KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KENTWOOD SCHOOL NEWS

NOVEMBER 2026



THE ARCH EXPERIENCE: WHERE BELONGING GOES BEYOND THE BELL

At Kentwood Public Schools, the sense of belonging doesn't end when the final school bell rings! For hundreds of Kentwood students, it continues through ARCH, the district's afterschool program that combines learning, enrichment, recreation, and meaningful relationships in an environment designed to make students feel right at home.

"Our goal is to provide activities that are not only fun but also help students build important life skills, develop new interests, and create meaningful connections with their peers and the ARCH staff."

ARCH, which stands for Academic enrichment, Recreation and the arts, Community and family services, and Healthy relationships, is offered at all 11 Kentwood elementary schools and three middle schools. Led by ARCH Project Director Becki Barrenger and a dedicated team of site coordinators and staff members, the program provides students with a safe, engaging place to spend their afternoons.

"In Kentwood Public Schools, we work hard to serve the whole child," Barrenger explains. "ARCH provides that safe place for students to come after school."

But the program is about much more than providing a place for students to spend time until their families arrive. Recognizing that students have already spent a full day in classrooms, ARCH staff intentionally create opportunities for movement, creativity, hands-on learning, and fun.

"Our goal is to provide activities that are not only fun but also help students build important life skills, develop new interests, and create meaningful connections with their peers and the ARCH staff."

Students might tackle a STEM challenge, work together on a LEGO project, explore their artistic interests, or enjoy some time outside with friends. Throughout these activities, they're also developing important skills in teamwork, problem-solving, and leadership.

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BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH TOWNLINE'S PTC

At Townline Elementary, everyone belongs! Building a strong school community means creating opportunities for students, families, and staff to connect, build relationships, and make lasting memories together. One of the ways Townline brings this belief to life is through its Parent Teacher Committee (PTC).

Townline's PTC is made up of parents and guardians who want to help make the school an even more welcoming and connected community.

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Excellence and Equity in Education.

The ARCH Experience: Where Belonging Goes Beyond the Bell

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"We want our facilitators who work in the buildings to be ambassadors of fun," Barrenger says. "That helps our students be excited. It's why they want to come back to ARCH each day."

At Explorer Elementary, ARCH Site Coordinator Amani Duke sees the impact of these experiences firsthand.

> Offered at no cost, the program provides dependable afterschool care while giving students opportunities to learn, grow, and connect with others.

"Students in ARCH get to participate in a variety of hands-on activities and enrichment opportunities, including STEAM challenges and experiments, art projects, team-building games, and opportunities to explore their interests and creativity," Duke shares. "Our goal is to provide activities that are not only fun but also help students build important life skills, develop new interests, and create meaningful connections with their peers and the ARCH staff."

Those connections are a particularly important part of the ARCH experience. Students have opportunities to develop friendships across grade levels, build relationships with caring adults, and discover interests and abilities they may not have recognized in themselves.

"I would describe ARCH as more than just an afterschool program," Duke says. "It's a place where students can continue learning, build friendships, develop social and emotional skills, and explore new interests in a fun and supportive environment."

Duke believes the relationships students develop are just as important as the activities themselves.

"Most importantly, I hope students leave ARCH feeling like they belong, that their ideas matter, and that they are capable of doing great things."

ARCH also provides an important service to Kentwood families. Offered at no cost, the program provides dependable afterschool care while giving students opportunities to learn, grow, and connect with others. Enrollment is limited by licensing requirements, and families interested in learning more can find information through the Student Services department page on the district website.

For Barrenger and Duke, the success of ARCH ultimately comes down to the experiences students have and the relationships they build.

"ARCH provides more than enrichment activities; it provides a sense of community, consistency, and support," Duke says. "At Explorer, we're like one big family."

The ARCH program is just one way we work at creating warm, welcoming environments where students feel safe, supported, and valued at Kentwood Public Schools. Building positive relationships and helping students know they belong has long been a foundation of the district's commitment to students.

EAST WING KITCHEN TEAM CELEBRATES 1,000-LUNCH MILESTONE

The East Wing Kitchen team at East Kentwood High School recently reached an impressive milestone, serving 1,000 student lunches in a single day!

Reaching that milestone takes more than preparing meals. It requires teamwork, careful planning, and a commitment to making sure students receive the warm, nutritious food they need to stay energized and ready to learn.

Through hard work and a continuous focus on improving their daily operations, the East Wing Kitchen team has developed an efficient process to serve a large number of students while maintaining quality and care.

Congratulations to the entire East Wing Kitchen team on this accomplishment and thank you for the important role you play in supporting East Kentwood students each day!



Community Partners Bring Book Fair to EK

Continued from page 1

The committee is led jointly by the PTC President and Kent School Services Network (KSSN) Coordinator Mikaila Hancock. The PTC meets monthly to identify, organize, and implement ideas that strengthen the connections between Townline staff and families. And, of course, they make sure to have fun along the way!



The PTC has already developed some exciting ideas for the 2026–2027 school year. Here are a few of the wonderful opportunities Townline families can look forward to:

- **October:** Fall Festival
- **December:** Winter Dance
- **January:** The Polar Express Film Showing
- **February:** Valentine's Goodie Bags from the PTC
- **May:** Yearbooks for fifth-grade students

These activities are just a few examples of how the PTC helps bring the Townline community together. The school is grateful to the parents, guardians, and staff members who share their time, energy, and creativity to make these experiences possible for students and families.

Families interested in learning more about Townline's PTC or getting involved are encouraged to reach out. Whether they have ideas for future activities, would like to volunteer, or simply want to learn more about the committee, there is a place for everyone.

For more information, contact Townline Principal Brian Gamm or KSSN Coordinator Mikaila Hancock at **Mikaila.Hancock@kentwoodps.org** or **616-538-4120, Extension 28251.**

As Kentwood Public Schools celebrates the theme "You Belong Here," Townline invites every family to remember that they are an important part of the school community. Together, they can continue to make Townline a place where every student and family feels welcomed, valued, and connected.

A SEAT AT THE TABLE: HELPING NEW STUDENTS FEEL AT HOME

At East Kentwood Freshman Campus, building a sense of belonging continues long after the first day of school. Students join our FC family throughout the year, each bringing their own experiences, questions, and hopes. Starting high school can already feel like a big adjustment. Entering a new environment, navigating a large building, learning unfamiliar routines, and possibly not knowing anyone can make that transition even more overwhelming.

To help students feel welcomed and connected, our counselors created a New Student Lunch, held at least once a month. Over pizza, new students meet current students, ask questions, and learn more about daily life at Freshman Campus. It is an opportunity to hear directly from peers who can explain everything from building routines and school acronyms to how to find support when they need it.

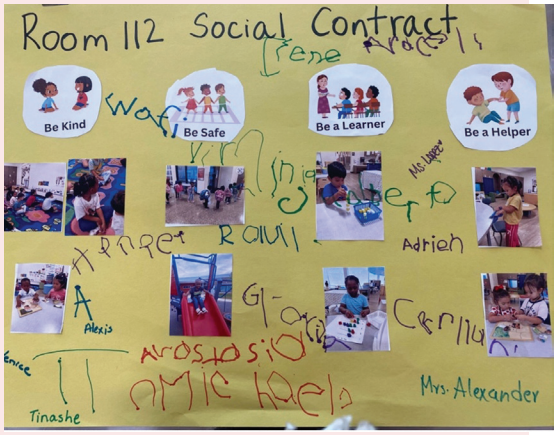


Sharing a meal creates a relaxed, low-pressure setting where conversation can happen naturally. Students can ask the questions they may not feel comfortable asking in class and begin making connections beyond their schedules. And pizza certainly helps get the conversation started!

Our goal is for every new student to leave with more than information. We want them to recognize a friendly face in the hallway, know someone they can turn to, and feel more confident navigating the "FC way." These small connections can make a meaningful difference as students settle into their new school. We are grateful to our counselors and student participants for helping make sure that joining Freshman Campus means becoming part of a community where every student belongs.

YOU BELONG HERE, LITTLE FALCONS!

In KPS, at our Early Childhood Centers, we know preschool is where it all begins! So, we are all about making sure our Little Falcons know they belong and that their voice matters. One way we do that is through our classroom social contracts.



At the beginning of each school year, teachers work with their students to create a classroom social contract, an agreement about how they will treat one another to make their classroom a kind, respectful, and supportive place for everyone. Through simple conversations about kindness, listening, helping, and friendship, our Little Falcons help shape their classroom community.

It's a big lesson for our littlest learners: even at their early age, they have a voice, their ideas matter, and they have a part in making sure everyone feels they belong!

A LITTLE KINDNESS, A LOT OF HEART.



At Bowen, we believe it truly takes a community to help children thrive—and we are incredibly grateful for community members who step up to make a difference.

One of those special community partners is Ken Kuiper, owner of Ken Kuiper Homes of Kentwood. Ken is passionate about giving back to students, teachers, and families in our community. His mission is simple but powerful: to create more equitable opportunities and help people recognize just how valuable they are.

Recently, Ken connected with two Bowen families and found a special way to brighten the lives of their children. He thoughtfully selected gifts based on each child's individual needs and interests, including new clothing, shoes, books, and puzzles.

And the best part? The smiles! The students were incredibly excited to receive their special surprises, and their parents were deeply grateful for the kindness and generosity shown to their families.



Ken's generosity is a wonderful reminder that small acts of kindness can have a lasting impact. When community members invest in children and families, they help create a stronger, more caring community for everyone.

Thank you, Ken, for seeing our students, believing in them, and reminding them that they matter. We are so grateful for community partners who help make Bowen a place where every child feels valued, supported, and cared for.



SECRET SUPPORTERS: SHOWING UP FOR STUDENTS

At Endeavor Elementary, building meaningful relationships with students is an important part of helping them feel connected, supported, and successful. Through a program called Secret Supporters, staff members are taking that commitment one step further, making sure students have an adult who is intentionally looking out for them.

Each student in the program is supported by a staff member who already has a relationship with them. Throughout the year, that adult checks in, celebrates their successes, listens, and reminds them that they are cared for. Staff members volunteer because they care deeply about these students and want to make an even greater difference in their lives.

The support happens quietly. Students don't know they're part of the program. They just know that an adult at school cares about them. A student may not tell us how much a check-in or encouraging word meant, but those small, steady moments can help them feel seen, supported, and valued. That connection helps students know they belong and that the adults around them are invested in their success.

Last year, 43 students participated in Secret Supporters. Compared with the year before, positive attendance among the group increased from 91.9% to 94.2%, while chronic absenteeism decreased from 28.6% to 11.6%.

Those results are encouraging, but the heart of the program is the relationships behind them. The Secret Supporters program is one way our Endeavor community lives out its mission: inspiring a passionate and productive Future Story for every child—no matter what.

BREWING PRIDE AND PURPOSE: THE CRESTWOOD COFFEE CART ENTERS YEAR 4!

What began four years ago as a classroom project in Jenna Dudley's Daily Living Skills class has transformed into one of Crestwood's proudest traditions. Today, the Crestwood Coffee Cart is a thriving, profitable student-run business that highlights the dedication, independence, and creativity of our program.

When the project began, basic coffee and pop were served. Now our menu has grown right alongside our students' skills. Staff across the building enjoy a wide variety of beverages, including a variety of hot coffees and rich cold brew freshly prepared by the students themselves.

Behind every cup served is an incredible amount of hands-on learning. Strutting the hallways in their official uniforms (aprons and name tags included), students practice food safety standards, manage inventory, design custom coffee sleeves, and master real-world math and money management. Beyond the hard skills, delivering drinks throughout the building fosters meaningful connections between our students and the entire school community, building confidence that extends far beyond the classroom walls.

To reward their hard work, all "tips" earned throughout the school year are saved for a special end-of-year group celebration - an activity chosen entirely by the students.

The Crestwood Coffee Cart is a powerful reminder of what happens when we combine real-life practical learning with our school community's support. Thank you to our staff for supporting our students, celebrating their growth, and starting your Friday mornings with us!



THE SOUND OF BELONGING

Every August, before the first bell of the new school year rings, Falcon Stadium comes alive with the sounds of the East Kentwood Marching Band preparing for another exciting season.

Thanks in part to support from the Kentwood Public Schools Education Foundation (KPSEF), more than 250 student musicians, directors, staff, and parent volunteers gathered for a week of summer band camp, bringing this season's field show, Hot Pursuit, from sheet music into motion.

But band camp is about more than music and marching. Students develop discipline, leadership, and teamwork while building friendships and connections that carry into the school year. For many incoming students, it's an opportunity to find their place in the East Kentwood community before the first day of classes.

The skills and relationships developed during camp help fuel performances at Friday night football games, the annual Kentwood Invitational marching band competition, and other community events that bring families, alumni, and neighbors together.

Through mini-grants and program funding, KPSEF helps expand access to quality arts experiences that enrich students' education and strengthen school pride.

When our community invests in opportunities like band camp, we're doing more than supporting music. We're helping students build confidence, discover their strengths, and create memories that last a lifetime.

Learn more about supporting student opportunities through the Kentwood Public Schools Education Foundation at www.kpsef.org/donate.



KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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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

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

SEPTEMBER

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30	31	1	2	3	4	5
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

OCTOBER

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NOVEMBER

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29	30					

DECEMBER

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27	28	29	30	31		

JANUARY

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FEBRUARY

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MARCH

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28	29	30	31			

APRIL

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MAY/JUNE

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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5

No School For Students
Half Day

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