Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

MAY 2022 www.kalamazoopublicschools.com VOLUME 25, ISSUE 5

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IMPORTANT DATES

Board of Education Meetings

Wednesday, May 4, 2022
& Thursday, May 19, 2022
7 p.m.
Administration Building
1220 Howard St.
Visit kalamazoopublicschools.com/boardmeetings for more information

Thursday, May 5
Grades 6–8
Half Day

Friday, May 27
Last Day
PEEP and
Graduating Seniors

Monday, May 30
Memorial Day
All buildings closed

Tuesday, May 31
KAMSC Senior Recognition
Chenery Auditorium

Wednesday, June 1
Loy Norrix Graduation
Wings Event Center

Thursday, June 2
Kalamazoo Central Graduation
Wings Event Center

Friday, June 3
Phoenix Graduation
Chenery Auditorium

Monday, June 6
KILP Graduation
Chenery Auditorium

Monday, June 13
Adult Education Graduation
Chenery Auditorium

Special Education Helps Find the Right Resources So Children Can Thrive

Parents enrolling their children in school for the first time naturally have questions. For some, those concerns may revolve around whether their child needs extra support.

Reuquiyah "Rikki" Saunders, director of special education for Kalamazoo Public Schools, said that as part of the Michigan Child Find system, KPS "has a legal obligation to ensure we identify, locate, and evaluate any child that may be suspected of having a disability. That means all children and young adults up to the age of 26."

In addition to providing services to KPS students, the district also provides support to private schools, the Kalamazoo County Jail and the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home.

Many young children who need services and support come into the school system already having been identified for special education through their preschool experience, doctor's of-

(continued on page 5)

Norrix Librarian Honored for Work with Gender & Sexuality Alliance

Loy Norrix High School teacher librarian John Kreider was honored with an OutFront Kalamazoo #AlwaysOutFront Award in April for his work as the advisor for the school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA).

Kreider said they were humbled to receive the award because they know of so many other teachers and staff who have worked to support students.



Loy Norrix librarian John Kreider, center, poses for a photo with GSA members Thea Pipe, Destiny Gutter, Alex Bucher, and Jay Michels.

"My work with GSA is important, but just as important are the countless conversations I've had with students outside of GSA about their evolving understanding of themselves and the world around them," Kreider said. "A lot of students simply can't attend GSA for their own safety or for fear of backlash from peers or adults. So it's very important to me to be available to students, just to listen and affirm them. I'm most proud of being someone a lot of students feel comfortable talking to. I don't give much advice, I mostly just listen and affirm and direct them to other resources."

In their role as the school librarian, Kreider said they are "responsible for curating a collection of materials that reflects the experiences and identities of all of my students. I'm constantly asked for books about and by LGBTQIA+ people. Right now books are being challenged around the country and nearly all of them are by authors of color or LGBTQIA+ authors.

"A common response to book challenges is to encourage people to buy those books. But that's not the same as having those books on school library shelves where students have free and equal access to them."

Principal Chris Aguinaga said Kreider has done an "amazing" job as the advisor to GSA.

"They have helped turn the club into one of our longest-running and most well-attended clubs at LN. Clubs often fade over time, but the endurance of the GSA has been excellent. They have helped move the GSA from a support group to a group of advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights at LN," said Aguinaga, who serves on the board of OutFront Kalamazoo.

Here are other thoughts Kreider shared about their work as the GSA advisor:

Why did you get involved with GSA — or why did you feel it was important to get involved?

This is only my third year as

(continued on page 7)

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Teachers Are Multitasking Experts

As we thank educators during Teacher Appreciation Week, May 1–7, we should think about what goes into "teaching" nowadays.

Obviously, teachers take on the responsibility of teaching our children the knowledge and skills they will need to navigate the world. We want our teachers to be able to share information with students in a vibrant way that keeps them engaged and inspires them to take that knowledge and claim it as their own with a sense of mastery and confidence.

We know that the best teachers, the ones we remember when we are long past our school days, are those who not only taught us facts but inspired us to want to learn more. They made us learners who were curious about the world. They made us want to know more, to dig deeper, to share our knowledge and skills.

But teachers have always been about more than the books and facts they lay before children, and today's teachers are no exception. The demands on our teachers are immense, and if you stop to consider all that they do in a day, in a month, in a school year, their job is awe-inspiring.



Dr. Rita Raichoudhuri, Superintendent, Kalamazoo Public Schools

Teachers are master negotiators. Anyone who has been a parent knows this from experience. Getting a child to agree to complete a task, follow a direction, or get along with another person takes no small amount of finesse. In an elementary classroom, it is not just one or two children, but perhaps two dozen personalities to manage, at the secondary level, with a new class every hour, that's dozens of interests to juggle.

Teachers are interior design architects. Sometimes you walk into a classroom and immediately have a sense of "aah." It is a space where you want to spend your day engaged in learning. They take a generic room and make it a special place that a child wants to visit every day, a place they are happy to claim as their own for the school day or a class.

Teachers are counselors. They can read a student's mood from 10 paces and know how to get them to talk about their concerns and fears. They can help an overwhelmed student deal with his or her emotions and move to a place of learning. Today's educators do not simply suss out emotions but can often be the first professional to help identify a child in crisis. They reach out to families and connect them to services in the district and the community to ensure our students and their families stay safe and healthy.

Teachers are entertainers. You know how your favorite actor or comedian or musician always keeps you engaged, how they pull you into the world they are creating through their art? Teachers often do that. Sure, some students come to school ready to learn and do not need the dramatic energy of a teacher — but many others are distracted or tired or simply not ready to learn — and our teachers will still work hard to find a way to draw them into the lessons of the day. They use multiple talents to accomplish that first, and most important task, of imparting the day's lesson.

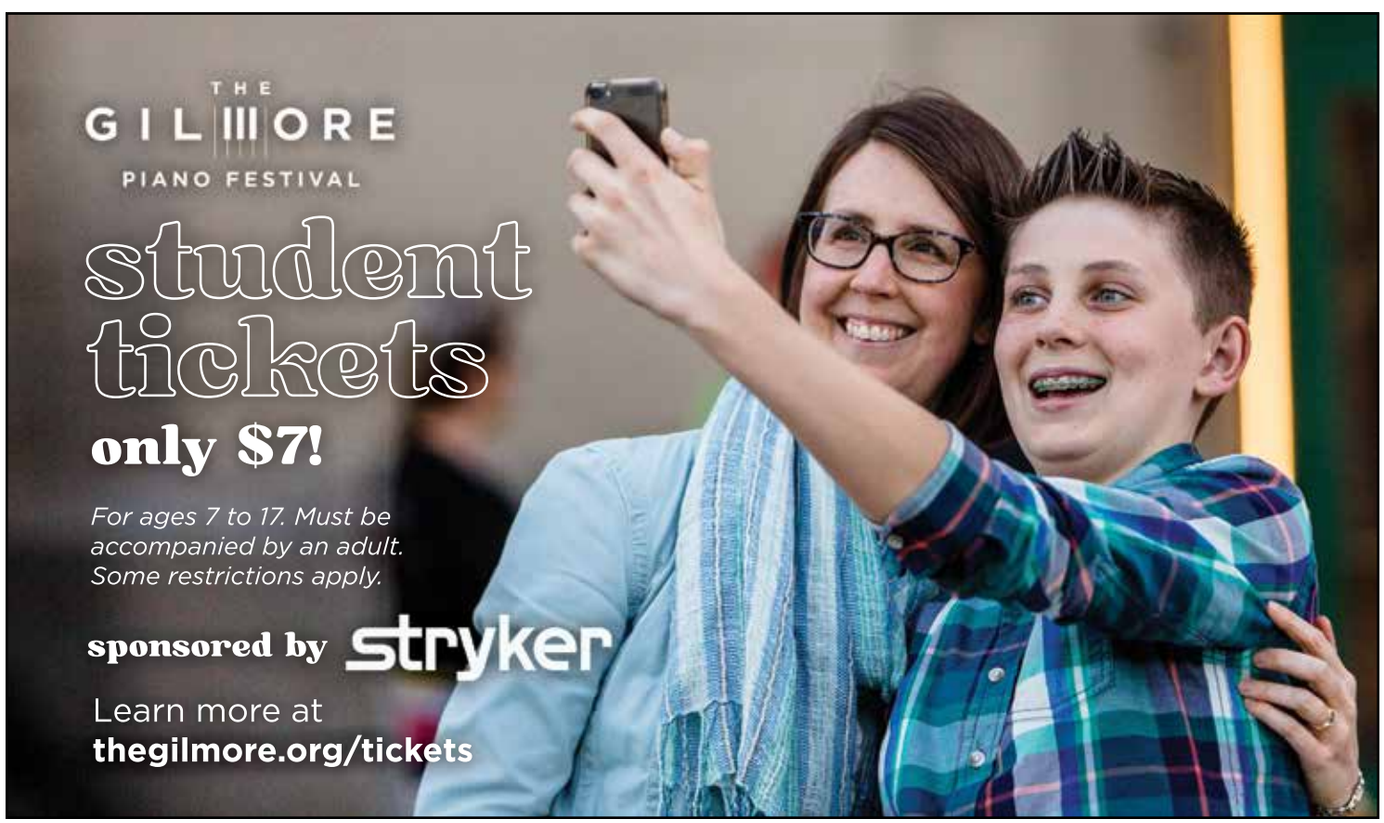
Teachers are cleaning technicians. Anyone who has children knows that this is true. Did someone spill juice? Did someone leave a trail of crumbs from their desk to the garbage? Did someone forget that the markers are for the paper and not their desk? Did they forget to throw away their used tissue, flush the toilet, push their chair in? Yes, we teach our children to do these things for themselves — but everyone forgets once in a while.

This year, of course, **teachers are also health care workers,** helping ensure our classrooms and schools stay safe and healthy by monitoring symptoms, enforcing mask rules, and communicating essential health information to families.

There are a million other little jobs that pop up in the course of a regular day — job duties big and small that need to be taken care of to ensure the day keeps moving along and students are in a place where they can learn and grow.

It can be daunting, and still our teachers remain some of the most dedicated people your children will encounter in their lives. They will have at least one, if not several, teachers who they will remember for the way they taught, or the kindness they showed on a bad day, or the way they made them laugh, or who made them feel like school was a special place — and that they were special.

Please join me in celebrating all that our teachers do by thanking them for another year of a job well done.



Stormwater Management Plan

Kalamazoo Public Schools is committed to ensuring stormwater run-off from its roadways and facilities comply with federal and state environmental regulations. View the KPS stormwater management plan at https://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/domain/62. See the City of Kalamazoo plan by scanning the QR code.





Fun and exciting events happening at KPL in May!
For details, please visit: kpl.gov or call (269) 553-7800

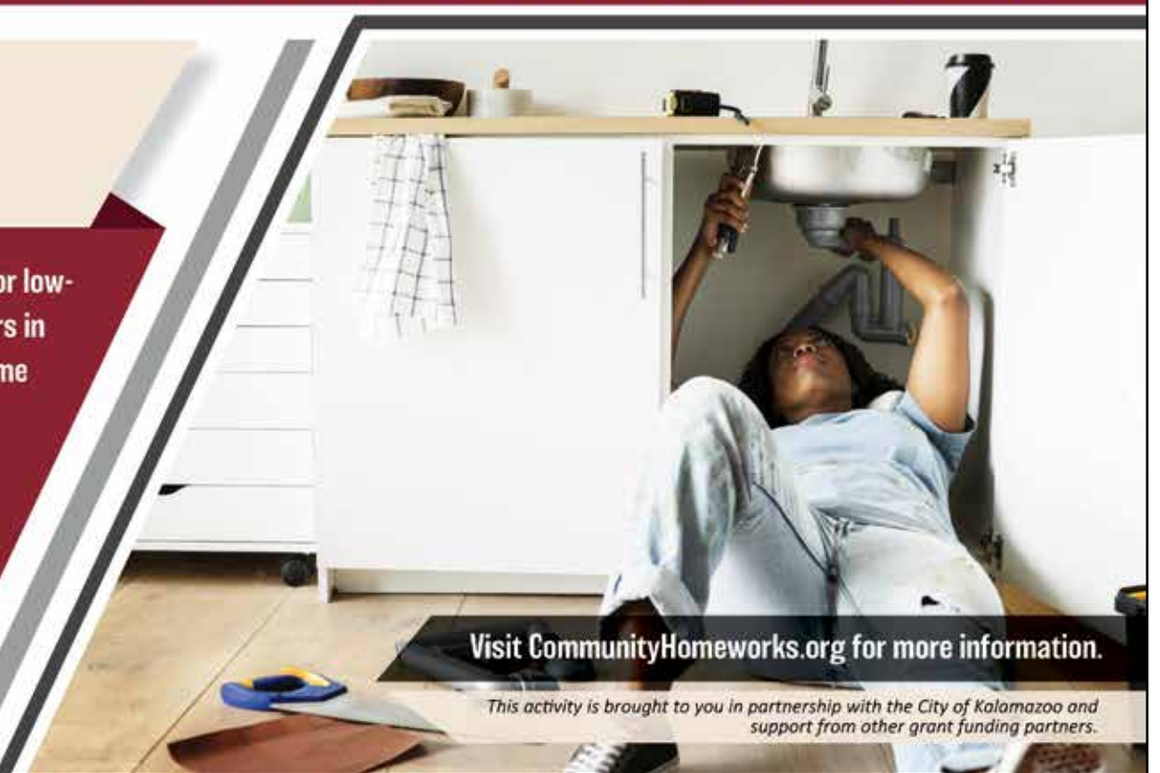
Kalamazoo Public Library
kpl.gov

These events are subject to change, please visit kpl.gov/events for more information.

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Visit CommunityHomeworks.org for more information.

This activity is brought to you in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo and support from other grant funding partners.



Eastside Youth Strong Offering Two Summer Programs

Eastside Arts and Science Learning (EASEL) summer program is a free high-quality program that focuses on three concentration areas: math, science, and art. EASEL targets first- through fifth-graders, providing hands-on projects and field trips. There are 20 spots available for the four-week program, which runs June 20–July 14 from 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday–Thursday at Trenches Community Church.

The Eastside Youth Strong STEAM Academy program is a free high-quality summer program that focuses on the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. STEAM is for rising sixth- and seventh-graders. Classes will be held at Douglass Community Association, Tree of Life, and St. Mary's Catholic Church. The four-week program runs June 20–July 14, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday–Thursday.

For more information contact Ashley Turnage at ashleyturnage.eys@gmail.com or at (269) 873-2826.



Matthew McKenzie, left, and Caleb Allen conduct a STEAM science experiment to learn about how much energy is in various foods.

Thank You!

Kalamazoo Public Schools would like to thank the following businesses for their donations of coupons, vouchers and merchandise for student raffles held during state testing this year.

State testing helps the district track student achievement, influence policy making, and affect funding from the state. State testing also gives the district an indication of the students' abilities and the district's effectiveness.

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- Turbo Chicken
- YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo
- GQT Kalamazoo 10
- Starbucks
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Kalamazoo Public Schools welcomes all students and staff of any religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability.

The District will not tolerate or condone any act of bias or discrimination toward any person on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy, gender identification, height, weight, familial status, marital status, sexual orientation, and disability in any of its activities, hiring practices, programs or services.

Inquiries by students and/or their parents/guardians should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Student Services
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

All other inquiries should be directed to:

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Kalamazoo Public Schools
1220 Howard St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0177

District Directory at :
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

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Special Education About Finding the Right Resources to Help Children Thrive *(cont. from pg. 1)*

To read more about Kalamazoo Public Schools' special education and Child Find go to:
https://www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/Page/1302

fice or the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), which provides in-home support services for children ages 0 to 2.

Parents of children who have not been formally assessed as requiring special education services, but are worried about their child's learning, should always feel free to speak to their child's teacher, which is a good first step to seeing how the district can support a child.

"Just let us know you're concerned about your child." But, Saunders cautioned parents against assuming a child needs special education. There are many factors to take into consideration in evaluating a child's needs, and the district offers a variety of interventions — short of special education — which may help a child.

"As special education advocates, we want to work ourselves out of a job," Saunders said. "We want children to grow and matriculate with their general education peers when possible. We also want to make sure we're not identifying kids too early, without using all other requirements of the law, such as interventions."

The Child Find process prescribes steps that help staff identify, locate and evaluate students and determine when special education is appropriate. Sometimes a child's special needs are more easily identified, such as in the case of students with severe medical needs, but oftentimes numerous other issues could be at play, Saunders said.

Some common issues that may be affecting a child's learning:

Child development — A child may lag behind peers in a skill such as reading simply because of maturity and development issues. "We need to give children a chance to develop. Let's look at what a child is actually expected to do at their age," Saunders said. "Not everyone develops in the same way. Disabilities are things that don't go away with time or development or a change of environment."

Social-emotional needs — With the pandemic, Saunders said, "Everyone is struggling." KPS has acknowledged the reality of the trauma caused by the pandemic by putting a renewed emphasis on social-emotional learning. She said students have been demonstrating that simply being in school with peers has resulted in academic growth.

Transitional periods — Some periods in a child's school career are more stressful than others, such as fifth grade and the transition into high school. In those cases, children often need time to decompress and learn new social skills and the expectations of their learning environment.

Social stability — Some students are impacted by stressful social and environmental issues such as homelessness or foster care. That may result in a child that has environmental challenges and needs socioemotional support. The district offers services to help students deal with those situations.

KPS serves about 1,700 students in special education but offers support to many other children through other programs. The goal is not to label children but to ensure that they are getting the appropriate help they may need at specific moments in their lives. For the vast majority of students with special needs, excellent services are provided within the regular education environment.

"We have to find the right interventions and specialized instruction to support students," she said. "We don't want to over identify children for special education programs and services. Our goal is to assist students with disabilities make progress in all areas of need, so they will become productive now and in tomorrow's world."



Chef Samuel Dunn • KPS FOOD SERVICE CHEF &
Kirsten Strong • KPS FOOD SERVICE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Grilled Asparagus and Lemon with Feta

Spring is here and that means so is asparagus season in Southwest Michigan! Asparagus is high in folate and fiber. Folate is the more absorbable form of vitamin B9. It is involved in the synthesis of DNA and other genetic material in our bodies and is crucial in the prevention of neural birth defects during pregnancy. Ongoing studies say folate also decreases the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

May 7 is opening day for the Kalamazoo Farmers Market at its newly renovated location on Bank Street. You will find many vendors there selling asparagus and other spring produce. The outdoor market is the perfect place to meet family and friends. It is an enjoyable way to do your grocery shopping while supporting local farmers!

Ingredients
1 lb asparagus, ends trimmed
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 lemon
¾ tsp salt, or to taste
¼ tsp ground black pepper
½ cup crumbled feta cheese

Preheat your outdoor grill to 425˚F, or start the coals if it is a charcoal grill.

Toss the asparagus in ½ tablespoon of olive oil. Cut the lemon in half and toss with asparagus or brush olive oil on the cut side of both lemon halves.

Place the lemon halves flat-side down onto the hot grill. Grill until the lemon halves are charred, about 5-7 minutes. Remove and set aside.

Position asparagus diagonally over the grill grates directly over the heat. Cook for 3-4 minutes, or until tender but crisp and slightly charred. Be sure to flip the asparagus to char all sides. Transfer asparagus to a plate.



Kirsten Strong, registered dietician, Samuel Dunn, executive chef, KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Pour remaining olive oil in a mixing bowl. Squeeze the lemon juice of both halves into the bowl with the salt and pepper. Whisk. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Drizzle lemon dressing over grilled asparagus, sprinkle with feta cheese, and serve.

Servings: 4

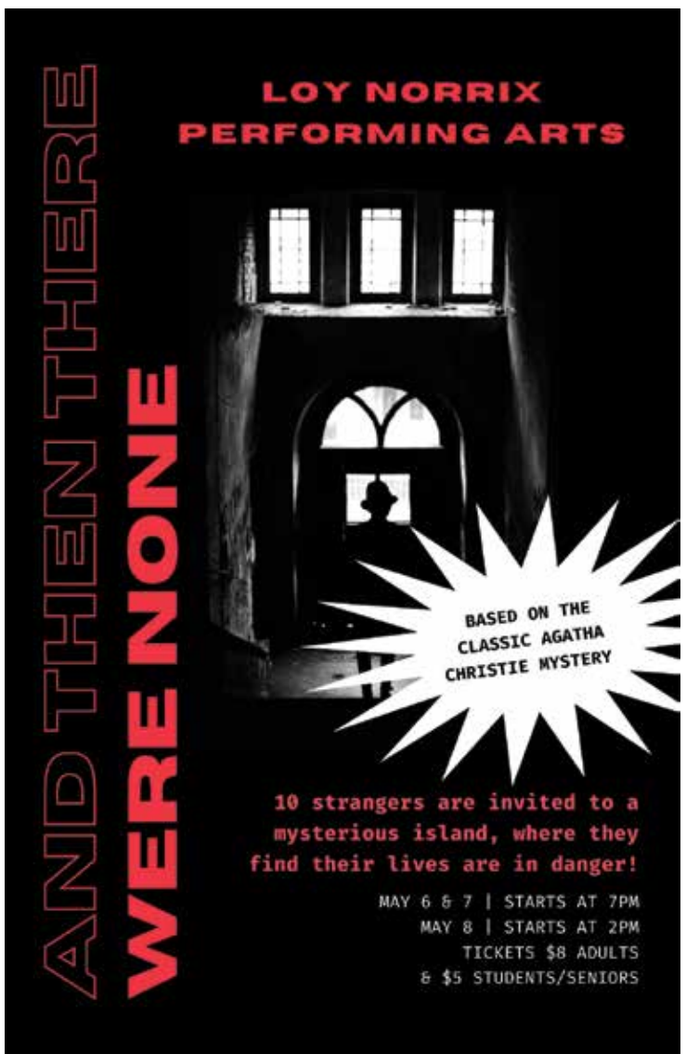
Artists' Corner

Hillside Middle School art teacher Amber Delos-Angeles has been working with her eighth-grade Basic Design class to explore concepts of mirroring, composition, and color selection. Students were asked to create playing cards images in which they could use only spots of color to create highlights on the cards.



From left, Eloise Chatel, Eva VanderRoest, Aziah Shelton display their art.





Norrix Librarian Honored for Work with Gender & Sexuality Alliance *(continued from page 1)*

an advisor of the GSA. Four years ago, when a previous advisor was moving, I said that I would make sure the group continued. Wanting to make sure the group carried on was really the reason I got involved, however, it also happened to be right around the time that I started coming out to my loved ones. So, I needed the group as much as the group needed me. The students and my co-advisors in GSA have helped me learn and grow tremendously.

Why is a group like GSA important for students?

The GSA is important for students because being a part of the LGBTQIA+ community is both beautiful and scary. Students know who they are better than anyone else, and they need to know and believe that whoever they are is valid and absolutely perfect. That goes for all students, of course, and the GSA is here for all students of any identities. But the experience of being Queer, Trans, or questioning is unique in its challenges and rewards, and so those young people need a space to process and celebrate it all.

What kind of activities does the group host?

The students set the course of the group. Typically we have a balance of a few types of meetings that rotate. We have educational meetings, where we discuss things such as policy and law, representation in media, intersectionality, allyship and advocacy, healthy relationships and boundaries, LGBTQIA+ history, and more. We have SEL-focused meetings where we work on art together, or exchange coping skills, or process our emotions together. And we have good ol' fashioned social time, where we hang out, get to know each other, and party. We also plan events and initiatives together that arise out of our discussions.

What are the biggest issues facing LGBTQIA+ students — especially those who are high-school age?

I think one of the biggest issues facing all students is that adults make a lot of decisions that impact young people without really listening to young people. We haven't done a great job of providing the structure for our students to lead the way on the issues that impact their happiness, health, academic success, and general well-being. This issue is amplified for LGBTQIA+ students because often it's adults telling young people, directly or indirectly, that, "we know you better than you know you;" "you don't know who you are, you're too young;" or "It's just a phase" is a common refrain my students talk about.

And my response to something being "just a phase" is: First, it's probably not, because being Queeer or Trans can be scary, so no one's really coming out just for fun or attention; and second, so what if it is a phase? I'd rather be in a phase in which I'm comfortable and happy and then move into another phase where I'm more comfortable and happier than be stuck pretending I'm something I'm not for the comfort of other people.

Kalamazoo Public Schools

Every child. Every opportunity. Every time.

Investing in our Community's Future

On May 3, 2022, the Kalamazoo community will have the opportunity to vote on a bond proposal. If voters approve this bond proposal, there is expected to be **NO increase in the tax rate.**

This bond would provide $197.1 million to fund capital improvements in our 24 schools. The Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) May 2022 bond proposal was developed to invest in our community's future. The bond funds will enable KPS to invest in safety and security; invest in buildings, classrooms, and mechanical upgrades; and invest in technology.

Election day: May 3, 2022

Polls are open: Tuesday, May 3, 2022 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Registered voters may cast a ballot at the polling location established by their city/township.

Absentee voting:
ballots will be available by March 19, 2022. For more information on voting: **michigan.gov/vote**.

To learn more, visit the district website at **kalamazoopublicschools.com/Bond2022** for an overview of the proposal, building specific details, and frequently asked questions and answers.

@KalamazooPublicSchools @KPSschools

Questions? Call **(269) 337-1572** or email **bond@kalamazoopublicschools.net**.

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Maple Street's New Mascot Cheers on Winning Teams

Western Michigan University's Buster Bronco. The Kalamazoo Wings' Slappy. And, the San Diego Chicken. Now you can add Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts' Freddie Falco to the list of recognizable mascots.

Maple Street introduced a new mascot this year and Freddie Falco has been quite busy cheering on the school's sports teams and attending activities at the school, said Thomas Unangst, who joined the Maple team as its athletic director and strategic reading teacher at the beginning of the school year.

"Freddie has been in some of our club photos. He has celebrated students of the month. He has attended some sporting events. And every once in a while, he makes his way around the school to visit classrooms," Unangst said. Most recently, Freddie was invited to a K-Wings hockey game to play broomball with the K-Wing's Slappy and other area mascots, sign autographs and pose for photos with fans.

The school has had an amazing sports year, Unangst said. It's 7A, 8B, and 8A boys basketball teams all won the city championship against the other Kalamazoo Public Schools middle schools. Its 7B, 7A, 8B, and 8A girls basketball teams brought home a Maple Street sweep with their city championships. The school's wrestling team also brought home its city championship trophy and a first place finish at the Lakeview Wrestling Tournament. Maple Street swimmers help their Kalamazoo United team win the Southwest Michigan Middle School Swimming and Diving Conference.



Maple Street Magnet School girls and boys basketball, wrestling, and swimming teams.



Freddie Falco takes time out of his day to pose with Maple Street Magnet School principal Dr. Jeffrey Boggan.

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Kalamazoo Public Library Lower Level
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DECA Students Head to Nationals After State Wins

Loy Norrix High School students took home several awards at the Michigan DECA state conference held in Detroit March 10-12. DECA is a career education program that helps students develop skills in four business areas: management, marketing, finance, and hospitality. Twenty-four Norrix students qualified for states.

Chanel Wilson and Wendy Miedema earned a gold School Based Enterprise Award for re-opening a pop-up school store and writing a 20-page paper about the experience.

Aliah Ward and Nateya Thomas earned medals and the DECA Glass Award for Career Awareness for hosting the I Have a Dream Career Expo at Norrix.

Arturo Pinto competed in the Virtual Business Sports competition. He placed third in the Central Region, which covers Michigan, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin and Iowa.

Javon Harris earned a medal for a high test score and a medal for the best role play in Principles of Business Finance.

Chanel, Wendy, Aliah, Nateya, and Arturo advanced to DECA's International Career Development Conference in Atlanta in April.

Loy Norrix business teacher Atiba Ward is the DECA advisor.

KPS-KAMSC Students Top Saginaw Valley Programming Contest

Kalamazoo Central High School Senior Anthony Alvarez and Loy Norrix High School junior Benjamin Whitsett took the top prize in the Association for Computing Machinery High School Programming Contest held at Saginaw Valley State University in March.

The first-place duo was part of a group of 49 Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center computer science students who participated in the event, which was the first in-person competition for students in two years. The team is coached by KAMSC computer science teacher Shannon Houtrouw.

Alvarez and Whitsett finished the entire set of 10 problems in just over 90 minutes and were the only team to do so. This was the second collaboration between Alvarez and Whitsett. In November, they teamed up for the Michigan State University Virtual High School Programming Contest, handily winning that event as well.

The Top 10 teams of two or three students were recognized at the end of the contest. The Top 3 placing teams were awarded electronic devices. KAMSC had seven teams finish in the Top 10. All 17 KAMSC teams correctly solved at least one problem. The KPS competitors, along with their final rank and number of correct solves were:

1st place: KC senior Anthony Alvarez and Norrix junior Benjamin Whitsett (10/10 solves)
5th: KC junior Alex Salinas (8)
7th: KC junior Evan McDermott (7)
9th: Norrix senior Evan Teal (7)
13th: KC seniors Abigail Houtrouw and Emily Nguyen (5)
23th: KC senior Evelyn Roth (4)
27th: KC junior Ava Moaiery (3)
39th: Norrix sophomore Vivienne Chapman (2)



KAMSC/KPS computer science programmers placed first overall at the recent ACM High School Programming Contest at Saginaw Valley State University. Students are: Evan McDermott, Abigail Houtrouw, Alexander Salinas, Evelyn Roth, Benjamin Whitsett,, Ava Moairey, and Anthony Alvarez. (Not pictured: Vivienne Chapman, Emily Nguyen, and Evan Teal).

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Teacher Sarah Giramia Finds Inspiration From Ugandan Roots



Linden Grove Middle School teacher Sarah Giramia came to Kalamazoo from Uganda, where she was first inspired to teach by her mother's school for war orphans.

Sarah Giramia knows that the past year and a half have not been easy for her students.

It wasn't easy for her either as a college student. She missed the in-person classes and learning from being with and around other people.

The Linden Grove eighth-grade English language arts teacher says she can see her students struggling with not having been together for the past few years.

"Kids are having a hard time transitioning," said Giramia, who graduated from Western Michigan University in the fall of 2020 and from Loy Norrix High School in 2016. "In addition to all of the school work, they have to just get used to being around each other on a consistent basis and having adults watching what you're doing."

She laughs. "Sometimes a student will forget basic classroom etiquette. They might just get up in the middle of class, and I'll think, 'I'm talking. Why are you walking toward me?'"

Giramia offers her students a certain amount of grace, in part because she went through her own moments as a student, when she had to learn how to handle the classroom experience. Giramia, 23, was born in Uganda and moved to Kalamazoo when she was about 8 and her mother enrolled in a Western Michigan University doctoral program.

"One day my mom said we're going to the United States. 'Oh. OK,'" Giramia remembers thinking. "My brothers and I had never really thought about coming to the U.S. and we never thought about coming to a place called Kalamazoo. All we knew about the United States was New York or Los Angeles — not Michigan."

In Kampala, Uganda, she attended school year round, wore a school uniform, and all of her teachers and most of her fellow students were Black. In the United States, she arrived in the middle of summer break, could wear what she wanted and found herself in a racially diverse school.

"It was my first time being exposed to a sense of diversity in a school setting," she said. "That was a culture shock for sure. I really didn't even know I was anything different, besides my culture of just being African. Coming here, I began to understand the identity of Blackness."

That sense of identity has stayed with her. As a college student, she was one of the founders of the student organization, Future Teachers of Color, which provided networking and career preparation opportunities for fellow education students.

"We just realized that our classes were not as diverse as they should be and we wanted to increase the numbers of students who stay in the WMU education program," Giramia said.

Giramia began working full-time for KPS this school year. She originally thought that she would teach high school students, but her internships in the middle school setting helped change her mind.

"Middle-schoolers are a little mix of everything," she said. "They're still very impressionable — even if they think they're not. They are a little crazy. A lot of these kids are crazy funny. They're going to do their own thing. I think my personality is a little more middle school. I don't know if high-schoolers would find my jokes as funny as middle- schoolers do."

Teaching at Linden Grove is the fulfillment of a long-dreamed of career. Her mother is an educator who began a school for war orphans in Uganda.

"She engulfed me in that world," Giramia said. "I got a first-hand look at how important education was and is. I never wanted to take it for granted."

Nor did she want to disappoint the teachers who inspired her — teachers that she wants to emulate so she can inspire the next generation of students.

"I always knew your education was something that no one can take away from you, so I tried really hard to equip myself with the best education possible. I want my students to be able to do that as well."

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WMU Presidential Scholar Hailey Timmerman Eyes KPS Teaching Career

Hailey Timmerman's first job convinced her that teaching was meant to be her only job.

Timmerman graduated in April from Western Michigan University with a degree in early childhood education. She was named a 2022 WMU Presidential Scholar. She hopes to begin teaching with Kalamazoo Public Schools in the fall.

A 2017 Loy Norrix High School graduate, Timmerman's first job was with Prevention Works, an afterschool program that educates children on drug and violence prevention.

"I was like, 'I like kids.' I felt like I could do it for free," she said. "I especially liked working with the younger population. They were just so excited to see me and to engage. They were like sponges, ready to soak up learning."

After graduating from Norrix, Timmerman enrolled in Western Michigan University where she took advantage of The Kalamazoo Promise scholarship which covered her tuition, and she was selected for the Future Educators Program, a U.S. Department of Education grant program that promotes the retention and graduation of future teachers.



Hailey Timmerman works with students as a student teacher in Rocann Fleming's fifth-grade class at Edison Academy.

For the lifelong student, college was an opportunity to examine education from the other side.

"I started learning best practices about how to make learning more fun and engaging. I think when you do that, it helps with some of the behavior problems. It's not just about repeating information, but to teach the information in a way that makes sense and really engages students.

"You want to teach it in a way that really makes sense to the students. I like thinking about problems from a student's perspective because that helps me teach effectively."

Her classroom learning has been supplemented by several hands-on teaching experiences. Her first field experiences were as a volunteer with Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo's afterschool program. She worked for the Kalamazoo Public Schools summer school program, worked as a one-on-one literacy coach for a student, and did a virtual field placement with Greenwood Elementary and a Head Start preschool class. She completed a pre-internship with Edison Academy and a full-time internship at Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School in the winter.

As an intern, she's had her work overseen by her classroom mentor teachers and an observational coach from WMU. In addition, she's been proactive about reaching out to other educators for advice. She's been recording herself when she's in front of classes, and has asked her former KPS elementary principal, Vickie Winfield, to review the recordings to offer advice.

Her hope is to find a job teaching third grade — her favorite age group.

"I love third-graders," she said. "They're still excited and ready to learn. Behavior isn't as much of an issue. I like little kids, but with them, so much of it is teaching them how to school, like sitting still and tying their shoes. Third grade is a happy medium."

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