



Schools across the nation are celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week in May. At Kentwood, our teachers are worth celebrating! Teachers and staff have a significant daily impact on students in classrooms, in extra-curricular activities, and even throughout the hallways of Kentwood Public Schools.

At Crestwood Middle School, Rashawn McClanahan loves his job. When stepping into his classroom, his commitment is obvious. The classroom is student-centered and welcoming. There are spaces intentionally designed to provide optimal and varied learning opportunities for students. A piano keyboard is displayed, front and center, just in case McClanahan decides to liven up a lesson with some music.

When you sit down and talk with McClanahan his love for his job is even more apparent. "I love working with kids," he exclaims. "I love making them happy. I love seeing them thrive as I lead the class."

Teachers like these are making a difference in the lives of each student

At Meadowlawn Elementary, first grade teacher Kallie Derrer also loves her profession. She greets each of her students in a warm, genuine manner every single morning — evidence of her love and care for the students. At times, she brightens her students' day by dressing like Cindy Lou Who. Kallie is intentional about making sure her young students are growing as learners.

"I do it for the kids," Derrer explains when asked why she teaches. "I just love that day-to-day interaction with them."

Teachers like these are making a difference in the lives of each student. "The research is very clear," says Superintendent Kevin Polston. "The most impactful factor on student achievement is their teacher(s). This is especially true at Kentwood Public Schools due to the strong relationships our teachers create with students and families and their deep commitment to our students' success."



Kentwood Public Schools teachers understand the responsibility involved in serving our students. They realize that established relationships combined with engaged learning leads to a successful future.

"I want them to remember that I cared about them," shares Crestwood's McClanahan, "and I did my best to serve whatever needs they had so that it could inspire them to do the same."

The love McClanahan and Derrer have for their work is shared by teachers across the district. It is also evident in the efforts teachers put into instruction.

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THE MULTILINGUAL TEAM AT GLENWOOD IS MULTITALENTED!

It's not every day you walk into your morning meeting and see a woman acting out the love story of a bird and whale in a different language, unless you work with Glenwood multilingual instructor Heidi Morrison. Morrison has taught ESL classes for the past 12 years and is one part of a superstar team. Heidi, her first-year teaching partner, Maxine Osorio, and longtime multilingual paraprofessional Melanie Mouw are dedicated to supporting Glenwood's multilingual students. It is indisputable that our multilingual team goes above and beyond in service to our families. They stay busy decorating their classrooms for an array of multicultural holidays, make certain every one of their students is properly geared up for the winter, visit homes to support parents, and of course ensure that their students see themselves in both their classrooms and their gen-ed classrooms.

While each member of the team goes above and beyond to support their students, each instructor was inspired to focus on multilingual education for vastly different reasons. Morrison's love of different cultures and languages prompted her to begin teaching EL. After spending years working in Indonesia, Mouw felt at home in the multicultural environment of KPS, and Osorio knew as a first generation Mexican American that she wanted her students to have an instructor that understood what it meant to be multilingual and all the nuances it brought.

When the team was asked what they wish others understood about being a multilingual teacher, two themes emerged. First, there is a lot more that goes into the job than "just teaching English". Second, the differences that our students bring are actually assets — our responsibility as educators is to figure out how to use them.

Glenwood is looking forward to our upcoming Parade of Nations on April 20th, marking Morrison's 10th Parade of Nations. Surprisingly, this will be Osorio's first, as a KPS Alumni. She is looking forward to seeing her students excited for an opportunity she knows her younger self would have cherished.

Thank you to Mrs. Morrison, Ms. Osorio, and Ms. Mouw for all the work you do!



CONGRATULATIONS SOUTHWOOD SPACE KIDS!

The Southwood Space Kids – Enrique Lara, Katelyn Weaver, Patrick Olahut, Phil McIntosh, and Darey Calderon-Garcia – spent several months researching, designing, and building a prototype for a remote control Mars rover dubbed "Falcon Space Rover." Mentor Engineer Jon McCulfor said, "My favorite concepts they developed are the spikes on the wheels to get better grip on the dusty surface of Mars, the extra battery, and the microphone." The judges must have agreed because the team won Honorable Mention at the Roger That! Design That! Challenge that took place in February at GVSU. Two of the Space Kids – Enrique and Patrick – were able to receive the award at the Grand Rapids Public Museum from U.S. Astronaut Dr. José Hernández and hear his inspiring story of a 10-year-old migrant farmworker who dreamed and worked hard to become an astronaut!



EAST KENTWOOD 10-12 TEACHERS OF THE MONTH

Each month our student body nominates two teachers of their choice that they feel go above and beyond. The teachers with the most nominations win that month. The winners are announced and shared on our digital TVs that month. The teachers also receive a free lunch of their choice and a plaque. Here are some of this year's winners:

EKHS NOVEMBER TEACHER OF THE MONTH
OLIVIA MILLER
Visual Arts

My favorite food is any kind of Ukrainian food! Borscht, hopchik, and perogies are my favorites!

My favorite things to do on my free time is go thrift shopping with a coffee in hand.

Travel inspires my teaching the most. Viewing new art and culture when traveling makes me excited to integrate new ideas, concepts, and methods into the classroom. I am an adventurer at heart and it fuels my lessons.

One word I would hope my students would describe me as is funny! However in reality I think they would describe me as engaging.

EKHS NOVEMBER TEACHER OF THE MONTH
KHADIJAH SHAAF
Math

My favorite food is any kind of chicken and broccoli.

My favorite restaurant is Black Rock.

My favorite hobbies are Cooking and Traveling.

My students inspire me the most. They are my "why." I am motivated every morning to wake up because I realize the impact I have on today's youth. Everything I do in the classroom is to further their knowledge of mathematics and make it relevant to the real world.

I hope my students will describe me as empowering.

EKHS JANUARY TEACHER OF THE MONTH
TARIN MCLEOD
Vocal Music

My favorite food is probably salad. I really do like salad! My favorite restaurant is Euro Bistro.

My favorite things to do outside of school are spend time with my family, read, shop, and play video games.

I am inspired most in my teaching when classes start to be a team and they are excited about coming to class to sing together. I honestly just like being around our students in general.

I hope kids would describe me as being kind.

EKHS JANUARY TEACHER OF THE MONTH
AMANDA THURNER
Mathematics

My favorite food are homemade pork and sauerkraut pierogies.

My favorite hobbies are reading or any type of cardio exercise.

My greatest inspiration is getting to laugh with my students.

One word I would hope students use to describe me is caring.

EKHS FEBRUARY TEACHER OF THE MONTH
ASHLEY BARTLEY
English Language Arts

My favorite food/restaurant is a tie between tacos and mac and cheese!

My favorite hobby is reading!

What inspires me most in teaching are my students- I love seeing lightbulb moments when what I'm teaching finally clicks.

One word I hope my students would use to describe me is caring.

EKHS FEBRUARY TEACHER OF THE MONTH
ALEX GIARMO
Social Studies

My favorite food is pizza, or anything with carb + tomato + cheese.

My favorite hobbies are golf, or hiking with my beautiful fiance.❤️

I love finding ways to instill joy and curiosity around learning. Having the ability to make a student's day better with some energy, enthusiasm, or the occasional cheesy joke (as my students roll their eyes) is so rewarding.

I hope others describe me as enthusiastic, energetic, compassionate (any of those work).

EKHS 10-12 TEACHERS OF THE MONTH!

Teacher Appreciation Week

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KPS teachers arrive before the start of the day and are staying beyond the dismissal bell and coming in on weekend afternoons to prepare for their students. Teachers attend athletic and art events, spend time in their evenings preparing for school, and take time to sit and listen to a student who needs extra attention.

"Our teachers are second to none," contends Superintendent Polston. "They are recognized across the state and nation for their expertise, innovation, and student outcomes both in and out of the classroom. The professional excellence of our teaching staff is a distinguishing factor of our district and community that sets KPS apart as a destination district."

Teachers like Meadowlawn's Derrer understand how special it is to teach at KPS. "I love teaching in Kentwood," she says. "I've always felt that this is my second family and that I belong here. I hope that my students feel that same sense of belonging."

This edition of Kentwood School News is dedicated to the teachers at Kentwood Public Schools, for their care and hard work for our students, and for the special role that they play in making KPS such a unique place for learning. Take a moment to view a collection of "Teacher Features" by scanning this QR Code and celebrate the impact of teachers at KPS!





MoCI TEAM EMPOWERS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Bowen Elementary contains the district's MoCI Program for elementary aged children. This program is designed to meet the needs of students with Moderate Cognitive Impairments (MoCI). Our program includes children with Down Syndrome, DeGeorge Syndrome and other health impairments. Under the direction of Alaina Allen, Jessica Serrell and Jenna VanderPloeg, the MoCI Program is committed to eliminating barriers by focusing on daily living skills, social skills and academic growth to allow our students to reach their fullest potential.

With a combined 20+ years of teaching experience, our MoCI Team uses their knowledge and expertise to design experiences to meet the individual needs of our students. Through accommodations and modifications, academic growth and relationship building are more attainable. These experiences include a Reading Buddies program that aligns students with their general education peers to engage in the joy of reading. In partnership with the East Kentwood High School MiCI Program, students engage in arts and crafts, team building and learning activities. Allen, Serrell and VanderPloeg work hard to include our entire Bowen student body in celebrating the unique differences of the MoCI program through spirit days such as World Down Syndrome Day. On this day, students wore mismatched socks to represent the extra chromosome that makes our children with Down Syndrome so unique.

Through practices such as these, and daily inclusion in the general education learning environment, our students with moderate cognitive impairments are teaching our student body empathy and compassion for one another. Students are building lasting friendships and learning new ways to communicate with each other. It has become the mission of our MoCI team to provide excellence and equity in education for all students.



CRESTWOOD COUNSELOR WINS PRESTIGIOUS HONOR

Congratulations to Shanna Bell, counselor at Crestwood Middle School, for being named Counselor of the Year by the West Michigan Counseling Association! Bell received the award in late April. "Shanna is a true champion for our students," says Crestwood Principal Jacquie Harris. "She goes above and beyond to ensure our students are cared for, supported, and heard. We are extremely blessed to get to work with such a compassionate and selfless individual. She is more than deserving of this honor." We thank Bell for representing Crestwood and all of Kentwood Public Schools so well and greatly appreciate her work and dedication to our students.

SPOTLIGHT ON ARCH ACTIVITY LEADERS

NICHOLAS RICKERT is an activity leader in Meadowlawn's ARCH program. Nicholas will graduate from Western Michigan University in June of 2023 with his master's in education, but his path to teaching wasn't always clear. Nick started his education career at GVSU, dreaming of becoming a physical therapist. He changed course and enrolled in their athletic training program. When that didn't quite feel like the right fit either, he switched paths again to Exercise Science. In May of 2017 he began working for ARCH. After earning a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science, Nick was unsure what his next steps would look like. He felt led to continue working with children and took a paraprofessional position at Meadowlawn. He enjoyed connecting with students, and seeing their faces when they learn something new. He decided that teaching was his true passion. He entered the master's program at Western University to become a certified teacher in June of 2022. He is currently a student teacher in Mrs. Vogler's 5th grade classroom as he finishes his degree. Fifth grader Malakhy McCoy is in Mrs. Vogler's class as well as ARCH. When asked his favorite thing about Mr. Rickert, Malakhy stated "His personality, he's super funny, and he loves teaching!" Nicholas feels more confident every day that teaching for Kentwood Public Schools is where he is supposed to be.



I would like to highlight a colleague, and a great friend of mine by the name of **DESTINEE BRILEY**. Miss Destinee serves as an activity leader for the Pinewood ARCH program. Miss Destinee is a very hard worker, responsible, reliable and also very loving and generous. She values the relationships that she builds with our students and loves to watch them grow and learn new things. Miss Destinee is also a math wizard that loves numbers and enjoys helping students solve tough math equations during our homework hour in program. I've also watched Miss Destinee slowly break out of her 'shy' shell and become more authoritative. She shows initiative with the way that she leads which is highly respected by our staff and students. She brings a great deal of high energy to the Pinewood ARCH program. Having the experience of getting to know her and work alongside her has been nothing short of joyful and thrilling. I am so appreciative for all that she does! Destinee's non-traditional path into working with kids came when her older sister served in ARCH as an activity leader. Her sister told Destinee that she would be great at it as well. Her sister was right! Destinee's fit with the program has been perfect. I'm so honored to have the opportunity to highlight Miss Destinee, her unique skill set and her devotion to the betterment of the lives of our students and scholars.

Townline ARCH would like to highlight one of our dedicated staff, **MS. ODELIA MITCHELL**. Odelia has been a great example to students since she started the ARCH program as a volunteer. In the fall of 2022, she joined our ARCH team as an activity leader. The ARCH students appreciate all her efforts and patience, especially during homework and enrichment time. Odelia is grateful for her time working for AmeriCorp tutoring math during the school day and working in ARCH after school. She finds her work very rewarding and enjoys all the relationships she has built with students. These opportunities have been priceless to her. She is currently in transition, changing her master's program from Applied Behavior Analysis to a counseling or education program after realizing her passion in working with children.



The Valleywood ARCH Program would like to spotlight two of its activity leaders, **MS. KARISSA KAUFMAN** and **MRS. LARISA AMOROS**. Their hard work and dedication have proven to be a valuable asset to the Valleywood ARCH program. We would like to shed light on the wonderful work Ms. Karissa and Mrs. Amoros have done since joining the team. We appreciate and respect all that they do to make the program a successful one.

Ms. Karissa is currently pursuing a degree in English and secondary education at Grand Valley State University. In her youth, one person, her senior English teacher, made an impression on her to pursue a degree in education. With her inspiration she pushed Ms. Karissa to do her very best and made learning enjoyable. Ms. Karissa shared the following: "The most rewarding part of my career would have to be the connections you make with the children. Walking in every day and seeing a smile on their face and getting to hear all about their day is something I absolutely love!" When asked, what is something that you can say to encourage others to make strides in their lives? She replied, "One of the more encouraging things my grandpa always told me growing up was "try your best, if you fail, try again". "I think that's something that has really stuck with me even on the bad days. As long as you did your best you should be proud of yourself."

Mrs. Amoros is currently attending Ferris State University pursuing a degree in criminal justice. Mrs. Amoros' husband would tell her about his workday as a PE teacher. This struck her in such a positive manner that she decided to seek out a job that would help her gain experience working with youth. Today, Mrs. Amoros states, "The most rewarding part of my career is being able to form bonds with the children. A mentor/leader is crucial in a child's life and being able to be that for some children is an amazing feeling. Making a child smile after a bad day really makes it all worth it." When asked if she had words to encourage others on their journeys she replied, "Little by little" my grandpa says this to me all the time. And what this means is, you don't have to rush things in your life. Great things take time, as long as you do things little by little, it will get done.

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PINEWOOD STEM PROJECTS

This year Pinewood students have had the opportunity to take enrichment classes focused on STEM concepts. We would like to recognize two of our amazing teachers who have gone above and beyond to develop engaging and exciting hands-on activities for students to help them gain a deeper understanding of some very complex subjects.

First, Ms. Amr developed a boat race unit where students worked collaboratively to design a watercraft using everyday items. Throughout the unit her students were challenged to use their Science, Technology, Engineering and Math skills to research and develop a buoyant vehicle that would carry at least one passenger. Our students' hard work and creativity were then put to the test at the end of the marking period when they had an opportunity to participate in an actual race against their classmates at the EKHS pool. The boat race unit this year was a huge success and lots of fun! Many thanks to Ms. Amr for creating such an interesting and engaging activity that is certain to have a positive impact on students for years to come.



Ms. Hewitt also created units where students would learn about STEM-related concepts, then apply their learning and creativity to build various projects using Legos as a learning tool. In one unit, students were challenged to work collaboratively to research a topic, then to produce a stop-motion video using technology and Legos to build each scene. In the other, students were asked to build a vehicle out of Legos, then to customize it to enhance its performance after a series of experiments. Students shared that they really enjoyed the lessons and to have the ability to use their imagination and be creative with their projects. Thank you to Ms. Hewitt for developing these interactive lessons and giving students the opportunity to apply their knowledge of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math in a fun and engaging way!



JUSTIN VELTING: NEWEST CROSSROADS TEAM MEMBER

Justin Velting is the newest Crossroads team member. He was hired in November as our social studies teacher and has excelled as a part of our team. He has experience working at WayPoint Academy, Wellspring Preparatory High School, and Hope Academy of West Michigan before coming to Kentwood Public Schools.

When asked about Mr. Velting, Crossroads student Joaquin Garcia had the following statements:

What class do you have Mr. Velting for? What do you like about that class and the culture/vibe in the classroom?

I have Mr. Velting for U.S. History. I really like this class because he makes the material understandable and relevant. The culture and vibe in the classroom are always positive and engaging.

What are Mr. Velting's greatest strengths as a teacher and person?

Mr. Velting's greatest strength as a teacher and person is that he is always very patient with students.

What is one memory that comes to mind when you think of Mr. Velting?

One memory that comes to mind when I think about Mr. Velting is a time in class when he played guitar for us. All students listened, and many of them even started rapping to the rhythm when he was playing. It was really cool!

What makes Mr. Velting a positive role-model and teacher?

Mr. Velting is a positive role-model and teacher because he is really committed to student growth, and is always approachable.

If you had to describe Mr. Velting to a new student at Crossroads who did not have him as a teacher, how would you describe him?

Mr. Velting is best described as funny, chill, positive, and very supportive.

What makes Mr. Velting different from most teachers?

Mr. Velting is different from most teachers because he has a "professor" vibe to him. Mr. Velting is a positive role-model and teacher because he is really committed to student growth, and he is always approachable.



ECONOMICS ARE ALIVE AND WELL AT EXPLORER

Explorer Elementary fourth grade entrepreneurs had the opportunity to practice their skills during their school-wide book sale. Each student created a business plan detailing their store's specialization, target consumers, competition, and incentives. Students designed their store signs/advertisements and decided on pricing for their products. On the day of the sale, Explorer students were invited to come and shop for books at each store. This firsthand experience allowed students to witness the immediate results of their hard work and planning. A fun, educational, and profitable time was had by all!



The third-grade students and staff recently finished a social studies unit on economics. Students learned about Michigan's economy and then took that knowledge to organize a sale of popular toys, pencils and pens to the school. The kids helped write announcements, create posters, and sold the items. Finally, the students voted on a charity where they could share their profits. They chose Helen Devos Children's Hospital and were excited to contribute to a local hospital in our community.

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IMPORTANT 2023 - 2024 CALENDAR DATES

As this school year nears the finish line, we are already looking ahead to next school year. At the time of publication, all the details of the 2023 - 2024 school year calendar were still being finalized. However, we can share some important dates for you that are established at this time:

- Start date for students: August 21
- Thanksgiving Break: November 22 - 24
- Winter Break: Begins at the end of school day December 22, 2023; School resumes on January 8, 2024
- Midwinter Break: February 19 - 20
- Spring Break: March 29 - April 7