULUM

Kentwood Public Schools is off to a strong start for the 2026-27 school year as students and staff settle into routines built around welcoming classrooms, engaging learning and strong connections.

At the elementary level, that strong start includes a significant investment in literacy. After a thorough review of reading materials last year, including piloting options in KPS classrooms, the district is implementing Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's (HMH) Into Reading for literacy instruction in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Into Reading is among the programs approved by the Michigan Department of Education to provide high-quality literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading.

"The foundational skills, as well as the word work in HMH's Into Reading, are really strong," said KPS Executive Director of Elementary Education Carrie Tellerico. "This creates a great continuum of learning for students in grades K through five."



KPS Director of Teaching and Learning Debbie

Schuitema points to the importance of the instructional approach behind the new curriculum, stating, "Research shows that explicit and systematic teaching is imperative to learning to read."

The new curriculum also creates greater consistency among the many educators who support students as they develop as readers.

"I'm really excited about the cohesion amongst all the different people who support our students with reading, like our speech pathologists, who can now come in and utilize the same materials with students that classroom teachers are using while teaching reading," Schuitema added.

Director of English Learner Programs Sanela Sprecic sees similar opportunities for KPS multilingual learners.

Continued on page 2...

POLSTON SELECTED TO LEAD STATEWIDE LITERACY COUNCIL

Kentwood Public Schools Superintendent Kevin Polston has been appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to serve as chair of Michigan's new Every Child Reads Champions Council, giving KPS a voice in an important statewide effort to strengthen literacy for students across Michigan.

The council brings together leaders from education, business, philanthropy and communities across the state to advise on and strengthen Michigan's statewide literacy plan. Its work is focused on helping ensure every child develops the skills needed to become a strong reader, writer and communicator.

Continued on page 3...

A Strong Start for Literacy: KPS Launches New Elementary Reading Curriculum

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"We now have the opportunity to use a curriculum that includes components intentionally designed with the needs of multilingual learners and other special populations in mind," Sprecic affirmed. "When a curriculum is designed with those considerations from the beginning, it creates more equitable opportunities for students to learn, participate, and be successful."

Teachers are beginning to see those instructional features at work in their classrooms. Third grade teacher Mindy Geer appreciates the "spiraling" design of the program, which gives students repeated opportunities to encounter and build upon their learning.

"We introduce a concept in a lesson or new vocabulary," Geer explained, "and then we revisit it in the next lesson and the next lesson. This benefits student learning."

And fourth grade student Sabrin offered perhaps the most straightforward review of the new materials.

"They are very cool, and I just love the stories."

Implementing a comprehensive new literacy curriculum is a significant undertaking. KPS teachers participated in professional learning before the school year began, and that learning and support will continue throughout the year as educators deepen their understanding of the program and its resources.

"Our students' reading matters a lot to us, and there are so many people putting in so many hours to plan this and get this right," Schuitema said.

The district has also been able to make this investment without drawing from its existing operating budget. More than \$1.5 million in grant funding received during the past two years covered the purchase and launch of the new curriculum, allowing KPS to provide the state-approved resources to students and teachers while preserving district funds for other priorities.

For Tellerico, the work ultimately comes back to something much bigger than a new curriculum.

"Being able to read and apply skills from reading," she noted, "opens the doors to opportunity for an entire lifetime."

"Being able to read and apply skills from reading," she noted, "opens the doors to opportunity for an entire lifetime."



BOWEN FALCONS ARE ON TARGET!

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is in full swing at Bowen Elementary! Over the past three weeks, our Falcons have been working hard to show "On Target" behaviors throughout the school.

Our three core expectations are simple: Be Respectful. Be Responsible. Be Safe. Students who demonstrate these behaviors are recognized by staff with Falcon Feathers, which they can use as currency at our Falcon Feather Fortunes!

Each month, we spotlight one of our core expectations and celebrate classrooms that are consistently demonstrating "On Target" behaviors. The Champion Classroom earns the ultimate prize—a championship belt to proudly wear for an entire week!

September is all about Being Respectful in every area of our Bowen Matrix—from the classroom and cafeteria to the playground and even the bus. At the end of the month, our Falcons will celebrate their hard work and positive choices with a Bowen Tailgater, featuring yard games, cooperative play, and healthy snacks.

We are proud of the way our Falcons are learning that positive choices make a difference!

Polston Selected to Lead Statewide Literacy Council

Continued from page 1

Polston was appointed to the council as a lifelong education representative with expertise in the science of reading and was selected by the governor to serve as its chair. He will help lead a group representing a wide range of perspectives, including early childhood education, special education, English learners and urban, suburban and rural communities.

"Literacy is the foundation for lifelong learning. We must seize this moment and leverage Michigan's historic investments in literacy to ensure our system is delivering for our children and our future," Polston said in the announcement of his appointment. "Michigan has gained important momentum, and now is the time to step on the gas and accelerate the progress our educators are working tirelessly to achieve, our parents expect, and our children deserve."

For Kentwood, Polston's appointment provides an opportunity to bring the experiences and perspectives of KPS students, families and educators to statewide conversations about literacy while also staying closely connected to strategies and resources that can support students here at home. At the same time, his leadership will help shape work designed to improve literacy outcomes for children in communities throughout Michigan.

Polston has served as superintendent of Kentwood Public Schools since 2021. His appointment to the council runs through September 2030, while his designation as chair is at the pleasure of the governor.



MORE THAN A RALLY: BUILDING BELONGING AT THE FRESHMAN CAMPUS

A strong school year begins with more than schedules, assignments, and routines; it begins with connection. At the Freshman Campus we wanted our students to start the 2026–2027 school year feeling welcomed, confident, connected, and proud to be Falcons. That goal came to life on September 3 through our schoolwide Rally Day.

Throughout the entire school day, students participated in a series of intentionally designed activities focused on teamwork, belonging, problem-solving, school pride, and learning how to successfully navigate the year ahead. Rather than experiencing a traditional day of classes, students moved through engaging experiences with their classmates and teachers.



Activities students participated included, How to School, the Amazing Race, an Escape Room, Falcon Chase, and Falconize Your Campus. Every activity offered students a different opportunity to learn, collaborate, and connect.

"How to School" helped students become more familiar with the resources, expectations, and supports available to them. The Amazing Race and Falcon Chase encouraged students to explore their school, work together, communicate, and solve challenges. The Escape Room required collaboration, critical thinking, and persistence, while Falconize Your Campus gave students an opportunity to use their creativity and help imagine how Falcon pride can be represented throughout our school community.

While the activities were fun, the larger purpose behind the day was intentional. We wanted students to understand from the beginning of the year that school is not simply a place they attend but, instead, it is a community to which they belong.

The day concluded with our Rally Assembly, bringing students together to celebrate the energy, spirit, and sense of community that had been building throughout the day. It was a fitting conclusion to an experience centered on relationships and belonging – thousands of individual students coming together as one Falcon community.

A strong start matters. When students know where to find help, understand expectations, develop relationships with peers and adults, and feel connected to their school, we create the conditions for them to thrive academically and personally.

As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, Rally Day represents the kind of strong start we want for every student—one grounded in connection, confidence, community, and Falcon pride.

HANDS-ON INNOVATION THROUGH ROBOTICS AND AUTOMATION

At Crestwood Middle School this school year, we are excited to introduce Automation & Robotics to one of our elective courses utilizing hands-on curriculum from Project Lead the Way. In this interactive class, students step into the roles of engineering interns. Working in teams, they learn how mechanical engineers, software developers, and electrical engineers collaborate to solve real-world problems. Students pair mechanical systems with input and output devices to build automated prototypes designed for client needs by layering construction and programming skills.

Students in this class are currently diving into Automating Mechanisms, exploring how gear trains and mechanical systems transfer motion and power. To wrap up the unit, teams will apply their learning to design, build, and program a final capstone project.

We are thrilled to see our students collaborating, problem-solving, and bringing STEM concepts to life in the classroom!





KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
FINE ARTS DEPARTMENT
PRESENTS

THEATRE

2026 - 2027 SEASON



Disney Beauty and the Beast JR.



Mockingbird

Adapted by Julie Jensen.
From the National Book Award-winning
novel by Kathryn Erskine

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S

The SOUND of MUSIC



MADAGASCAR

A MUSICAL ADVENTURE JR.



Disney FINDING NEMO JR.

NEW!

Pinewood Middle School
Beauty and the Beast JR.
KENTWOOD FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM

NOV	20	10:00 AM	6:00 PM
	21	3:30 PM	6:00 PM

East Kentwood High School
Mockingbird
BLACK BOX THEATRE

NOV	13	7:30 PM
	14	2:00 PM
	19	7:30 PM
	20	7:30 PM
	21	2:00 PM

East Kentwood High School
The Sound of Music
KENTWOOD FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM

MAR	19	7:00 PM
	20	2:00 PM 7:00 PM
	25	7:00 PM
	26	7:00 PM



Picnic in the Alps
Family Event Before Matinee

27	2:00 PM
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Crestwood Middle School
Madagascar - A Musical Adventure JR.
KENTWOOD FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM

APR	23	9:30 AM 7:00 PM
	24	7:00 PM

Summer Stock
Finding Nemo JR.
KENTWOOD FINE ARTS AUDITORIUM

JUN	25	7:00 PM
	26	2:00 PM 7:00 PM
	27	2:00 PM

ENDEAVOR TEACHER HONORED FOR IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

Endeavor Elementary teacher Leah Hall was recently recognized for the impact she is making on student learning, receiving a High-Impact Educator Award from Teach! Michigan.

Leah was honored during a celebratory dinner in Detroit, where Teach! Michigan recognized educators for their work supporting student success. Leah's award highlighted the significant growth her students demonstrated in both reading and math achievement.

Endeavor Elementary Principal Mark Bea, along with other members of the KPS team, joined Leah and her parents at the celebration to recognize this well-deserved honor.

Leah's recognition also reflects Kentwood Public Schools' ongoing partnership with Teach! Michigan. Numerous KPS educators participate in Teach! Michigan cohort groups focused on strengthening instructional practices and making a positive impact on teaching and learning across the district.

Congratulations to Leah on this outstanding recognition and thank you for the dedication and care you bring to your students each day at Endeavor Elementary!





HAMILTON'S IB JOURNEY TAKES SHAPE

Hamilton Elementary is proud to be an IB Candidate School! In just a few short weeks, we will take another important step in our IB journey as we prepare to submit our application for candidacy. This milestone reflects the hard work of our teachers and staff as we continue building learning experiences that encourage students to think deeply, ask questions, and make meaningful connections.

Our teachers have been working hard to develop our Programme of Inquiry (POI), which organizes learning around six transdisciplinary themes. Through each Unit of Inquiry, students engage in higher-order thinking, ask questions, make connections, and explore their learning with curiosity. We want our students to not only understand what they are learning, but also develop an awareness of their role and impact within their community and the world. Through inquiry, we are helping students grow into caring, thoughtful citizens who understand that their actions can make a difference.

Each month, we celebrate students across all grade levels who demonstrate our IB Learner Profile attribute of the month. This month's focus is Communicator, which is exemplified by students who listen thoughtfully, share their ideas, express themselves clearly, and connect with others. We can't wait to see who receives a nomination and celebrate the wonderful communicators throughout our Ham Fam!

BEYOND OUR DOORS: KPS BRINGS BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUPPORT INTO THE COMMUNITY

Starting strong begins with being prepared for the school year: new backpacks, blank notebooks, fresh haircuts, and remembering how to log in to ParentVUE!

This year, KSSN Community School Coordinators Scott Troyer (EKHS), Jeff Vander Kamp (EKFC), Kate Veldman (Pinewood Middle School), Patricia McKenzie (Glenwood Elementary) and Julia Raap (Southwood Elementary), together with Woodfield Community Center and Refugee Education Center, worked to bring back-to-school preparations and open house resources directly to southwest KPS families, right where they live.

Community partners came together on the evening of August 20 to transform Woodfield Community Center into a festive block party. Parents collected school supplies and connected with KPS staff; kids lined up for free haircuts, henna art and face painting; and families connected with community resources including Refugee Education Center, LMCU, Arbor FCU, KDL and more.

By the end of the evening, more than 350 people had come together to celebrate the start of the new school year, many of whom had not been able to attend their school's open house the previous day.

The KPS community doesn't stop at the doors of our school buildings. It extends down our streets and into our neighborhoods. Together, we are starting strong and taking on an incredible school year.



NEW SCIENCE CLASSROOMS SPARK DISCOVERY AT CRESTWOOD

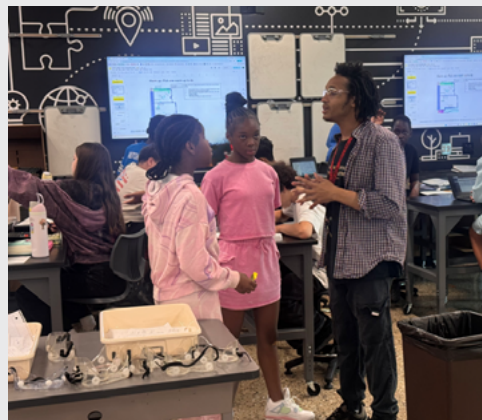
The excitement is undeniable as students at Crestwood begin the school year in newly updated science classrooms. From the moment they walked through the doors, students have been eager to explore learning spaces designed to support hands-on discovery, collaboration and innovation.

The new classrooms have quickly become a favorite destination for students, who are enthusiastic about conducting experiments, engaging in interactive lessons and working together to solve real-world problems. The modern learning environment has energized students and staff alike, creating a positive atmosphere that encourages curiosity and academic growth.

Students are already demonstrating strong engagement and a willingness to dive deeper into scientific concepts. Whether investigating ecosystems, exploring physical science principles or participating in STEM activities, they are taking full advantage of the opportunities these updated spaces provide.

Throughout the school year, the new science classrooms will serve as hubs for discovery, creativity and critical thinking. Most importantly, they provide students with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge they will need for future success.

With engaged learners, dedicated educators and innovative learning spaces, Crestwood is off to an outstanding start to the school year, and students' excitement in their new science classrooms is helping lead the way.



FROM PRE-K TO EK: BUILDING A STRONG START FOR KENTWOOD'S YOUNGEST LEARNERS

This year marks an exciting new chapter for Kentwood Public Schools as this is our first year as a subrecipient of the Great Start to Readiness Program (GSRP) grant. We are filling all three early childhood locations with children and KPS staff with a shared goal of providing a strong start for every child—not just to the school year, but to their educational journey. This transition allows us to expand access to high-quality preschool experiences for children and families in our community while strengthening the connection between early learning and the K–12 experience.

Our GSRP and Early Childhood Special Education teams have started the year with a shared commitment to being one Kentwood Early Childhood team. Classrooms are establishing positive routines, creating welcoming environments and providing opportunities for children to develop independence, build friendships and learn through meaningful play and exploration. A strong start doesn't happen by accident, it happens through intentional planning, strong relationships and a team of educators who understand that every interaction matters.

We are especially excited about what this year means for our community. By bringing GSRP into Kentwood Public Schools, we are creating greater opportunities for young children to begin their educational journey in a high-quality, supportive environment and helping families establish connections with their school community early. It is another important step toward creating a connected Kentwood experience for students and families—from Pre-K to EK.

We are grateful to our Early Childhood staff, families and community partners for helping us create spaces where children feel that they belong, families feel that they are partners and every child has the opportunity to grow.



BUILDING COMMUNITY DIFFERENTLY: VALLEYWOOD'S MITTEN TEAM

Walk into Valleywood's 6th grade Mitten Team and you may notice that learning looks a little different. Four teachers are working collaboratively with a shared group of students, using a flexible teaching model that reimagines how students, educators, time, and space can come together throughout the school day.

During the first weeks of school, the team has intentionally used that flexibility to build a strong sense of community and belonging. Students and teachers came together to create one shared social contract, giving students a voice in defining how they want to learn, work, and treat one another as members of the Mitten Team.

Students then put those commitments into action during a paper tower challenge. Working in small groups, they practiced communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and perseverance while competing to build the tallest tower using only paper and tape.

These experiences are just the beginning. The flexible model allows the team to move between whole-group experiences, smaller learning communities, targeted groups, and different combinations of teachers and students based on the purpose of the learning and the needs of students.

At its core, the Mitten Team is creating more possibilities for students through shared expertise, stronger relationships, and a community where students belong to a team of educators, not just one classroom.



Play. Learn. Grow. Get in the game.

Programs for kids ages 1 to 17!

Sports starting in October:

- Archery Club
- Basketball Classes
- Basketball Leagues
- Wacky Sports Explorers
- Tiny Tumblers Gymnastics
- Flag Football
- TotKwon Do
- Martial Arts
- Boxing
- Pickleball

Plus Art, Dance, Music, Improv, Cooking, STEM and Educational classes too!

You don't have to be a Community Center member or live in Kentwood to participate in our programs! Online at bit.ly/KentwoodYouthSports



EKHS NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY EARNS NATIONAL DISTINCTION

East Kentwood High School's National Honor Society (NHS) has been recognized as a 2026 NHS Chapter of Distinction, a national honor celebrating chapters that demonstrate excellence in leadership, service, student engagement and the core values of the National Honor Society.

The recognition is especially meaningful because EKHS students took the lead in managing and organizing the chapter's application last spring. Their work highlighted the chapter's commitment to creating opportunities for students to lead, serve their school and community, and uphold high standards for membership.

The NHS Chapters of Distinction program recognizes chapters that meet all Essential Standards established by the National Honor Society while also demonstrating higher-level achievement in multiple areas of distinction.

Under the guidance of advisers Tracey Kooy and Katie Wierenga, EKHS National Honor Society members continue to demonstrate the scholarship, service, leadership and character at the heart of NHS.

Congratulations to our EKHS National Honor Society students and advisers on this outstanding national recognition!



A LEGACY ON ICE EARNS HALL OF FAME HONORS

More than 40 years after a group of community members came together with a vision to create new opportunities for Kentwood students and families, their efforts have earned a place in the Grand Rapids Sports Hall of Fame.

The Kentwood Hockey and Skating Association was officially inducted into the Hall of Fame during a September 14 ceremony at Van Andel Arena. The association was honored in the team category for its work to dream up, plan and build the Kentwood Ice Arena.



The grassroots effort brought together hockey and skating parents, the City of Kentwood, local businesses, Kentwood Public Schools and countless volunteers. Built without city or school district funding, the Kentwood Ice Arena broke ground in 1984 and became a model that helped inspire the development of additional ice arenas in the area.

Several members of Kentwood's hockey and skating community attended the induction ceremony, joined by KPS leaders and members of the Board of Education, to celebrate the well-deserved honor.

Four decades later, the Kentwood Ice Arena continues to serve students and the community. It is a lasting legacy of what can happen when people come together around a vision for the future and for our students.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS HELP SOUTHWOOD START STRONG

Southwood Elementary's strong start to the school year has extended beyond the classroom, with community partners helping create welcoming spaces and meaningful experiences for students and families.

As part of the United Way Day of Caring, volunteers from Grand Wealth and CU Answers rolled up their sleeves to help clean and refresh Southwood's grounds and hallways. Volunteers worked throughout the school, including sprucing up the playground and clearing nature trails, helping make these spaces more inviting for students to explore, play and learn.

Southwood families also recently gathered at the Gaines Township branch of Kent District Library for a special Literacy Night. Families enjoyed a picnic dinner while listening to the ABC Orchestra before heading inside the library for a variety of literacy activities. The evening also provided an opportunity to introduce and reconnect families with a valuable community resource located just around the corner from Southwood.

Both experiences reflect the important role community connections play in supporting students and families. Southwood is grateful to the many partners who are helping make it a strong start to the school year.



MORNING CONNECTIONS BRING TOWNLINE FAMILIES TOGETHER

At Townline Elementary, meaningful connections between home and school play an important role in helping children thrive. This year, the school is creating a new opportunity to strengthen those relationships through **Morning Connections**, a monthly gathering for families centered on connection, conversation and, of course, donuts!

Townline kicked off Morning Connections on September 25, welcoming families into the school before the start of the day. Parents and other grown-ups had an opportunity to sit with their children in the cafeteria, enjoy a donut and spend time together before students headed to class.

Following the family time, adults participated in a brief learning and information-sharing session focused on what is happening at Townline and throughout Kentwood Public Schools. During the first gathering, families were also invited to share ideas with Townline's Parent Teacher Committee about topics they would like to explore during future Morning Connections.

Possible topics include the KPS new reading curriculum, ways families can support learning at home, internet safety and other subjects important to the Townline community. The goal is for each gathering to reflect the interests, questions and needs of families.

Morning Connections will continue the fourth Friday of each month through May, providing families with regular opportunities to connect with their children, build relationships with the school and learn together.





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

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	8:55 AM	4:00 PM	12:10 PM
Middle	8:20 AM	3:05 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						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1						1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31	1	2	3	4	5	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30										
OCTOBER							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3	28	1	2	3	4	5	6
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	28	29	30	31			
NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
29	30						25	26	27	28	29	30	
DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5							1
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
27	28	29	30	31			23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31	1	2	3	4	5
No School For Students Half Day													