

Kalamazoo Public Schools

EXCELSIOR

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April 2024 • Volume 27, Issue 4

The Sound of Festival Music

(STORY & PHOTOS ON PAGES 22-23)



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KPS Seeks New Paths to Success with Strategic Planning Process

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



SPRING is the stuff of promise. Summer may be wonderful with the full sun, beach weather, and vacations, but spring, that time of transition, is immensely inspiring with its transformative powers.

With spring, the world resets before our eyes. Suddenly, we see new possibilities in the warmer weather, the sunnier days and every shoot pushing through the ground. With spring's arrival, we know things are going to change.

This spring, Kalamazoo Public Schools will begin thinking about its own transformation with the launch of its first comprehensive strategic planning process in almost 10 years. Every school district needs a strategic plan to help it identify its goals and objectives for the next several years and establish strategies for achieving those goals and objectives.

At the heart of the process, the district will consider questions such as: Who are we as a school district, who do we want to be, and how will we achieve the goals necessary to become the school district we want to be?

The new strategic plan will serve not only as a roadmap for the district's future, but it will be a valuable tool for sharing this information with stakeholders, so they fully understand where the district is and where it plans to go. It will also help our committed community partners understand the role that they play in the future of the district.

Already, we have begun discussing the process for developing our next strategic plan with the KPS Board of Education as well as senior leadership. The first work in this process begins with what is known as a SWOT analysis of where we are as a district and examining operations in terms of:

- **Strengths** — What are we doing well? What unique resources do we have that we can capitalize on as we

continue to build and grow?

- **Weaknesses** — Where do we need to improve? Are there disadvantages that we need to address? Are there areas in which we compare unfavorably to others and that we want to change?

- **Opportunities** — Looking forward, what is happening in the world that we need to pay attention to? Are there trends that we can leverage to our students' advantage? Can we be smart and identify the world events and forces that we can use to be more effective educators?

- **Threats** — What are the things outside of our control that may negatively impact the work we do, that inhibit the growth that we seek?

Understanding these elements will help us create measurable goals and objectives to help us track our progress and ensure that we continue moving forward in our mission to provide the best possible educational opportunities for all of the children in our community and to give them every opportunity to find success.

Key to the success of our strategic

planning process will be input from multiple sources. Obviously teachers, staff, students and parents will be able to provide insights, but so will community leaders, volunteers, churches, neighborhood associations, higher education leaders, business executives, and more. Anyone who cares about KPS and the broader community is encouraged to attend one of the many input sessions that will be launching this month. In addition to meetings at each school building, the district will hold community sessions to gather comments from as many people as possible.

The plan will become richer and stronger through your involvement in the process.

Kalamazoo has tremendous resources and none is greater than the people who live here and care about the community and our children. Through our strategic planning process, we hope to build new partnerships and coalitions to continue our strides toward making KPS the best district possible.

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

Milwood Magnet School Students Top the Kalamazoo County Regional Spelling Bee

TWO STUDENTS from Milwood Magnet School: A Center for Math, Science and Technology claimed the top spots in the second annual Kalamazoo County Regional Spelling Bee.

Eighth-grader Carter Tuthill was named winner of the 2024 Kalamazoo County Regional Spelling Bee,



Spelling bee winner Carter Tuthill, left, and runner-up Omar Eversole. Both Carter and Omar attend Milwood Magnet School.

which was held March 9 at Chenery Auditorium. He won with the word “linguistics.” His other competition words included “garniture” and “vegetarian.”

The runner-up was his fellow Milwood Magnet

eighth-grader Omar Eversole. Tuthill said he was a little intimidated to go up against Eversole in the finals because he knew he was a “really good speller.”

Tuthill, who is an avid reader, will represent Kalamazoo County in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Maryland in May. His trip to the national competition will be paid for by the contest sponsors. His other prizes included: a plaque as well as subscriptions to several online educational resources.

Students from 17 schools participated in the spelling bee. They were:

- **Arcadia Elementary School:** Neela Parthasarathy and Baihas Alqabati
- **Edison Academy:** Christian Bell-Griffis and Herno Fataki
- **El Sol Elementary:** Lauren McCann and Alexis Bakalyar
- **King-Westwood Elementary School:** Orion Bailey and Nova Shumaker
- **Lincoln International Studies School:** Jordan Burrell and Kamilah Jackson
- **Maple Street Magnet School for The Arts:** Maya Mollberg and Nathan Heckman
- **Milwood Elementary School:** Isaiah Acosta
- **Milwood Magnet School:** Omar Eversole, Jenna Itawi and Carter Tuthill
- **Northeastern Elementary School:** Richard Weddington and Jasper Mann
- **Northglade Montessori Magnet School:** Aiden Pimentel and Christopher Thompson
- **Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School:** Rowan Allhoff and Mayim Olbrot

- **Prairie Ridge Elementary School:** Eli Gill and Paisley Phillips
- **Spring Valley Center for Exploration:** Eve Bongers and Zachary Phillips
- **Washington Writers’ Academy:** Harmony Brown and Deshawn Hayes

- **Winchell Elementary School:** Michael Bovid and Jonah Antoniotti
- **Woods Lake Elementary:** A Magnet Center for The Arts: Cedar Horner and Layla Coleman
- **Woodward School:** Ava Ray and London Lee

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* Source: Randy Cohen, Americansforthearts.org, March 2021

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SOLAR ECLIPSE 2024

Witness the solar eclipse at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. A live feed from NASA and viewing assistance will be offered to help visitors understand and celebrate the much-anticipated solar eclipse.

UPCOMING EVENT FREE

KALAMAZOO FOODWAYS SYMPOSIUM: AFRICAN HERITAGE

Friday, April 5 | Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Keynote address and exploration of the gardening of some delicious plants of Africa.

Saturday, April 6 | Culinary and Allied Health Building

Hands-on cooking classes, lectures and more.



ACTIVITY FRIDAY, APRIL 12 | 5 - 8 P.M. | FREE

STATEWIDE ASTRONOMY NIGHT

Free astronomy-related activities for all ages.

SWAN is coordinated by Michigan State University's annual Science Festival.



ACTIVITY FREE

THE GILMORE FILM SERIES

Watch four piano-related films at the museum from April 30 through May 7 as part of The Gilmore Piano Festival 2024. Visit kalamazoomuseum.org for more film descriptions.

Tuesday, April 30 | Noon | Igor Levit: No Fear

Thursday, May 2 | Noon | Silenced: Composers in Revolutionary Russia

Friday, May 3 | Noon | Through the Eyes of Yuja: A Road Movie

Tuesday, May 7 | 2 p.m. | Warsaw Is My Name



EXHIBIT NOW - JAN. 19, 2025 | FREE

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Earth, Moon & Sun | 11 a.m. | 28 min. | Grades 3 & up

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Secrets of the Sun | 2 p.m. | 25 min. | Grades 5 & up

Discover the power of the sun and its impact on the planets and life on Earth.

SUNDAYS

Magic Tree House: Space Mission | 1 p.m. | 30 min. | Grades 3 & up

Travel with siblings Jack and Annie in their Magic Tree House as they discover a note that asks them to answer questions about space.

The Sky Above Us | 2 p.m. | 40 min. | Grades 4 & up

Learn about some of the "celestial wonders" that can be seen overhead in Michigan in this live, season-focused program.

NOTE: Special shows for the solar eclipse on April 8 and SWAN on April 12. Visit kalamazoomuseum.org for details.

HOURS: Tuesday - Saturday | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday | Noon - 4 p.m.

FREE GENERAL ADMISSION

Note: Some areas of the museum may be closed due to exhibit changes, staffing needs, special programs or collections care. We thank you for your patience.

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.



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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:

Director of School Improvement, Title I and Assessments
KPS, 1220 Howard St., Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 337-0161

All other inquiries should be directed to:

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

District Directory at :
www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

CORRECTION

In the March Excelsior, the photos at the bottom of page 6 and on page 7 should have said those students attend Washington Writers' Academy.

Save the date!
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Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Kirsten Strong, registered dietician

Samuel Dunn, executive chef

Strawberry-Lemon Tres Leches Cake and Panna Cotta Shooters

THIS was one of the winners of a recent KPS Administration Building Bake-Off Fundraiser. There are a lot of steps but it's really easy overall. You can make it much simpler, obviously, by not adding so many layers. It's a little time consuming, because there is a wait time between adding layers. Panna cotta is wonderful because it seems so fancy and yet it's so versatile.

Strawberry Tres Leches and Regular Tres Leches Panna Cotta and Chocolate (Layers 1-4)

1½ cup heavy cream
½ cup sweetened condensed milk
1½ cup coconut cream
½ cup seedless strawberry jam
1 tablespoon plain gelatin, divided in half
1 teaspoon vanilla extract, divided in half
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
2 pinches of salt
Chocolate shell ice cream topping (store bought)
Pound cake or angel food cake

Layers 1 and 2

- Bloom ½ tablespoon gelatin in a few tablespoons of cold water by sprinkling the gelatin over the water and letting it sit for a few minutes.
- In a heavy saucepan, combine and heat the cream, condensed milk, and coconut cream over medium heat. Bring to a simmer. Do not boil. Pour half of the mixture into a bowl and set aside for layer 4.
- Layer 1 — Add ½ cup strawberry jam to the milk mixture in the saucepan and bring to a simmer (don't boil).
- Add ½ tablespoon gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Continue to simmer gently (don't boil) for about 4 minutes. Remove from heat.

- Add ½ teaspoon vanilla extract and a pinch of salt, mix well. Cool in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes. It will continue to thicken.
- Pour enough strawberry panna cotta into cocktail glasses or plastic shooters to create a 1-inch thick layer.
- Chill in the freezer for 30-40 minutes.
- Layer 2 — Put a small amount of the chocolate shell ice cream topping on top of the chilled strawberry panna cotta. Let that cool for 20 minutes in the fridge.

Layer 3: Angel Food or Pound Cake

- Break into pieces and add to the top of the chocolate layer. Use another glass to push down the cake a little to make more room in the glass.

Layer 4: Tres Leches Panna Cotta

- Bloom ½ tablespoon gelatin in a little cold water
- In a heavy saucepan, bring to a simmer the leftover cream, condensed milk, and coconut cream mixture from Layer 1. Add cinnamon, then add ½ tablespoon of gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Continue to simmer gently (don't boil) for about 4 minutes. Remove from heat.
- Add ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract and a pinch of salt, mix well. Cool



in the refrigerator for 20 minutes to thicken.

- Pour on top of the cake. The cake will not be submerged. Some will be higher than the panna cotta. It will be covered by the next layer.
- Chill in the freezer for 30 to 40 minutes.

Layer 5: Lemon Tres Leches Panna Cotta

3 cups heavy cream
½ cup sweetened condensed milk
Zest of 1 lemon
Juice of 1 lemon
1½ tablespoon plain gelatine
Pinch salt

- Bloom gelatin with a little water.
- In a heavy saucepan, bring cream and condensed milk to a simmer, then add lemon zest. Next add the gelatin and stir until dissolved. Continue to simmer gently (don't boil) for about 4 minutes. Remove from heat.
- Add lemon juice, mix well
- Cool in the refrigerator for 20 minutes to thicken.
- Pour on top of layer 4 until it covers the cake and creates a flat surface
- Chill in the fridge for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Career Champions Program Helps Teachers Expand Opportunities to Learn About the World of Work

FOR THE THIRD year, Kalamazoo Public Schools teachers have been participating in Career Champions, a Kalamazoo RESA program designed to give students valuable exposure to real-life career

opportunities and help teachers develop the skills they need to become highly trained career development educator partners in their community. Joan Hawxhurst, a senior career coach with KRESA's

Career & Technical Education program, said the program puts an emphasis on student-focused learning opportunities and creates a framework where educators can develop valuable relationships that allow them to share resources, ideas, proposals and opportunities for collaboration. Through the program educators develop a proficiency with Xello, a career education software used in Kalamazoo County. They also gain "knowledge of in-demand occupations with local employers, along with understanding of the training and education candidates need in these fields," Hawxhurst said. The Kalamazoo Central Career Champions team of teachers Jovaughn Carver and Jack Lambert has been very busy taking science students on career-related field trips this year. In October, they took a student group to Charles River Labs in Mattawan for a full-day tour outlining all of the various career opportunities there. In the winter they visited several science departments at Western Michigan University. Then in March, they went to WMU's
(continued on page 7)



Kalamazoo Central AP Chemistry students, from left, Rebekah Hodgkins, Amenech Kostrzewa, Nora Ghazal try the chemistry equipment at Western Michigan University as part of the Career Champions program.

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Career Champions (cont. from page 6)

Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine.

“The fellowship provides training, support, and funding for all of our ideas for students,” Carver said. “They help us game plan bringing our ideas to fruition, with workshops and consultants. We are pretty much a cohort of educators and we will be presenting on our experiences and strategizing on how to build and improve our current plans.”

Teams consist of two to six members, which may focus on building, grade level or district level programs. Each team works with a KRESA career development consultant and each team member receives a \$500 stipend to develop their program, which must include 20 hours of student engagement outside of school hours.

In addition to Carver and Lambert, there are two other KPS teams:

- Liza Bucknell and Laurie Sipes at Prairie Ridge Elementary School,
- Nora Snead and Stephen Spybrook at Linden Grove Middle School, and

Career Champions is helping Bucknell and Sipes plan the Second Annual Prairie Ridge Career Fair, in



Justin Liggins, Ny’shawn Scott, Devin Webster, Eugene Fellings, TJ Terrentine examine a medical mannequin at WMed as part of the Career Champions project.

which students are able to explore careers and meet everyone from scientists to mechanical engineers, fire fighters, dieticians, and physician assistants. The

fair gives students an up-close look at different career paths and connects their learning to the real world.

“Reading about a career in a textbook is very different from learning about a career straight from someone in the field,” Bucknell said. “The Career Fair provides an interactive and dynamic learning experience, where students can ask questions directly to professionals and presenters can invite students to tackle real-world problems.”

Carver, who is a chemistry teacher at Kalamazoo Central, is passionate about career education. He said he knows that selecting a career or area of study for post-secondary education can be daunting, and he believes students need as much exposure to the world of work as possible.

“Jovaughn and Jack are doing a great job of providing context beforehand and reflection opportunities afterwards, so that students are able to understand and consider the STEM career paths they are seeing in action,” Hawxhurst said.

Carver said that one of his passions as a teacher

(continued on page 8)

Mo Willems Party

Children

Tuesday, April 16 | 4 pm | Central
Celebrate the iconic characters Gerald, Piggie, and Pigeon! Enjoy crafts, games, and activities.

Paint a Piggy!

Teens

Apr 15, EAS, 4 pm | Apr 22, CEN, 4 pm | Apr 25, WSQ, 4 pm
Come paint a piggy bank and learn how to be more savvy about financial literacy.

Career Champions (continued from page 7)

is to help students identify their passions in terms of areas of study. Many students have not given much thought to what they want to do with their lives after high school and with no goal in mind, they have difficulty developing a plan for what comes next.

“They are in the exact same place I was in, when I was their age at Loy Norrix graduating 10 years prior to them,” Carver said. So, even before Career Champions, he went on a mission to help provide experiences that expose his students to what it actually takes

to be successful. He reached out to scientists of Pfizer, Zoetis, Charles Rivers labs and Kalsec to come speak to his classes to discuss their career journeys.

Career Champions is allowing him to expand on that idea by taking students to actual labs, where students can see scientists in their work environments.

“The hope is always to expand the students’ knowledge of different types of science professions that they have never heard of or to expand their knowledge about what scientists actually do,” he said.” It doesn’t hurt that I was able to help build a connection between what we are doing in class and its correlation to what scientists get paid to do.

“In my opinion, the biggest challenge for making the transition from the classroom to careers is identity. Believing that you belong is the first step to believing in yourself and that you can achieve your idea of success. Helping students see themselves in that light is difficult because that process is different for each student. That’s why I hope days like the days we have through Career Champions can help some of them understand what it takes and make that connection.”



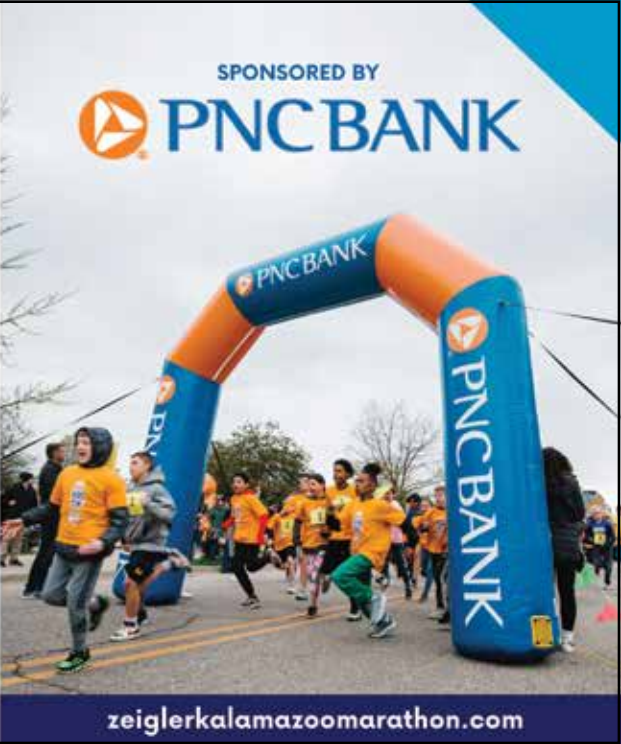
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Carol McGlinn
Selected to Fill Board
Trustee Vacancy

CAROL MCGLINN was unanimously selected to fill a Kalamazoo Public Schools board trustee vacancy in a special board meeting on Feb. 9.

She previously served on the KPS Board of Education from July 2008 to December 2018. She has also been involved with KPS as a member of various



Carol McGlinn

PTOs, Girls on the Run, Girl Scouts, and Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo.

McGlinn is currently the vice chair of the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Organizing Committee.

McGlinn recently retired as executive director of SLD Read, an organization that has partnered with KPS on various literacy initiatives. She also served as a tutor and director of development for the organization.

Her term runs through Dec. 31, 2024.



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SUMMER CAMP 2024

INSIDE: Picking a Camp.....10 Types of Camps.....12 Benefits of Camp.....16 Low-Cost Fun.....18



Picking a Camp: Start Early and Ask Questions

Soon that last school bell will ring and kids will be ready for summer. For parents and caregivers, however, the thought of summer's arrival can be stressful as they try to figure out the best ways to keep their kids active and engaged during the summer break.

One of the best ways to keep your kids from going stir-crazy (and making you crazy) is to sign them up for various camps throughout the summer. But with so many options and types of camps from residential to day camps, science to arts, academic to adventure, choosing the best camp for your child means starting early and asking the right questions.

1. Start now. Camps fill up quickly. April is the peak time for parents to sign their kids up for summer camps, so don't put off too long making your decisions. Also, some camps require health appraisal forms or deposits to secure a spot, so you need to plan ahead to ensure that you have taken the steps needed to reserve your child's spot in a camp.

2. Decide on the type of camp. Do you want your child's camp experience be to learn new skills, develop self-confidence, increase their athletic ability or provide adventurous, age-appropriate activities? As you narrow down the types of camps, be sure to include your child when finalizing the selection. Some children, just like adults, appreciate being made aware of or involved in the decisions that affect them.

3. Get recommendations. Ask other parents and caregivers for recommendations of summer camps that match your child's interests. You can often learn about the physical environment and the camp's daily operations, including things like noise level, type of food served, and staff diversity, that could affect the quality of your child's camp experiences. It doesn't hurt to ask former campers about their experiences as well, and to share what you learn with your child.

4. Make a budget and stick to it. Summer camps can be expensive, so decide early how much you will set aside for your child's camp experiences. Make sure



to find out if the camps you'd like them to attend offer scholarships or other financial aid, because many do. Don't let a camp's price tag keep you from considering it for your child; you might be surprised at the financial help that is available.

5. Do your homework. As you narrow down different camps for your kids, make a list of any concerns and questions you may have for each camp. Camps' websites are a great place to learn about rules, procedures and special considerations for campers, including what to bring and what to leave at home. If you still have questions after reviewing the information, reach out to the camps. Camp directors will gladly talk to you and tell you how they can address your concerns. They have heard and been asked it all, so don't feel like any question is a "silly question." Here are some questions to consider:

What kind of support is available for campers with special health care needs?

Some children with special health care needs or disabilities may need special accommodations so

they can enjoy camp while being protected. If your child has special health care needs, talk with camp directors and your pediatrician to identify specific accommodations your child may need. Existing plans, such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans can be helpful to assist the camp in making accommodations.

What is the refund policy if my child becomes sick and can't attend camp?

Ask about the camp's policy regarding rolling the enrollment to next summer. Or, if your household is in a position to do so, consider reaching out to your camp to let them know that you'd like your enrollment dollars to be a donation instead.

What medical facilities are on-site or nearby?

The American Camp Association (ACA) recommends that an overnight camp have a licensed physician or a registered nurse onsite everyday and that camps have direct phone access. Be sure your camp will be able to handle your child's medical needs, for example, medications or allergies.

What is the camp's approach to discipline and how does it handle conflict between campers?

Ask what breaches of camp rules would result in the camper being sent home. You should feel comfortable that the camp's practices are in line with your parenting practices. Also, ask what the camp's bullying policies are. What does it look like? Is it zero tolerance? Be sure to share this with your camper.

What are the camp's relationships and statistics with staff and campers?

Ask about the hiring process for staff. Do they go through criminal background checks? Are the staff trained and certified in first aid, if so, from which organization? Ask how many counselors are returning this year. The ACA states that most camps see 40%-60% of staff return. If the number is low, ask why. Also ask how many campers return. A good number is 50% or higher.

What does the ratio of counselors to campers look like and how old are the counselors?

The ACA guidelines for counselor-to-camper ratios are:

For overnight camps:

- Ages 7 and 8: 1 counselor to 6 campers
- Ages 9-14: 1 counselor to 8 campers
- Ages 15-18: 1 counselor to 10 campers

For day camps:

- Ages 6-8: 1 counselor to 8 campers
- Ages 9-14: 1 counselor to 10 campers
- Ages 15-18: 1 counselor to 12 campers

The ACA also recommends that 80 percent of a camp's staff be 18 years of age or older and that all staffers be at least 16 and a minimum of two years older than the campers they supervise. ●

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So Many Types of Camp, So Little Summer

When looking at camp for your children, there are many options



Traditional/General — Traditional/general camps offer a little bit of everything like team sports, swimming, boating, fishing, archery, performing arts, arts and crafts, music, dance, hiking, wilderness adventure, and rock climbing. Some of these camps can be resident camps, where the campers stay overnight for a week or for several. Others are day camps, which can last from 2-3 hours a day or all day.

Traditional/general camps also have different types of programming. Programs can be structured, where the schedule is pre-arranged; semi-elective,

where the camper has some choice in activities; or elective, where the camper decides their entire schedule.



Academic — Academic camps focus on specific areas of study designed to either improve grades or explore special topics, like the sciences. Some examples of what academic camps offer are: ESL, STEM, SAT Prep, foreign languages, tutoring, study skills, biology, computer gaming, general science, rocketry, robotics, and physics. While the schedule is usually structured and can be rigorous, many of these camps also have fun activities to give kids time to rest and play.

Community Service — Community service camps offer programs for kids to be involved in helping local communities. Some camps offer enrichment credits toward graduation. It is normally labor intensive and includes things like building houses, installing water systems, farming, engineering, animal care, and nature preservation.



Sports Specialty — Sports specialty camps usually focus on one sport. There is extensive instruction and campers spend most of their time playing or learning about the sport. Some examples of sports specialties are football, soccer, baseball, basketball, volleyball, golf, and tennis.

Wilderness Adventure — Wilderness adventure camps are usually overnight camps and can last anywhere from a couple of days to a month or longer. They are usually in a forest or a mountainous area. Campers sleep in tents and sleeping bags. Some of the activities are backpacking, hiking, camping, rock climbing, white water rafting, survival skills training, canoe trips, and mountain biking.

(Continued on page 14)

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Technical Theatre

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KazooCivic.com/Camps | 269-548-3035

(Continued from page 12)



Arts — Arts camps can specialize in dance, music, performing arts, comedy, creative arts, technical theater, painting, and visual arts. Many are held in theaters, on college campuses, and at dance companies. The programs are normally exclusive to the art. Some camps are for children who already have experience and there may be auditions required.

FIND YOUR FUN. FIND YOUR Y.

Registration begins March 19

When school is out, the Y has all your child needs to stay engaged and active for the summer! Between outdoor activities, art projects, reading time, swimming, games, and STEAM learning, your kid will experience a summer of enriching fun at the YMCA's day camps.

Kalamazoo and Portage locations

The YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo

kzooymca.org








Religious — Religious camps are predominantly Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. Some religious camps can be traditional/general camps, where they offer the same activities as a traditional camp but with a focus on a specific religion. Other religious camps can be week-long day camps often called Vacation Bible School.



Special Needs — Special needs is a broad term that is used to separate traditional and specialty camps from those that cater to kids with specific needs. A special need includes, but is not limited to, cancer, autism, physical disability, burn victims, grief/loss, and LGBTQ. Similar to traditional camps, these camps offer activities such as horseback riding, swimming, climbing, team sports, and arts and crafts. The camp may also offer education for kids and their families specific to the need. There may be group therapy sessions or one-on-one counseling. If the camp specializes in serving children who have a disease or physical disabilities, there are most likely nurses or doctors on site as well as medical facilities. Some camps have an approval process. This may mean filling out an application, providing medical documents, or speaking directly to their admissions personnel. ●

— Information provided by the
National Camps Association



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will love?**



**KYD
network**
Kalamazoo Youth Development



Check out the KYD Network
Summer Program Finder
www.kydnet.org/summer-finder



Benefits of Attending Camp Can Be Lifelong



Summer camp offers kids the chance to learn a variety of different skills that may have been missing from their day-to-day experiences. According to the American Camp Association, summer camp experiences help students develop social skills and self-respect, build character and learn about caring and being a good citizen. In addition, attending a camp can have these benefits:

1. Socializing and Friendship Building

Whether it's a day camp or overnight camp, summer camp provides a great opportunity for kids to socialize and meet new people, especially other kids who share the same interests. A summer camp program provides a safe environment for children to develop social skills and decision-making skills. Kids develop important life skills through socializing — such as sharing, setting boundaries, and problem-solving — and learn how to develop strong, healthy relationships by interacting with their peers.

2. Less Sitting and More Exercise

Our kids spend a lot of time sitting at school and during screen time and are more sedentary than ever. Sedentary lifestyles increase the risk of health issues including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity. A summer camp is a great solution to get kids moving again. Many programs take place outdoors and include physical activities such as hiking, archery, horseback riding, swimming, rock climbing, dance and team sports.

3. Personal Growth and Exploration

Summer camps are an opportunity for kids to explore their interests and learn new things. For example, local science-focused camps can teach kids about chemistry, robotics or aeronautics, while other camps focus on such things as the arts, cooking and nature. While they are having fun and exploring new interests, kids are also being educated and challenged. Studies have shown that 70 percent of parents report that their child gained self-confidence while at camp.

4. Positive Role Models

Through their camp counselors and directors, children will have opportunities to interact with positive adult role models. Many camp counselors are younger adults who work or volunteer over their summer breaks from school and whom kids see as “cool” and more relatable than their parents. Because these young adults often share their personal experiences as well as interests with campers, they can provide your child a glimpse into what their future could be like.

5. Becoming More Independent

Going to camp gives kids an opportunity to become more independent. Whether for a day, week, or entire summer, separation from parents and caregivers allows children to learn to rely on themselves and other trusted adults and peers. Separation from parents allows children ability to think independently, which builds self-esteem. ●





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RAWK
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Kalamazoo
readandwritekzoo.org
269-743-7005



No-cost, low-cost options for summer fun

Looking for a little more fun this summer for your family and children? Here’s a list of places no-cost and low-cost alternatives:

KYDNet Summer Program Finder

One of the best places to start your search for kids’ summer programs is through KYDNet (Kalamazoo Youth Development Network). KYDNet works to ensure that Kalamazoo County youth have access to high-quality in-person and virtual programs and the organization’s program finder is a great online tool to see youth-oriented programs and activities are available in Kalamazoo County this summer. It becomes available this month online at kydnet.org.

Camp Kzoo



The City of Kalamazoo’s Parks and Recreation department offers a variety of programs for Kalamazoo’s youth. Plans for this summer’s activities will be available on its website at kzooparks.org/programs.

Financial assistance is available from Kalamazoo Friends of Recreation to help ensure that these programs are available to, and affordable by, everyone. For more information, visit the Kalamazoo Friends of Recreation website at friendsofrec.org.



All Things Possible

All Things Possible is a free program offering career and college exploration for KPS students entering high school. Held 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday–Friday, there will be two 4-week sessions this summer: June 11–July 5 and July 8–Aug. 2. Daily events will include learning work skills and life skills, recreational activities, talent development and career/educational exploration. For information or to register visit kzooparks.org/Programs/All-Things-Possible.

Join a Reading Program

Kalamazoo Public Library offers a robust reading program for kids with benchmarks and prizes. All that’s needed to participate is a library card (which most KPS students got in first grade!). Visit kpl.gov or check with your local library branch for the details of this summer’s reading program.

Outdoor concerts

Another great outdoor activity is offered by the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo’s Summertime Live concert series. Free concerts are held throughout the community including in Portage, Parchment, Oshtemo Township, and downtown Kalamazoo. The schedule was still being finalized at press time, but to find out who is playing where and when visit kalamazooarts.org.



Take a Rewarding Hike

The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is challenging kids to Hike Our Preserves (HOP) this summer. Registration is \$7 per person and includes a free hiking stick (while quantities last), a medalion for each HOP preserve you visit, and a prize from Jr. Rangerland Educational Publishing for the first 25 hikers to visit all 10 preserves. Preserves feature many different types of landscape from wetlands and forests to fens and beaches. For more information visit swmlc.org/hop or call (269) 324-1600. ●

Kirk Newman Art School Summer Art Camps



**Weekly Camps Begin
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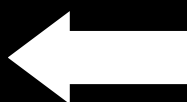


VAN BUREN YOUTH CAMP

Season Schedule

June 9 to 15	Leadership Camp - grades 9 - 12
June 16 to 22	Great Bear - grades 3 - 6
June 23 to 29	Wolverine - grades 5 - 8
June 30 - July 3	Little Bear #1 - grades 1 - 3
July 3 - 6	Adv. Leadership - grades 10 - 12
July 7 to 13	Discovery - grades 4 - 9
July 14 to 20	Frontier - grades 4 - 9
July 21 to 27	White Pine - grades 4 - 8
July 28 to 30	Little Bear #2 - grades 1 - 3
August 4 to 9	Explorer - grades 3 - 7

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ARTISTS' CORNER

Milwood Elementary School art teacher Abbey Ruffer has been working with students on a variety of projects inspired by books, nature and surrealism.

Chameleon — Second grade students listened to the books: “A Color of His Own” and “The Mixed-Up Chameleon” and then used Prisma colors and watercolors to create colorful and camouflaged chameleons.

Rainbow Fish — Inspired by the book “The Rainbow Fish” and observing sea creatures, students drew and cut out fish, adding details like scales, gills, and fins. They added

their fish to blue paper and created shapes to represent seaweed, coral, or rocks.

Eye — Students studied surrealist artists like Salvador Dali and Frida Kahlo, focusing on “The False Mirror” by Rene Magritte and used color pencils to create their “false mirror” artwork.

Cat — Students used an educational website called Pebble to learn about wild cats and their habitats around the world. They created their own wild cats using markers and tempera paint.



Eli Potts



Aiden Brown



Tianna Robertson



Mariah Atlas



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**ARCADIA CREEK
FESTIVAL PLACE**



WMU Music Faculty Help KPS Musicians Prep for Festival Season

Kalamazoo Public Schools band and orchestra students had a unique opportunity to prepare for festival season thanks to the generosity of the Western Michigan University Irving S. Gilmore School of Music.



ON THE COVER: Denis Shebukhov conducts the Loy Norrix High School orchestra in front of Western Michigan University faculty in preparation for the upcoming festival season.

KALAMAZOO Public Schools band and orchestra students had a unique opportunity to prepare for festival season thanks to the generosity of the Western Michigan University Irving S. Gilmore School of Music.

WMU faculty held a clinic concert for all of the district's middle school and high school band and orchestra students in February. Each ensemble performed for a group of WMU music faculty members, who critiqued their performances, providing feedback for the students as they prepared for the Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association festival competition in March.

"Our students gained a realization of the attention to details and execution that is demanded from our ensembles to perform music at the

highest level," said Ryan Kasperski, the lead music teacher for KPS. He also directs the Kalamazoo Central marching and symphonic bands.

"For our KPS directors, having an extra set of eyes and ears on our ensembles helps reinforce that we are focusing on the appropriate areas of instruction while also identifying areas that could use more attention and how to achieve the desired results," he added.

In May 2023, Dr. Mary Land, associate professor of music education at WMU, was invited to the KPS music department's professional development. Land coordinates the placement of music student teachers in the schools for internships and pre-internships.

"I wanted to be able to offer something to KPS teachers since they accept our interns," Land said.

She and the KPS staff came up with the idea



Aaron Mirakovits leads the Loy Norrix Band.

Jenna Love conducts the Kalamazoo Central Band at the pre-festival clinic at WMU.

of the pre-festival clinic and Land suggested that it be held on Western's campus to provide students the opportunity to visit a college campus and to allow them to perform in a different setting to replicate the festival experience.

At festival, ensembles perform select music for a panel of adjudicators, who assess students on preparation and performance of the music. Students must also perform a sight-reading piece after the concert performance. In that scenario, ensembles have about five minutes to review a piece and discuss the work, which has not been prepared beforehand. The adjudicator will observe and assess the learning process and the performance.

Students receive a rating for the concert performance, one for the sight reading and an overall rating. "Festival is not a competition between

(continued on page 23)

Music *(continued from page 22)*

schools,” Kasperski said. “It is an individual assessment for each participating ensemble.”

The participating KPS school ensembles and their directors were:

- Hillside 7th/8th grade band – Craig Freeman
 - Milwood Magnet 7th/8th grade band – Aaron Mirakovitz
 - Kalamazoo Central Symphonic Band – Ryan Kasperski
 - Loy Norrix Band – Aaron Mirakovitz
 - Maple Street 7th/8th grade band – Craig Freeman
 - Milwood Magnet 7th/8th grade orchestra – Denis Shebukhov
 - Hillside 7th/8th grade orchestra – Jenna Love
 - Maple Street 7th grade orchestra – Ben Gudbrandson
 - Linden Grove 7th/8th grade orchestra – Cynthia Zerban
 - Maple Street 8th grade orchestra – Ben Gudbrandson
 - Loy Norrix orchestra – Denis Shebukhov
 - Kalamazoo Central orchestra – Jenna Love
- The participating WMU faculty, including Land, were:
- Dr. Scott Boerma, professor of music and director of bands
 - Dr. Trey Harris, associate director of bands



WMU violin professor Dr. Junqui Tang offers suggestions to the Kalamazoo Central Band.

- Mary Kothman, violin instructor
 - Bruce Uchimura, professor of cello and orchestra
 - Dr. Junqi Tang, assistant professor of violin
- “Western Michigan University went above and beyond, providing professional and memorable

learning experiences for our students and invaluable feedback for our directors,” Kasperski said. “Some of their comments align with what is currently being taught by our directors, but the way it is explained to our students could differ. Sometimes it is not what you say to students, but how it is said that helps students understand.”

Kasperski said the pre-festival work was as important for the teachers as for the students. Rarely, do educators have the opportunity to collaborate with collegiate colleagues at this level, he said.

“Teachers are lifelong learners. Teaching an ensemble demands the understanding of how to play anywhere from four instruments, in an orchestra, to more than 13 instruments, in a band,” he said. “We can always learn more about the nuance of playing a specific instrument, new ways to deliver instruction, and new curricular resources and materials.”

“As teachers, working with high-quality professors and musicians provides an opportunity for us to reflect and assess our current practices, challenge our assumptions, and open a dialogue for growth.”



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Literacy Night Emphasizes that Reading Fun Can Be Found Everywhere

LITERACY Night was a success with Kalamazoo Public Schools elementary and middle school families. The annual celebrations, which were held Feb. 28 for elementaries and Feb. 29 for middle schools, mark the start of National Reading Month, which takes place in March. Students and families visit the schools after hours to partake in fun hands-on activities that encourage reading as an intergenerational activity. Schools chose special themes for their events, such as Arcadia Elementary's international celebration, Linden Grove's literary escape room puzzles, and Milwood Elementary's Olympic kick-off. Woodward School went to the beach, while Washington Writers' Academy looked to old time hip hop for reading inspiration.



Gideon Wolfe was a torch bearer at the Milwood Elementary Olympic-themed literacy night.



Teachers Paige Kulchinsky and Brianne Mayhew explain how to grow sunflowers and jalapeno peppers to Meadow Walsh, Jane Cannon and Claire Westervelt at Milwood Magnet.



Arcadia Elementary families enjoy a performance by El Concilio dancers.



Lincoln kindergartener Nasir Head designs and names a new hairstyle that he created at Literacy Night.



From left: Elijah Brown, Aden Sano Kamanzi, and Maddison Heeres participate in the "JD and The Great Barber Battle" Jeopardy game at Lincoln.



KPS/Lincoln Alumni Andre Lockett, owner of Kzoo Kutz, shows Major Pace-Sims how to use clippers during the Lincoln International Studies School Literacy Night.



Linden Grove's literacy night included an always popular book giveaway.



Avanna Shoffner is all smiles with her Woods Lake literacy night prize.



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The Valley Advantage also offers:

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Session 1

July 8 - 11, July 15 - 18, July 22 - 25 and July 29
8:30 - 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 - 3:45 p.m.

Anna Whitten Hall on the Arcadia Commons Campus

Session 2

Aug 5 - 8, Aug 12 - 15, Aug 19 - 23
8:30 - 11:45 a.m. or 12:30 - 3:45 p.m.

Anna Whitten Hall on the Arcadia Commons Campus



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KPS Grievance Procedure Explained

ABOUT a year ago Kalamazoo Public Schools adopted a new grievance procedure for students and their families who request or are provided services under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act. The Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education has requested that the School District publicize its Section 504 Grievance Procedure to all students, families, and school staff members. To accomplish that objective, the District is including a complete copy of the Section 504 Grievance procedure below:

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

A person who believes a student has been discriminated against by the District on the basis of the student's disability or who believes the District otherwise violated Section 504 also has the right to file a complaint through the District's grievance procedure. A person who wishes to file a complaint should contact:

Kalamazoo Public Schools
Barry Smith — District 504 Officer
1220 Howard Street Kalamamazoo, MI. 49008
269-337-0161

A person may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) if he/she does not wish to use the District's grievance procedure. A person who wishes to file a complaint with OCR should contact:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Education
600 Superior Avenue East, Suite 750
Cleveland, OH 44114-2611
FAX: (216) 522-2573; TDD: (877) 521-2172
Telephone: (216) 522-4970
E-mail: OCR.Cleveland@ed.gov

A discrimination complaint may be filed with OCR

at any time. Additionally, if a person is dissatisfied with the District's resolution of a complaint, that complaint may be filed with OCR at the address above within 60 days of the District's resolution.

NOTICE OF SECTION 504 PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

The following is a brief summary description of the rights provided by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to students with disabilities, or suspected disabilities, and some related rights provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The intent of the law is to keep you fully informed about decisions concerning your child and to inform you of your rights in the event you disagree with any decisions concerning your child. You have the right to:

1. have the District advise you of your rights under federal law;
2. receive notice with respect to Section 504 identification, evaluation, and/or placement of your child;
3. have an evaluation and placement decision for your child based upon information from a variety of sources and which is made by a team of persons knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of evaluation data, and placement options;
4. have your child receive a free appropriate public education, which is the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet individual educational needs of your child as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met, if the child is Section 504 eligible;
5. have your child be educated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate, if the child is Section 504 eligible;

6. have your child take part in and receive benefits from the District without discrimination on the basis of disability;
7. have your child educated in facilities and receive services comparable to those provided to non-disabled students;
8. examine all relevant records of your child, including those relating to decisions about your child's Section 504 identification, evaluation, educational program, and placement; and obtain copies of those records at a reasonable cost, unless the fee would effectively deny you access to the records;
9. receive information in your native language and primary mode of communication;
10. have a periodic re-evaluation of your child, including an evaluation before any significant change of placement;
11. have your child given an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities offered by the District;
12. request and participate in an impartial due process hearing regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child, including a right to be represented by counsel in that process and to appeal an adverse decision;
13. file a complaint in accordance with the District's grievance procedures or with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

SECTION 504 — GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The Kalamazoo Public Schools has provided the following Grievance Procedure for addressing complaints of discrimination under Section 504. A person is not
(continued on page 27)



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Grievance Procedure (continued from page 26)

required to use this procedure and may instead file a complaint directly with the U.S Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, 600 Superior Avenue East, Suite 750, Cleveland, OH 44114-2611:

STEP 1:

A person who believes that he/she has been discriminated against by Kalamazoo Public Schools is encouraged, but is not required, to discuss the matter informally with the appropriate building principal, in the case of a student, or his/her immediate supervisor, in the case of an employee.

A. If the building principal or the immediate supervisor is the subject of the complaint, or the grievant is not a student or employee, the grievant may, instead, contact the Kalamazoo Public Schools Section 504 Coordinator.

B. The person receiving the complaint shall verbally convey his/her findings to both the person who alleged the violation and the person who is the subject of the complaint within 10 business days.

STEP 2:

If the informal Step 1 process does not resolve the matter, or if the grievant does not wish to use the informal procedures set forth in Step 1, a written complaint may be submitted to the Kalamazoo Public Schools Section 504 Coordinator who will investigate the complaint.

A. If the Section 504 Coordinator is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools who will appoint another administrator to conduct the investigation.

B. The complaint shall be signed by the grievant and include the:

- (1) grievant’s name and contact information;
 - (2) facts of the incident or action complained about;
 - (3) date of the incident or action giving rise to the complaint;
 - (4) type of discrimination alleged to have occurred; and
 - (5) specific relief sought.
- (6) Note: Witness names and other evidence as deemed appropriate by the grievant may also be submitted.

C. An investigation of the complaint will be conducted within 10 business days following the submission of the written complaint. The investigation shall include an interview of the parties and witnesses, a review of relevant evidence, and any other steps necessary to ensure a prompt and thorough investigation of the complaint.

D. A written disposition of the complaint shall be issued within 10 business days of completion of the

investigation, unless a specific written extension of time is provided to the parties. Copies of the disposition will be given to both the grievant and the person who is the subject of the complaint.

STEP 3:

If the grievant wishes to appeal the decision in Step 2 above, he/she may submit a signed, written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools within 10 business days after receipt of the written disposition. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall respond to the complaint, in writing, within 10 business days of the date of the appeal. Copies of the response shall be provided to both the grievant and the person who is

the subject of the complaint.

The Kalamazoo Public Schools provides assurance that it strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against persons who utilize this Grievance Procedure. Further, a grievant making a complaint is neither required to prosecute the matter nor confront the alleged discriminator or harasser when that would be inappropriate.

In addition, KPS will take steps to prevent the recurrence of discrimination or harassment if either has been found to have occurred and to correct its effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate.

If you have questions regarding these procedures or want to file a complaint, please contact the Kalamazoo Public Schools District 504 Coordinator, Barry Smith.

SECTION 504 COMPLAINT FORM

Name of Injured Party: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

If the injured party is a student, please also provide the following information:

School Building Attending: _____

Grade: _____ Birthdate: _____

Complainant’s Name: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Attach pages with the following:

- 1. Describe the alleged violation of Section 504. Please be specific and describe the specific incident(s), as well as identify the individuals involved, dates/times/locations, etc.
- 2. Describe your proposed resolution to address the alleged problem(s)/violation(s).

Date: _____ Complainant’s Signature: _____

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM TO:
Barry Smith — District 504 Coordinator
1220 Howard Street
Kalamazoo, MI. 49008
269-337-0161

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[Ages 14-24]

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2Gen

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