



ROBOTICS + STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING = ELEMENTARY EXCELLENCE

It is 8:00 on a Saturday morning. While many are sleeping in, close to 100 Kentwood Public Schools elementary students have a different idea. They are members of the Red Storm Robotics Team - Elementary Division. On this morning the students, along with their coaches and countless supporters, are headed to a robotics team scrimmage, excited to experience their first robotics competition.

This year the Red Storm Robotics program expanded to the elementary level, forming 13 teams across elementary schools in our district. Teams are coached by a combination of staff members and parents who meet twice a week after school. Students learn to write code to make robots move across game boards during competitions.

Trista VanderVoord, Red Storm Robotics Program Coordinator for grades K - 12, points out that this is not all students learn. "It is more than just creating robots," VanderVoord explains. "It is about forming teams, making sure we act with gracious professionalism, and making sure we have the soft skills to enter into a working relationship with other people."

Being student centered when it comes to learning is not just limited to STEM activities in Kentwood.

Robotics is also about student-centered learning as Kentwood Public Schools Superintendent Kevin Polston notes, "A point of pride for our district is being student centered in all that we do. STEM learning provides a relevant, meaningful learning experience for our students.

STEM is also a high interest area for students and KPS continues to meet this high demand with innovative programming."

The STEM learning represented in the Red Storm Robotics program incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. STEM learning requires students to problem solve, research, collaborate, and create. This type of learning is not only taking place in the robotics program, but teachers across our district are also creating opportunities to incorporate STEM learning at all levels during the regular school day.

Fostering student engagement in their lessons each day is an important part of our commitment to creating student-centered classrooms.

Being student centered when it comes to learning is not just limited to STEM activities in Kentwood. The district also utilizes an instructional model that puts students at the heart of learning. "Our instructional model ensures that students are involved in every lesson, making student collaboration a critical component of teaching and learning," Polston explains.

"Fostering student engagement in their lessons each day is an important part of our commitment to creating student-centered classrooms. When students are excited about their learning, are engaged in it, and are active thinkers throughout, it will lead to more meaningful, lasting learning and academic excellence."

MAKING A MURAL MASTERPIECE

Students in Mrs. Surdam and Ms. Hay's classroom at Challenger explored how painting murals can showcase cultures and bring people together. They began by reading about Judy Baca, a Hispanic muralist. Judy helped bring a group of arguing teenagers in Los Angeles together by teaching them to paint murals depicting the cultures represented in their city. The resulting half-mile mural is a timeline of the people and cultures of LA still on display today.

After reading about the mural, the third grade MLL students researched their own cultures and created a painting to demonstrate their heritage to others. They had so much fun looking up traditions from their families' home countries in preparation for their paintings. When finished, the students will combine their paintings to create their own mural masterpiece showcasing the cultures represented in their classroom and the school. The students are excited and proud to be able to display their hard work and heritage for others!



LEARNING ABOUT THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

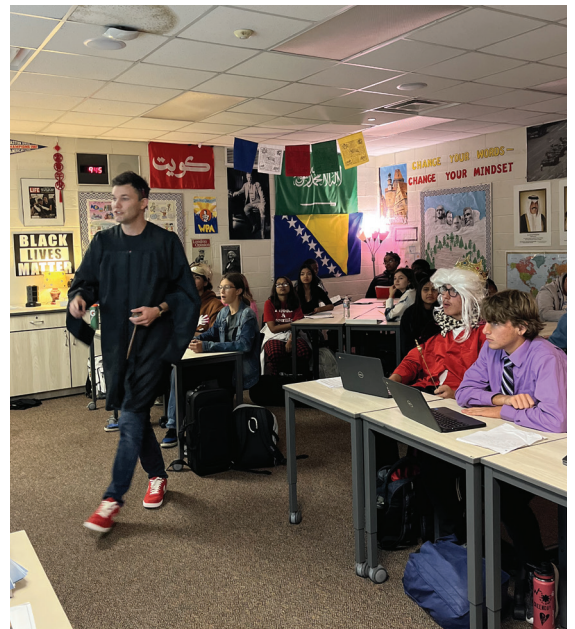
Group projects and collaboration help students develop skills that are important for thriving in society. At Crestwood the staff uses group work and collaboration to aid students on their learning journey. In Mrs. Lowe's class the students dove deeper into the endocrine system and its functions during a student-centered lesson. Mrs. Lowe encouraged students to take an active role by working in small groups.

The groups moved from station to station, learning information about the functions of the thyroid gland, pituitary gland, and the hypothalamus. They also discovered how hormones influence certain cells. Working together enables students to break complex tasks into parts and steps, plan and manage time, refine understanding through discussion and explanation, challenge assumptions, and develop stronger communication skills.

MOCK TRIAL ENHANCES LEARNING

AP US History at East Kentwood is designed around student-centered learning. Often in class the person doing the talking is the person doing the learning, so the goal for the teacher is to be a "guide on the side" rather than the "sage of the stage." Recently, the classroom became a courtroom where King George III was put on trial to facilitate learning about the American Revolution.

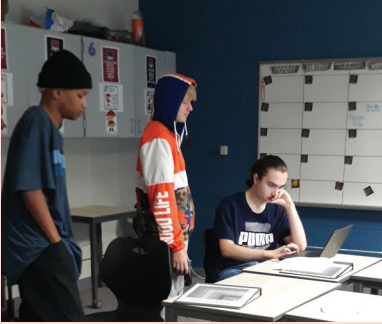
By participating in the trial the students learned the Declaration of Independence was not only a summary of Enlightenment values and an announcement of colonial intentions but was also an indictment against the British monarch. Students selected the role of lawyer, witness, King George, or jury. They determined for themselves whether all of Thomas Jefferson's claims were legitimate, or if some could be considered propaganda. The entire three-day process was student-led, required active engagement, and helped students retain information in a memorable way.



HANDS-ON LEARNING AT EKFC

Scholars in the 9th grade Biophysics class at EKFC have been studying energy and forces. The unit started by watching a video of a crash test between an older and newer car, raising questions about safety features. Students then learned about forces and energy to explain how different designs help make a car safer.

After gaining a common understanding of how forces and energy work, scholars put their skills to the test by designing games for the Force and Energy Fair. This unique event required students to work collaboratively to design, build, revise, test, and analyze carnival-style games. The project culminated in an event where groups present their work to other scholars, staff, and community members for feedback. Activities like this bridge the gap between theory and application and provides students an opportunity to showcase their unique talents and perspectives when it comes to physics.



Scholars in US History showcased their learning about the Progressive Era in Mr. Pierson's class. Many Americans were poor immigrants who lived and worked in unsafe conditions in this timeframe, so laws were passed to create better living and working conditions. Students wrote content and recorded podcasts detailing the need for specific laws which were passed to protect and enrich American lives.

In Mr. Knickerbocker's US History class, scholars were placed in various interest groups which formed during the Progressive Era in Illinois in 1912. Each community group had a vested interest in the shape of politics and how the new laws would affect their lives.

Continued on page 4...

EXPERIMENTING WITH WATER AND LANDFORMS

5th graders at Endeavor Elementary have been learning about how topography (shape of the land) influences how water interacts with the land. Students explored different landforms and how changes of elevation are shown on a topographic map. They learned how water flows on land and how this flow impacts the land.

The students investigated the flow of water by creating a mountain with cardstock paper. They traced the lines made from the crumples with a washable Crayola marker. The class simulated rain by spraying water from a squirt bottle over the paper mountain. They studied water flow by observing where the Crayola-colored water collected. One student noticed "The water pooled at the bottom parts of the elevation", while another student exclaimed, "The water created a small lake!"

After this, students took turns playing different roles: landform maker, rain maker, line maker, and observer. They created multiple landforms and noticed how the water interacted with various geographical features. One group created a valley and noticed that the water "created a lake inside the valley!"

Later the students came back together to answer the question "How does water flow?" Students used the sentence stem of "Water flows..." to answer the question so they could compare observations. At the end, they summarized answers with one common theme: Water flows down. Students had a great time creating landforms and predicting where the water would pool as they investigated how water interacts with the land.



BROOKWOOD PRINCIPAL WINS GIANT AWARD

Congratulations to Brookwood Elementary Principal Lorenzo Bradshaw on being named the recipient of the Hattie Beverly Education Award at the 39th Annual GIANT Awards Ceremony in Grand Rapids on October 1! The GIANT awards recognize members of the African American community in Grand Rapids who make a meaningful impact on the lives of others. Bradshaw has served as principal at Brookwood for 14 years.

Those who know Bradshaw are not surprised he received this recognition. Explorer Elementary Principal Carrie Tellerico, who has known Bradshaw since their early teaching days in the late 1990's, explains Bradshaw will "Do everything in his power to make sure that we are removing barriers for, not only parents, but most importantly for students." Crestwood Middle School Assistant Principal Damon Johnson, who has known Bradshaw since college, states, "He's so invested in our community. He's so invested in kids." Tellerico adds that Bradshaw is "the most selfless person" she has ever known.

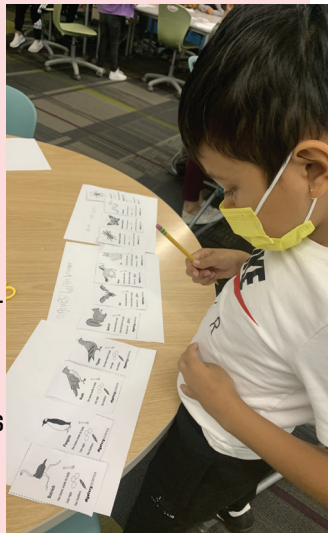
STEM AND STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

Townline students have been actively engaged in student-centered learning. Whole group lessons and activities are not only educationally sound, but also great for team building and classroom culture. One of the ways Townline is engaging in student-centered learning is through STEM.

STEM-focused lessons have always been a favorite for Townline students! STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and is important because it is part of our everyday lives. Science is everywhere in the world, and technology is continuously expanding into every aspect of life.

Second grade students participate in group STEM activities every Thursday in the Collaboration Center. "STEM gives our 2nd grade students an opportunity to nurture their curiosity, guide them as they explore the world, and ensure they develop the most important skill of all: the ability to figure things out for themselves," Ms. Mohamed commented when asked why she thought STEM was important for the classroom. Activities range from geography and climate lessons to structural engineering activities.

Fifth graders were fortunate enough to participate in a multi-school STEM event held at Southwood elementary. Some of the activities included DNA extraction, tracking box turtles, and learning about Drone technology. "My favorite part was being able to see our DNA," Sophie, a 5th grader enthused while showing us a small vial filled with her DNA. These active experiences make learning memorable and fun!



ENGINEERING EXPERIENCES

Sixth grade students at Valleywood are engaged in mimicking the engineering world in STEM class. Students are learning to connect and wire circuits virtually on Tinkercad. Tinkercad is an engineering platform that allows students to mirror real-life simulations. Students are also connecting circuits on Arduino boards, an open-source electronics platform based on hardware components and programmable software.

Students are challenged to build a Keystudio smart robot with the Arduino boards. These boards read computer inputs to activate a motor or detect an object with an electronic sensor. The students have been learning design, problem-solving and troubleshooting with electrical circuits. The Keystudio robots lead students toward thinking about the future of automation in transportation. The robots help students understand new engineering practices and prepare for a future of engineering vehicles to use less fossil fuels.



HANDS-ON LEARNING AT EKFC *Continued from page 3*

Scholars engaged in Socratic Circles where they identified the needs and desires of each of these groups to influence political action. Scholars relied on reading, writing, and listening skills to form thesis statements and debate their stance to influence political action in their group's best interest. In doing so, scholars were forced to take on new perspectives, learn empathy for other groups, and challenge their own values and assumptions.

Scholars in Mrs. Prielipp's algebra classes have enhanced learning by using motion sensors. Their work with the sensors integrates key features of linear equations with motion graphs and establishes connections with content learned in their Bio/Physics class. Students walk in front of sensors to collect data and create lines with negative slope, positive slope, and zero slope.

These kinesthetic experiences help students to explore and understand the relationship between position and time while interpreting slopes of graphs.

Applied learning is not specific to our core departments. In 9th grade choir, the musicians work daily on sharpening their ability to read music. Scholars read music while interpreting changes in dynamics and tempo in small sections. Then they come together to blend nearly 50 voices into a beautiful chorus singing in perfect harmony.



KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Calendar 2022-23

Aug 22 *First Day of School

- Sep 2 No School
- Sep 5 No School
- Sep 21 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Sept 28..... Middle School Conferences- Evening (Full Day for Students)
- Sept 29..... Middle School Conferences- Half Day for 6-8 Students
- Sept 30..... Half Day for 6th-8th Student & Staff
- Oct 12 & 13.... High School Evening Conferences (Full Day School)
- Oct 14 Half Day for 9th-12th Students & Staff
- Oct 26 Elementary Evening Conferences
- Oct 27..... Half Day K-5 Students / Evening Conferences
- Oct 28 Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Oct 31 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Nov 23 Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Nov 24 & 25 ... No School - Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 16 Half Day for ALL Students/KEA records day
- Dec 19 - 30 Winter Break
- Jan 2 Winter Break
- Jan 16 No School - MLK Day / PD for Staff
- Feb 14 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- Feb 20 & 21 Mid-Winter Break
- Mar 1..... Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Full Day of School
- Mar 2 Middle & High School Evening Conferences / Half Day 6-8 Students ONLY / Full Day High School
- Mar 3 Half Day 6-12 Student & Staff
- Mar 27 Elementary Evening Conferences / Full Day
- Mar 28 Half Day K-5 Students
- Mar 29..... Half Day K-5 Students & Staff
- Mar 30..... Half Day for ALL Students and Staff
- Mar 31 - Apr 7. Spring Break
- May 26 Half Day for ALL Students / PD for Staff
- May 29 No School - Memorial Day
- Jun 2..... Last Day of School - Half Day for Students & Staff

School	Start	Dismissal	Half Day Dismissal
Elementary	9:00 AM	3:55 PM	11:55 AM
Middle	8:15 AM	3:04 PM	11:20 AM
Freshman Campus	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
High School	7:30 AM	2:31 PM	10:53 AM
Crossroads	7:37 AM	2:29 PM	10:45 AM

AUGUST							JANUARY						
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SEPTEMBER							FEBRUARY						
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NOVEMBER							APRIL						
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DECEMBER							MAY/JUNE						
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No School For Students
 Half Day *check left column to see what schools have ½ days

Kentwood Board of Education
KENTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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KENTWOOD, MI 49508

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Want to make a difference?

The Education Foundation has several openings for its board of directors.

The Foundation was founded in 1986 and it exists as a community funded, volunteer driven organization. Its mission is to increase the value in our community's public education through...

- Educational Grants to Kentwood Public Schools Faculty
- Corporate and Memorial Scholarship Opportunities
- Partnering Business Giving with Classroom Needs

Please visit www.kpsef.org and go to the "contact us" tab for more information.

The following is a collection of excerpts from a letter our Foundation received from Southwood Elementary teacher Julie VanLier, sharing the impact Foundation dollars have made at her school.

Dear KPSEF,

About nine years ago, one of SW's teachers wrote for and received a grant from the KPS Education Foundation to start a garden at SW. She got it started but then ended up moving across state....

When I took over the garden, the only thing I knew was that I hated gardening. But it's so good for our kids, especially those who don't get a chance to be outside or have limited space to play outside. Our garden is THRIVING thanks to the incredible support of various programs....

Before summer school started, I was at Meijer and ran into a second grader. I told her that she was going to be in one of my summer school groups, and the first thing she said was, "Yay, that means I get to go to the garden." Our garden has served various purposes over the years, and we get a lot of "repeat" kids to come back and help with it year after year. Today one of the fourth graders came out to help us, and he reminded me that he got to take some potatoes home last fall, and he'd like to take some home again so his mom can make him baked potatoes.

Thank you again for your support in initially funding this project.

Julie VanLier