

Kalamazoo Public Schools

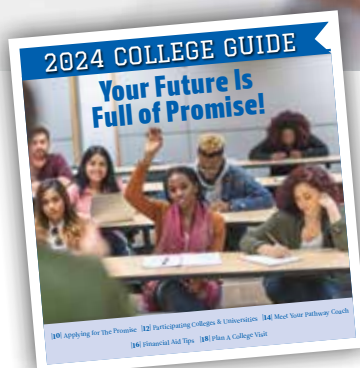
EXCELSIOR

www.kalamazoopublicschools.com

March 2024 · Volume 27, Issue 3

Welcome to Kindergarten!

(STORY & PHOTOS ON PAGES 6-7)



2024 College Guide:

Accessing the
Promise and more!

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Serving Our Youngest Students Helps Ensure Future Success, Growth

A Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Darrin Slade



IN EDUCATION, you hear a lot of discussion about graduation and high school completion rates, because we know that when people think about success in the K-12 realm they are looking at those measurable outcomes that come after 12 years of schooling.

It might not be apparent but K-12 educators are also highly focused on the other end of the process — the when and how students begin their education. What we as parents, educators and school systems do for our very youngest students has a huge impact on not just academic skills but on essential social-emotional skills that help our children succeed later in life.

Being aware of the tremendous brain development and skill acquisition that

occurs early in life can help ensure that our children receive the enrichment and nurturing that they need in their earliest years. The State of Michigan’s MiKidsMatter website states that 90 percent of a child’s brain develops by age 5. Ninety percent. That is astonishing.

That’s why this time of year is one of the most exciting in the school year. On March 6, KPS will hold its annual kindergarten and PEEP (PreKindergarten Early Education Program) orientation at all 17 of our elementary schools. No reservations are required to attend either the 9:30 a.m. or the 5:30 p.m. session. Parents can attend by themselves but are encouraged to bring their incoming students to meet teachers, principals and other staff, tour the school, and learn about the exciting adventure that awaits them.

You can find more about enrollment and orientation on pages 6 and 7 of this edition of the Excelsior.

While we often think of public

education as being a K-12 system, the truth is that we are really a Pre-K to 12th grade system. Prekindergarten learning opportunities are no longer considered a luxury but are regarded as essential to ensuring children can develop skills that will help them succeed in the future.

MiKidsMatter says that high quality preschool experiences help children with hands-on learning; social skills; communication skills; developing curiosity; life skills experiences; and early reading, math and science skills. A good preschool experience can lay the foundation for a life-long love of learning and independence.

Research that has followed young students from the 1960s has shown that those who participated in early childhood education opportunities experienced benefits ranging from positive health outcomes to future academic success in elementary school, according to Dr. Michael Little of North Carolina

State College. He also emphasizes the need for school districts to work hard to provide smooth transitions between preschool and the K-12 experience, so students and districts build effectively on the skills students bring from their PreK experiences.

At KPS our PEEP classrooms have lots of room for children to move, there is a low ratio of students to adults, the teachers are specially trained to meet the needs of young learners. And, PEEP teachers know that when we talk about “learning” for pre-kindergarten age students, what were talking about is exploratory play that allows them to test boundaries and try new social and academic skills in a way that excites and engages them — because play is the best learning experience for small children.

Please join us for our PEEP and kindergarten orientation on March 6 for your child’s exciting first steps into a world of growth and independence.

NEED HEAT? WE’RE HERE TO HELP!



If you find your furnace is in need of repair or replacement, **Community Homeworks** is here to help! We offer no or low-cost support to income-eligible homeowners in the **Kalamazoo County**, such as plumbing, electrical, and other health and safety issue repairs. Call or email us today to see if you are eligible at **(269) 998-3275 ext. 202** or **info@communityhomeworks.org**.



Community Homeworks provides additional critical home repair services for homeowners, such as plumbing, electrical, and other health and safety issues. Visit CommunityHomeworks.org for more information.

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

KPS PEEP Continues Move Toward All-Day Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms

TO MEET the needs of today's families, Kalamazoo Public Schools has been steadily moving toward full-day pre-kindergarten experiences for young children.

By fall of 2025, all PEEP (Pre-Kindergarten Early Education Program) classrooms will be full-day.

When PEEP began over 30 years ago, the standard for pre-kindergarten classes was the half-day model, but times have changed, said Elizabeth Jackson-Spaner, the director of PEEP, which is a Great Start Readiness Program.

"A part-day preschool experience was the norm back then," she said. "As years went on and jobs have become more demanding for families there has been a transition from part-day kindergarten to full-day kindergarten. It makes more sense that our preschool program mirrors that to help children transition to kindergarten."

If there are families who still want their children to go only part of the day, PEEP staff can work with resources and partners in Kalamazoo County to help find a Pre-K program that best serves those families.

PEEP serves almost 400 children in 11 of the district's 17 elementary schools: Arcadia, Edison, Greenwood, Lincoln, Northeastern, Parkwood-Upjohn, Prairie Ridge, Spring Valley, Washington, Winchell, and Woodward. Last year Indian Prairie and Prairie Ridge transitioned from part-time to full-time PEEP classrooms and were filled almost immediately. Winchell Elementary's site will become full-day by the 2025-26 school year.

Preschool experiences help children become



Amir O'Large and La-Troye Wheaton draw together.



Grayson Decou tries his hand at being a chef.



Miguel Torres has discovered the toy cars in his PEEP class.

more independent and confident learners by providing them with educational and social experiences that they will be able to build on in kindergarten.

"It gives students the challenge to build relationships with adults that are not their grown-ups at home. It gives them the opportunity to learn their own social skills in a space that is supportive and especially designed for them to be successful," Jackson-Spaner said.

In spacious rooms with a teacher and two support staff, students learn how to spend the school day with their peers, how to navigate relationships with adults outside of their homes, and how to "school." They also

learn how to make friends and engage in valuable play — which is not just about fun but is also about learning, "because children learn best through play."

"Attending just one year of preschool gives them more tools in their tool belts to build a strong kindergarten school year," she added.

Read more about PEEP on pages 6-7.

To enroll in PEEP, guardians can visit the KPS online enrollment portal at www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/enrollment. The form opens March 1. Paper enrollment forms are available at Greenwood Elementary, where PEEP staff are located. For questions, feel free to call (269) 337-0095.



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ARTISTS' CORNER

Northglade Montessori Magnet School art students have been busy learning about artists and their individual styles with teacher Ashley Lepsch.

The fourth- and fifth-grade classes created unique nature-themed art with a Pop Art twist. In this lesson, students explored and developed creative thoughts about Pop Art by viewing the works of influential artist Andy Warhol. Using watercolors,

wax crayons, and black pens, students created wonderful art similar to Warhol's "Endangered Species" series.

Third-grade students have been creating works influenced by Michigan native Natasha Wescoat. As a class, they examined the word "abstract" and the abstract qualities in nature itself. Using watercolors and wax crayons, students created beautiful abstract and colorful trees similar to Wescoat's "Jewel Trees."



Dasho Tamang



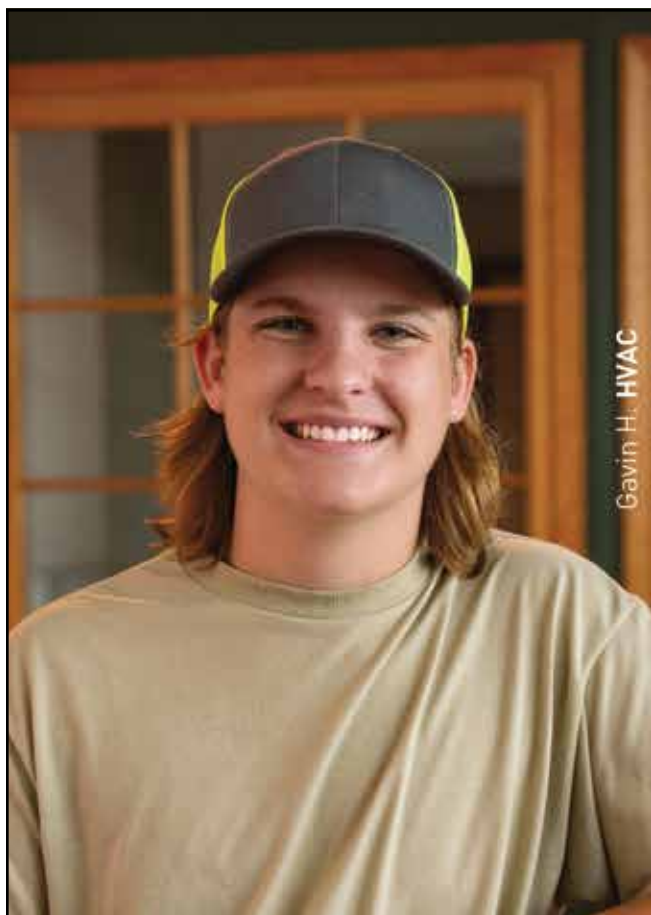
Mariyah Berry



Holland Nieboer



River Reich



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Earn a degree or certificate from Kalamazoo Valley Community College during an additional year of high school through the EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE PROGRAM.

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Dr. Darrin Slade

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(269) 383-4433

NOTICE

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:

Director of School Improvement, Title I and Assessments

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

Recipe

from the KPS Food Service, Chartwells

Kirsten Strong, registered dietician

Samuel Dunn, executive chef

Lion's Den Chili

HERE IT IS folks! This chili took home the trophy for Best Retail in this year's Kalamazoo Chili Cook-Off, and now we are sharing it with you! KPS Food Service made 34 gallons and served almost 2,000 samples to Kalamazoo locals. If you missed out, you can make it at home. Enjoy!



SERVINGS: 6-8

1 pound ground beef
1 pound ground pork
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 medium onions, diced
1 green pepper, diced
1-2 poblanos
5 tomatillos, husk removed
1 cup jarred jalapenos, diced
4 tablespoons cumin
4 tablespoons coriander
2 tablespoons chili powder
1 15-ounce can northern beans, drained and rinsed
1 15-ounce can chili beans, drained and rinsed
1 15-ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
1 24-ounce can tomato sauce
1 24-ounce can diced tomatoes
1 quart + 1 cup stock (*see recipe below*)
2 cups masa (corn) flour (this can be found in any Mexican market and some grocery stores)
¾ cup cream

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with foil. Toss the whole tomatillos in olive oil and salt and pepper. Roast on the baking sheet for 10-15 minutes or until the tomatillos brown. Watch carefully to make sure they do not burn. Set the tomatillos aside in a bowl. When cool, use

an immersion blender (or regular blender) to puree the tomatillos.
2. Toss the whole poblanos in olive oil and salt and pepper. Roast on the foil-lined baking sheet for 15-20 minutes or until the poblanos begin to brown (but not burn). Remove from the oven when you see the peel blister. While still hot, place poblanos in an airtight container (large zippered plastic bag or plastic container with a tight fitting lid). When cool, peel, remove stems and seeds, and then dice.
3. Using a large sauté pan over medium heat, cook the ground beef and ground pork. Drain excess fat. Season with salt and pepper and 1 tablespoon each of cumin, coriander and chili powder. Remove from the pan and set aside.
4. Using the same pan, heat a drizzle of olive oil and add garlic. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the onions, green peppers, and jalapenos. Cook until veggies are soft, stirring occasionally, about 7-10 minutes.
5. Heat a large saucepan or stock pot and add veggies, meat, tomatillos, and poblanos and the rest of the spices.
6. Add 1 quart of stock, tomato sauce, and beans. Let simmer for 30 minutes.
7. In the meantime, whisk the masa flour into 1 cup of heated stock. This will form a loose batter.

8. Slowly add the masa batter to the chili, mix thoroughly.
9. Add the cream when the chili is at a simmer. Do not add cream to boiling chili. It will curdle.
10. Season to taste.
11. Serve with toppings of your liking!

STOCK

(Use regular canned beef broth in-place of homemade stock to simplify the recipe.)
3 beef bones (the kind that have marrow in the middle)
2 tablespoons of coriander seed
7-10 cilantro stems
3 medium onions, quartered
5 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
2 24-ounce can tomato sauce or puree
1 ½ quart water

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with foil. Add beef bones to the baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Bake bones for about 1 hour or until the bones brown. Put a stockpot over medium heat. Add coriander seeds. Toast seeds for 3-4 minutes stirring occasionally. Add the bones, then add the rest of the ingredients. Bring to a low boil and cook for 2 to 4 hours. The longer you let the stock cook, the more flavor will develop. Strain the stock.

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Welcome to the Class of 2037!

**KPS Kindergarten Online Enrollment Begins March 1
Kindergarten/PEEP Orientation Will be March 6
at All Elementary Buildings**

STUDENTS can take their first steps toward earning their Kalamazoo Promise at Kalamazoo Public Schools Kindergarten and PEEP Orientation on March 6 at all 17 of the district's elementary schools. Parents and students can attend a 9:30 a.m. or 5:30 p.m. session to enroll for the 2024-25 school year and have fun sampling the kindergarten experience with a visit to the library, hands-on activities and question-and-answer sessions.



Kindergartener Lupita Benitz-Rubio makes an owl puppet in Eleanor Rudolph's kindergarten class at Milwood Elementary.

Washington Writers' Academy kindergarteners show off their best smiles, from front row left, Donquarius Gibson, Salina Anderson-Bennett, Giselle Jackson and Ezekial Miller, and back row from left Zoe Southbird, Athena Roberson-Moreno, and Kar'Myah Stevenson-Smith.

ON THE COVER: Allana Inzarry works hard in kindergarten at Washington Writers' Academy.



Cristian Garcia smiles in his kindergarten class at Milwood Elementary.



Rory McDonough, left, works next to Aiden Jones at Milwood Elementary.

Orientation is a time to meet teachers, principals, and other school staff; tour buildings; and to complete the enrollment process. Find more information about kindergarten enrollment at www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/kindergarten.

Enrolling is easy to start through the district's online portal, which opens March 1.

Families can check their school attendance boundary area using the district's interactive map and street directory on the district website at www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/enrollment.

Incoming students who will be 5 by Sept. 1 can enroll in kindergarten. Parents also may request kindergarten enrollment waivers for children who will be 5 years old no later than Dec. 1.

Parents need the incoming child's birth certificate; immunization record; proof of dental, hearing and vision screening — if available; and two proofs of residency (for example, a utility bill, lease agreement, or mortgage agreement with the guardian's name). While the enrollment process can begin online starting March 1, families must visit their assigned school to complete the enrollment process by bringing the documents in for review.

This year's kindergarten students will be members of the Class of 2037! Students who enroll in KPS as kindergarteners, attend all 12 years of school in KPS, and graduate from KPS, while meeting all residency and enrollment requirements, are eligible for The Kalamazoo Promise, a scholarship that covers up to 100 percent of mandatory tuition and fees at most Michigan colleges and universities — public and private.

This anonymous gift has awarded more than \$180 million in scholarships to more than 7,000 KPS graduates.

March 6 is also the orientation day for the KPS Pre-Kindergarten Early Education Program for students who will turn 4 by Dec. 1.

PEEP is open to families that meet state financial eligibility
(continued on page 7)

KPS Kindergarten and PEEP (continued from page 6)



Teacher Katie Loza works on reading skills with Washington Writers' Academy students, Jaelynn Sandoval, left, and Lilleona Clopton.

requirements.

Applications for PEEP are taken at all schools, but the program operates only at Arcadia, Edison, Greenwood, Lincoln, Northeastern, Parkwood-Upjohn, Prairie Ridge, Spring Valley, Washington, Winchell, and Woodward elementary schools.

PEEP is part of the state's Great Start Readiness initiative. The program offers full-day pre-kindergarten classes with highly trained teachers and two support paraprofessionals per classroom. Meals are available, and transportation is provided for students who live more than a mile from the school in their attendance district or for students who attend magnet schools that are outside their attendance district.

Children who need immunizations to complete the kindergarten or PEEP application process can visit the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Immunization Clinic, 311 E. Alcott St. For hours and to schedule appointments, call KCHCS at (269) 373-5203.

The KPS online enrollment portal for all grade levels opens March 1. It can be found at www.kalamazoopublicschools.com/enrollment.



For more information on KPS enrollment, call Student Services at (269) 337-0161. For information on PEEP, call (269) 337-0095.

Arcadia Elementary School
Principal: Meaghan Timmons
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0530
932 Boswell Lane

Edison Academy
Principal: Dr. Julie McDonald
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0550
831 Lake St.

El Sol Elementary School
Principal: Dr. Natalie Wilson
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0230
604 W. Vine St.

Greenwood Elementary School
Principal: Ebony Sikaundi
Grades: PreK-3
(269) 337-0560
3501 Moreland St.

Indian Prairie Elementary School
Principal: Tammo Nelson
Grades: PreK-3
(269) 337-0590
3546 Grand Prairie Ave.

King-Westwood Elementary School
Principal: Erika Zavasky
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0610
1100 Nichols Road

Lincoln International Studies School
Principal: Dionna Roberts
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0640
912 N. Burdick St.

Milwood Elementary School
Principal: Craig LeSuer
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0660
3400 Lovers Lane

Northeastern Elementary School
Principal: Sylvia Washington
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0690
2433 Gertrude St.

Northglade Montessori Magnet School
Principal: ReQwal Duckworth
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0700
1914 Cobb St.

Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School
Principal: Jessica Rosecrans
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0720
2321 Park St.

Prairie Ridge Elementary School
Principal: Joletta Drake
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0630
2294 S. 9th St.

Spring Valley Center for Exploration
Principal: Heather Misner
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0750
3530 Mt. Olivet Road

Washington Writers' Academy
Principal: Lanisha Hannah
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0770
1919 Portage Road

Winchell Elementary School
Principal: Kelly Corrigan
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0780
2316 Winchell Ave.

Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet School for the Arts
Principal Linda Mitchell
Grades: K-5
(269) 337-0790
333 S. Westnedge Ave.
(Temporary location, 2023-24 school year)
3215 Oakland Dr. (Re-opening, fall of 2024)

Woodward School
Principal: Frank Rocco
Grades: PreK-5
(269) 337-0810
606 Stuart Ave.

KIDS RUN FREE!

Arcadia Creek Festival Place
Saturday, May 4, 10:00 AM

Join us by registering for the PNC Kids' 1K in downtown Kalamazoo!
Entry is FREE and each entrant will receive a T-shirt and medal.

Scan to register kids for free!

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE



PROGRAM MARCH 12 | 2 p.m. | \$3 PER PERSON

Adult Discovery Series and Retro Café

Learn about the upcoming solar eclipse with fun space science demonstrations, and pick up your solar eclipse glasses while you are here. Register in advance at kalamazoomuseum.org.

ACTIVITY MARCH 26 - 30 | FREE

SPRING Into the Museum!

A different activity every day! Choose from stories, STEM, animals, the solar eclipse and more. For more about each activity, visit kalamazoomuseum.org.



AGES 0 - 5 | FREE

CHILDREN'S LANDSCAPE

NEW THEME: DINOSAURS:

Archaeology Lab! Dig up fun and learning with these prehistoric creatures.

UPCOMING EVENT FREE

THE 19th ANNUAL FRETBOARD FESTIVAL



Friday, March 1 | 5:30 - 9 p.m. Featuring a musical performance by El Ballet Folklórico Estudiantil & Mariachi.

Saturday, March 2 | 9:30 a.m. - 7 p.m. Live music performances, regional luthier vendors and workshops with local professionals.

For more information, visit kalamazoomuseum.org.



EXHIBIT NOW - JAN. 19, 2025 | FREE

Kalamazoo State Hospital: 165 Years of Psychiatric Care

Learn about the history of the patients, employees and buildings on the campus of Michigan's longest-operating mental hospital.



EXHIBIT NOW - JUNE 2 | FREE

Skin: Living Armor, Evolving Identity

Explore the shape-shifting, color-changing and adaptable nature of skin and the technological innovations it inspires.

PLANETARIUM EXPERIENCE

MARCH SHOWS | \$3 PER PERSON

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS

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

Coyote is confused about what he sees in the sky. Join this amusing, fast-paced and fun full-dome show that explores lunar phases, eclipses and more.

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 during Kalamazoo Public Schools' Spring Break, March 26 - 30. 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.

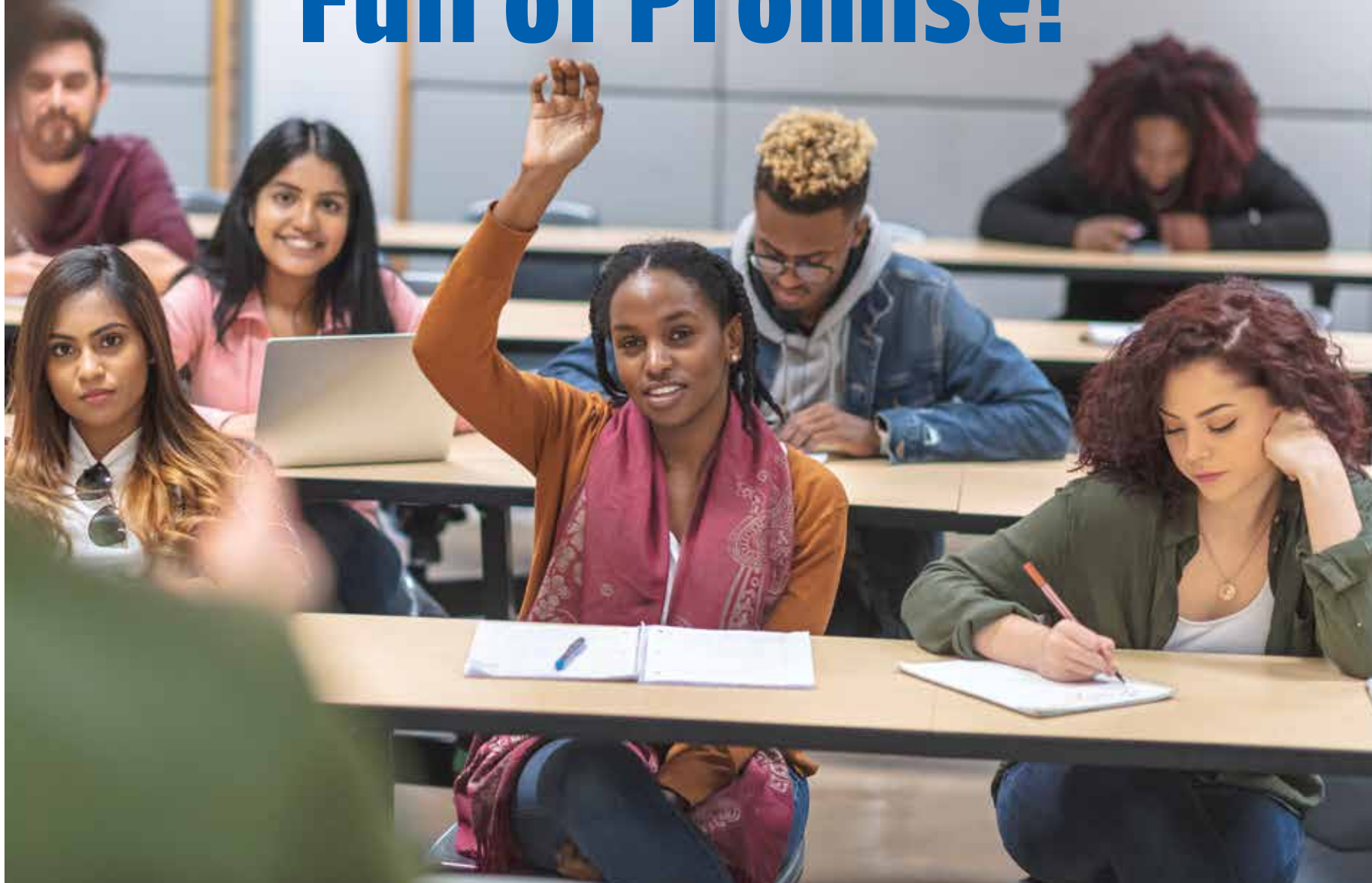
The Kalamazoo Valley Museum is operated by Kalamazoo Valley Community College and is governed by its Board of Trustees.



230 N. Rose St., Kalamazoo
kalamazoomuseum.org | 269.373.7990

2024 COLLEGE GUIDE

Your Future Is Full of Promise!



|10| Applying for The Promise **|12|** Participating Colleges & Universities **|14|** Meet Your Pathway Coach

|16| Financial Aid Tips **|18|** Plan A College Visit

How to Access and Utilize Your Kalamazoo Promise

So, you’ve narrowed down the colleges and programs you are interested in, you have considered taking or have taken the SAT or ACT, and you have researched or visited campuses that fit your needs and wants. Time to take the next steps to utilize The Kalamazoo Promise.

The Kalamazoo Promise is a scholarship that covers tuition and mandatory fees at all Michigan public universities and colleges, community colleges, Michigan College Alliance (MCA) private colleges and some institutions that provide industry recognized certificates for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools. (For a list of these, see “The Choices Are Endless,” page 12).

How much of The Promise am I eligible for?

The Kalamazoo Promise covers tuition and mandatory fees based on how many continuous years you attended and lived in the KPS district:

Grades you attended & lived in KPS	How much benefit you’ll get
K-12	100%
1-12	95%
2-12	95%
3-12	95%
4-12	90%
5-12	85%
6-12	80%
7-12	75%
8-12	70%
9-12	65%
10-11-12	None

Apply for and activate your Kalamazoo Promise in 3 easy steps:

The Promise has made it simple for KPS seniors to apply for and get the tuition and mandatory fee funds credited to their college accounts.

1 Apply for The Promise in the fall of your senior year

Students apply for The Kalamazoo Promise at the beginning of their senior year of high school. The Kalamazoo Promise has Pathway Coaches at each high school who work in collaboration with guidance office staff to help students navigate the scholarship process. (See “Meet Your Pathway Coach” on page 12)

2 Register for your Kalamazoo Promise account through the online portal:

<https://portal.KalamazooPromise.com/signup>

You will simply need your KPS ID number and to provide a personal email address (please do not use your Kalamazoo Public Schools email because it will end after you graduate). If you do not have another email account, you can create one for free with many services including Google, Yahoo, Microsoft Outlook and others. You will complete your Kalamazoo Promise application through the online portal and this form is used to determine and confirm your percentage of eligibility.

3 Complete the Kalamazoo Scholarship acceptance form and start survey

The second online form needed is The Kalamazoo Scholarship acceptance form, which lets The Promise know which college you will be attending so the scholarship can be applied to your account at that school. Students submit this form once they have been accepted to the college or university that they wish to attend and must include the student identification number assigned to them by the college. (When you are accepted, colleges will assign you a student ID number for that specific campus; this is the College Student Identification Number that should be placed on this form.)

You will have to complete this form only once, unless you attend summer school at a different institution or if you decide to transfer to another college or university that meets The Promise criteria.

For more information, scan this QR code to go to www.kalamazoopromise.com.



WHATEVER IS NEXT

For Grand Valley students, next is opportunity and innovation. Next is global, connecting and uniting us. It’s local, shaping the spaces in which we work and live. It’s a commitment to progress. Next is where minds are free to imagine what could be. At GVSU, next is now. And whatever’s next for you, we will help you get there.

gvsu.edu/next

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Summer Semester Registration Opens: **MARCH 4**

Summer Semester Classes Start: **MAY 6**

Fall Semester Registration Opens: **APRIL 1**

Fall Semester Starts: **SEPT. 4**

www.kvcc.edu/register

Kalamazoo**VALLEY**[™]
community college

2024 COLLEGE GUIDE

The Choices Are Endless

Colleges & universities that participate in The Promise

There are more than 60 colleges and universities across Michigan that you can attend as a Kalamazoo Promise Scholar. From the very large to the very small, private and public, community college, technical and vocational, your educational options are expansive and exciting.

These are the participating colleges and universities, the city they are located in, and their websites:

Adrian College (MCA), Adrian, www.adrian.edu (See ad, page 17)

Albion College (MCA), Albion, www.albion.edu

Alma College (MCA), Alma, www.alma.edu

Alpena Community College, Alpena, www.alpenacc.edu

Andrews University (MCA), Berrien Springs, www.andrews.edu

Aquinas College (MCA), Grand Rapids, www.aquinas.edu

Bay College, Escanaba, www.baycollege.edu

Bay Mills Community College, Brimley, www.bmcc.edu

Calvin College (MCA), Grand Rapids, www.calvin.edu (See ad, page 16)

Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, www.go.cmich.edu

Delta College, University Center, www.delta.edu

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, www.emich.edu (See ad, page 13)

What is an MCA School?

The colleges and universities listed with (MCA) next to their names are part of a partnership between The Kalamazoo Promise and the Michigan Colleges Alliance, an alliance of 14 private liberal-arts colleges in Michigan.

Through this partnership, Kalamazoo Promise scholars can attend these liberal arts colleges and enjoy the same tuition and fee benefit they would at Michigan public universities and community colleges. The MCA institutions have agreed to fund the difference in costs between their institutions' tuitions and attending a public university for Kalamazoo Promise scholars.

Ferris State University, Big Rapids, www.ferris.edu

Glen Oaks Community College, Centreville, www.glenoaks.edu

Gogebic Community College, Ironwood, www.gogebic.edu

Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, www.grcc.edu

Grand Valley State University, Allendale, www.gvsu.edu (See ad, page 10)

Great Lakes Maritime Academy, Traverse City, www.nmc.edu/maritime

Henry Ford College, Dearborn, www.hfcc.edu

Hillsdale College (MCA), Hillsdale, www.hillsdale.edu

Hope College (MCA), Holland, www.hope.edu

Jackson College, Jackson, www.jccmi.edu

Kalamazoo College (MCA), Kalamazoo, www.kzoo.edu (See ad, page 18)

Kalamazoo Electrical JATC (Apprenticeship), Kalamazoo, www.kalamazoojatc.com

Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Kalamazoo, www.kvcc.edu (See ad, page 11)

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2024 COLLEGE GUIDE

Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, www.kellogg.edu

Kendall College of Art & Design of Ferris State University, Grand Rapids, www.kcad.edu (See ad, page 19)

Kirtland Community College, Roscommon, www.kirtland.edu

Lake Superior State University, Sault Ste. Marie, www.lssu.edu

Lansing Community College, Lansing, www.lcc.edu

Macomb Community College, Warren, www.macomb.edu

Madonna University (MCA), Livonia, www.madonna.edu

Michigan Career and Technical Institute, Plainwell, www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights, Detroit, Reno, Saginaw, Wayland, Grayling, Negaunee, www.hammer9.com

Michigan State University, East Lansing, www.msu.edu

Michigan Technological University, Houghton, www.mtu.edu

Mid Michigan Community College, Harrison, www.midmich.edu

Monroe County Community College, Monroe, www.monroeccc.edu

Montcalm Community College, Sidney, www.montcalm.edu

Mott Community College, Flint, www.mcc.edu

Muskegon Community College, Muskegon, www.muskegoncc.edu

North Central Michigan College, Petoskey, www.ncmich.edu

Northern Michigan University, Marquette, www.nmu.edu

Northwestern Michigan College, Traverse City, www.nmc.edu

Oakland Community College, Bloomfield Hills, www.oaklandcc.edu

Oakland University, Rochester Hills, www.oakland.edu

Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, www.svsu.edu

Schoolcraft College, Livonia, www.schoolcraft.edu

Siena Heights University (MCA), Adrian, www.sienaheights.edu

Southwestern Michigan College, Dowagiac, www.swmich.edu

Spring Arbor University (MCA), Spring Arbor, www.arbor.edu
(See ad, page 15)

St. Clair County Community College, Port Huron, www.sc4.edu

University of Detroit Mercy (MCA), Detroit, www.udmercy.edu

University of Michigan Dearborn, Dearborn, www.umdearborn.edu

University of Michigan Flint, Flint, www.flint.umich.edu

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, www.umich.edu

The University of Olivet (MCA), Olivet, www.uolivet.edu
(See ad, page 12)

Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, www.wccnet.edu

Wayne County Community College, Detroit, www.wcccd.edu

Wayne State University, Detroit, www.wayne.edu

West Shore Community College, Scottsville, www.westshore.edu

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, www.wmich.edu
(See ads, pages 14 & 20) ■

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Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coaches are available to all students at each Kalamazoo Public Schools high school and work in collaboration with each school's guidance office staff to help students navigate The Kalamazoo Promise scholarship application process. The coaches are available at the high schools on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. They have weekly in-person and virtual office hours and can assist seniors and their parents/guardians in the completion of Promise-related forms, filing appeals, and providing resources to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and applying for other scholarships. Students can set up appointments with their Pathway Coach by email or in person. The Kalamazoo Promise Pathway Coaches assigned to each high school and their email addresses are:



Phoenix & KILP
Melissa Nesbitt
Pathway Coach Manager
mnesbitt@kalamazoopromise.com



Kalamazoo Central
Trenae Dunigan
tdunigan@kalamazoopromise.com



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Applying for Financial Aid

Even with The Kalamazoo Promise, there are other costs of going to college and you may qualify to receive federal student aid to help defray some of those expenses such as fees, room and board, books and supplies and a computer.

Federal student aid comes from the U.S. Department of Education and is accessed by completing and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). States and schools use FAFSA information to determine whether you qualify for additional aid, including scholarships, so fill out a FAFSA even if you think you won't qualify for federal aid.

Important Updates for 2024-25 Applicants

A revamped FAFSA form became available on Dec. 1, 2023, for the 2024-25 school year and federal and state deadlines to apply are June 30. There have been some issues with the new form and, as a result, applicants may not receive their financial aid package notification until later this month or in April which may delay students' decisions for next school year. However, here's what to do while you wait:

1. File the FAFSA. Visit fafsa.gov to apply online or download a PDF version to fill out and mail it to the address on the form. The sooner you file, the sooner you will receive an award letter. Please note that the FAFSA is running inconsistently on Chromebooks and if possible, students/families should use a computer other than a Chromebook to apply.

2. Visit colleges that you have been accepted to or that you are interested in to make sure you have the information that will help you make your final decision. (See page 18 for tips on how to visit colleges.)

3. Use the FSA Student Aid Estimator at studentaid.gov/aid-estimator to determine potential aid and compare it to actual college costs using the net cost calculator at collegecost.ed.gov/net-price as you consider final college decisions.

4. Research and apply for scholarships. Visit tiny.cc/scholarships2024 for a list of scholarships you may qualify for. Scholarship providers should understand that they will not have FAFSA submission summaries until mid-March.

5. Attend or watch virtual webinars about financing college at michigan.gov/mistudentaid to learn more about various opportunities. Register and you will receive a recording of the webinar even if you cannot attend it live.

6. Having troubles with the FAFSA form? Visit the site's live chat or email customerservice@studentaid.gov. Providing screenshots in your email of the issues that you are having will be helpful.

7. Scan this QR code for direct links to all the sites mentioned in this article:



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Plan a College Visit

Why should you visit a college?

One of the most important things to do when deciding where to go to college, is to visit the colleges you are interested in. College visits are easy to schedule; just reach out the college or university's Admissions or Enrollment Management Office. Some colleges will set up weekends or other days for groups of students to visit which will include tours and the opportunity to experience college life.

Visiting a college campus will tell you so much more than a brochure or web-site can. You can learn how diverse the college is and what the physical campus is like, and see the buildings you'll be taking classes in. It also gives you an opportunity to ask questions and meet the faculty that could be teaching you in the future.

Here's how to have a successful campus visit:

- Consider the best time to visit. If possible, try to visit on a weekday when classes are in session. You're not as likely to get a true feel of the institution if there aren't any classes for you to attend. It will also give you a feel for how busy the campus is.

- Phone the college to schedule an appointment for a guided tour, information session, or both. Be sure to ask for recommendations on what to wear for the visit. If the institution is farther away, ask about hotels in the area and parking passes.

- Once you get to the college, pick up brochures, financial aid forms and a campus map. Try to sit in a classroom, if possible, and get a feel for the environment. Talk to students about campus life and faculty about courses you are interested in. Gather contact information from professors and admissions faculty in order to ask follow-up questions, if needed.

- Be sure to take your own tour of the campus, as the guided tour probably won't show the less attractive features of the institution. It will also give you an idea of how close or far away your classes will be to where you live.

- Save the schools you're really interested in to visit last. By the time you get to these picks, you will have figured out what is most important to you and how you can better gauge campus life.

Get an understanding of campus life by:

- Visiting dorms, dining halls, libraries, student union and other campus facilities.

- Talking to current students at the college about their transition from high school to college, college courses, how they get home for breaks and whether there is campus transportation.

- Learning about campus services for students, including mental health counseling, academic advising, IT support, financial aid, medical care, academic support and religious services.

- Finding out what's happening on campus and what students are thinking about by looking at the institution's social media accounts, student-run publications and the campus radio station.

Turn Four Into MORE

"What I love the most about environmental studies at K is that I'm not just studying science—I'm studying history and anthropology. I'm studying economics and policy. It's really cool to see reflections of a subject I love in new areas."

Emerson '25

Loy Norrix graduate, Heyl Scholar
ECO club board, outdoor program leader
Major: biology
Concentration: environmental studies
Study abroad plan: Thailand

kzoo.edu/admission

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2024 COLLEGE GUIDE

Ask lots of questions, such as:

- What are the class sizes like?
- Why did you choose this institution?
- What do you do in your free time or on the weekends?
- Do graduate students, juniors, seniors or professors mentor students?
- What is the graduation rate?
- What does the campus do to promote volunteering, student involvement in campus groups and extracurricular activities?
- What are housing options and are first-years required to live on campus?
- Am I allowed to have my own transportation or can I bring my own car on campus?
- Are there work-studies or part-time jobs available?

For Parents/Caregivers:

If a parent or caregiver is planning to visit campus with you, here are some questions they can ask:

About Financial Aid

- What are the financial aid options available?
- What is the year-to-year tuition increase? When is the next increase expected?
- What percentage of students were awarded financial aid in the past academic year?
- What additional costs should we anticipate?
- What are the work-study opportunities?

About career and employment opportunities

- What opportunities exist for undergrad internships?
- How many job fairs and recruiters are scheduled for each department?
- Are there mentorship programs? Are they free?
- Is academic counseling available? Is it easily accessible?

About health and campus safety

- What kind of counseling and support groups are available? What is the student-counselor ratio?
- What are the campus health and counseling services? What does the college health insurance cover?
- How is communication between faculty, students, parents and counselors facilitated and encouraged?
- How are roommates chosen? Can a student switch roommates due to compatibility issues?

About campus life

- Is the level of competition — social and academic — manageable?
- Are there any campus role models or student organizations to guide my student?
- If you belong in a minority community, are there minority community organizations? What is their presence?
- Is the cafeteria menu diverse enough to serve students from different ethnicities? What are other dining options?
- Is the campus population mostly local or out-of-state? Is campus populated on weekends? ■



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“... I feel even more motivated to make a lasting change in my community.”

Sierra W. | Marketing, leadership and business strategy, class of 2025

Sierra found meaning in the courage to explore.

As a Loy Norrix graduate initially called to public health, Sierra found a new passion in community outreach as a member of the Black Student Union’s executive board. She found the space and flexibility to grow her leadership and networking skills at the Haworth College of Business. Making an impact through an internship at Stryker as a Higher Promise Scholar, Sierra also played a lead role in bringing the You Beautiful Black Woman RSO back to campus.

WMU supports student exploration through experience-driven opportunities.

wmich.edu/experience-driven



Kalamazoo Kids In Tune

Building Community One Note at a Time

WHEN Kalamazoo Kids In Tune began 12 years ago, the idea was that relationships could help students develop their musical skills. Now, the program is more interested in using a framework of music to help students develop meaningful relationships.

It is a nuanced difference in focus but an important shift for the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra after-school program that works with about 100 KPS students in third through 12th grades.

“We’re really an inclusive and accessible musical community for KPS students during the after-school time, where sustained mentorships, friendships and excellent music instruction results in positive lifelong outcomes,” said Liz Youker, director of education and community engagement for the KSO.

KKIT staff strive to create a community of music-making where students feel “they belong, feel like they’re recognized for who they are and everyone is equal in contributing in the way they are best able,” Youker said

The program operates an elementary program four days a week at Woods Lake Elementary School and a secondary program twice a week at Milwood



Syncere Alexander practices the French horn with the KKIT orchestra.



Kalamazoo Kids in Tune violinists at Milwood Magnet School work in their sectional, from left, Kealliya Nelson, Gracelyn Sneddon, violin instructor Negar Afazel, Axl Kimbrough, Jhaleel Calvin (back), and Jonathan Solonika.

Magnet School. Students divide their time between small group ensemble work, lessons on their instruments, and orchestra practice. There are about 100 students in the program, divided evenly between the two levels.

Milwood Magnet School seventh-graders Rosario Romero Morales and James Rial agree about what keeps them coming back to KKIT — the people. Romero Morales was just looking for something to do after school when she joined as a third grader.

“But I started doing it every year because everyone is really nice and it’s fun,” she said. “You get to try new things and your opinions get heard which is really nice.”

She’s enjoyed the experience so much that she’s convinced friends to join, and she plans to join marching band in high school — something she’d never even considered before joining the group.

Rial said he originally planned to play violin but a shortage of those instruments led to the opportunity to play flute.

KKIT provides more intensive learning than the typical school class and he particularly enjoys the sectionals, which allow students to study just their section with an experienced musician. It’s demanding, but “It’s just generally fun to be here.”

On KKIT night at Woods Lake, there is a cacophony

of sound emanating from the building. Some of it is the nature of a building full of children happy to be done with their school day, but there is definitely music in the making as well.

Young cellists work on their bowing, woodwind students are perfecting their fingering, and in the orchestra room, KPS music teacher and KKIT Artistic Director Ben Gudbrandson can be seen with baton in hand urging more sound of his orchestra performers, stopping and starting practice as he guides them toward a unified sound.

He is demanding and exacting, but he is also gentle and supportive of these young musicians because he understands the heart they bring to their music-making.

“I think the cornerstone of the program in today’s day and age is that this is a community of kids who want to gather to make music,” Gudbrandson said. “That is maybe an evolution from where we started. Over the years, we realized we should really be looking for kids who are really excited about making music, because we’re asking you to come and make a lot of music with us every single week.”

The music ranges from everything from Latin American folk dances to the opera music of Rossini and Bizet to Motown and movie themes. Sometimes

(continued on page 22)

Kids In Tune *(continued from page 21)*

staff choose the themes, but students also get a voice in the selections — especially for the popular summer concerts held in Bronson Park.

Whatever the music, there is always a hook that appeals to the students’ musical sensibilities. Students were playing the overture to “Carmen,” when they suddenly realized it was the main theme from the video game and horror movie “Five Nights at Freddy’s.” “They were like, ‘We know this and we love Five Nights at Freddy’s,’” Gudbrandson said.

KKIT is a cooperative venture that fosters community between all age levels. In the secondary program, seasoned seniors from the Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra, arguably some of the most advanced high school musicians in the region, play alongside sixth graders who may just be learning their instruments. Some of those accomplished older students have been hired as program assistants and work with elementary school musicians.

Yes, they are accomplished musicians and leaders, but for elementary school kids, these older students are also just cool. The older students and even teachers play alongside the youngest students as a



KKIT Artistic Director and KPS teacher Ben Gudbrandson practices percussion with Colin Burgis, Makir Hutt and Liam Moody.

community of musicians — which is the very definition of an orchestra, Youker said.

Gudbrandson said that they play together to convey the message that, “Hey friend, I’m here to sup-

port. You don’t need to feel lost in this jungle of music and older students. Let’s really help and support your individual needs as musicians as well.’ I think
(continued on page 22)



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Kids In Tune *(continued from page 22)*

that’s a unique model to help everyone move at their own pace and find success in this bigger community.”

Kalamazoo Kids In Tune was inspired by the El Sistema organization, founded by Venezuelan educator and musician Dr. Jose Abreu. It used intensive classical music instruction to support and help poor children in Venezuela. Its most famous graduate is conductor and violinist Gustavo Dudamel, music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Paris Opera.

Youker helped develop KKIT with Kalamazoo Public Schools and Communities in Schools of Kalamazoo. The KKIT program provides intensive musical instruction — as well as meals, transportation and academic support as necessary — but staff works hard to make sure that the students know that they matter as much as the music.

“A lot of opportunities get progressively harder very quickly and students may feel ‘this is not for me’ or ‘I’m not keeping up.’ that’s not what we do at Kids in Tune so much,” she said.

What they have learned after almost 12 years, Gudbrandson said, is that, “Kids will blossom into their greatest success through this community of people and interactions together. It’s not necessarily the music but it’s the people and the process and the community that makes this special.”

The pandemic really drove that message home for KKIT. When the lockdown first happened, a lot



Rosario Romero Morales has played trumpet since third grade.

of effort went into giving the students ways to make music together, but then it became apparent that the real value of the program was that it was helping students express themselves and to communicate and to share their stories with each other.

After that, the online gatherings became as much about playing games and hanging out as the music making. That enhanced community building became

part of the in-person program as everyone came out of Covid.

“What we’ve learned is that what kids were coming to us for was community,” Youker said. “The difference is being outcome focused when it comes to musical ability and being outcome focused when it comes to what relationships are built — with music as the foundation.”

KALAMAZOO KIDS IN TUNE IS FUNDED BY:

- Carnegie Hall Weill Music Institute – PlayUSA Program
- Irving S. Gilmore Foundation
- Kalamazoo Community Foundation
- Michigan Department of Education
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KPS Librarians Favorite Books About Going to Kindergarten and Preschool

THINKING about the first day of the school year is nerve-racking enough — but what if you're facing not just the first day of the school year but your first day of school EVER? That's an exciting proposition but it can also be a scary one for the youngest learners.

Luckily, Kalamazoo Public Schools' top-notch librarians know just how to calm little nerves — with a good book. Or, because they're librarians, with lots and lots of books. Peruse their list of books about starting preschool or kindergarten for some great reads to help ease children into this exciting time.

STARTING PRESCHOOL



Maisy Goes to Preschool by Lucy Cousins

This bright, colorful storybook takes a look at Maisy's fun day at preschool. Maisy is confident and acquainted with the routines of preschool. She hangs up her coat, joins in making music, listens to a story, and so on. Throughout the day, the young mouse and her friends have a good time.



Pearl Goes to Preschool by Julie Fortenberry

Pearl loves taking

dance class at her mother's ballet school, but when her mother suggests she go to preschool, she isn't so sure. Her mother tells her all about what preschool is like, and eventually, Pearl is convinced. When she goes to preschool, she paints a picture, builds a fairy castle, and even makes a new friend.



My First Day of Preschool by Louise Martin

Rhyming text follows Bunny on his first day of preschool. At first he has a nervous tummy, but with his favorite stuffed animal in tow, he meets new friends and enjoys activities. When

he feels a bit unsure at school, notes from his mother help him feel brave. Includes a certificate readers can complete on their first day of preschool, and a downloadable personalized sign for a photo prop on the first day.



Pete the Kitty's First Day of Preschool by James Dean

It's a big day for Pete the Kitty: his first day of preschool! He meets his cool teacher, sings a few fun songs, and even gets to paint. Who knew preschool could be so much fun? Preschoolers and little ones getting ready to go to preschool for the first time will enjoy cheering Pete the Kitty's fun entry to preschool.

STARTING KINDERGARTEN



The Class by Boni Ashburn

Count along with 20 young students from 19 different homes as they get ready for their first day of kindergarten. Alarm clocks go off and students all over town wake up and get ready for their big day. Some feel eager, others are nervous, and a few are even grumpy! But they all get dressed, eat breakfast, pack backpacks, and make their way to school, where they will meet their new teacher and become a wonderful new class.



The King of Kindergarten by Derrick Barnes

Starting kindergarten is a big milestone — and the hero of this story is ready to make his mark! He's dressed himself, eaten a pile of pancakes, and

can't wait to be part of a whole new kingdom of kids. The day will be jam-packed, but he's up to the challenge, taking new experiences in stride with his infectious enthusiasm. Afterward, he can't wait to tell his proud parents all about his achievements — and then wake up to start another day.



The Queen of Kindergarten by Derrick Barnes

It's MJ's first day of kindergarten, and

she can't wait to learn all sorts of new things. Before she leaves for school, Momma gives her a tiara and proclaims she's the Queen of Kindergarten. Momma explains that the Queen of Kindergarten brightens every room, is caring and kind, and is always helpful to others. At school, MJ finds ways to be the best queen she can be by being kind, sharing with others, and helping her new friends.

(continued on page 25)

Let's Growww!



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it's time to GROW!



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Questions? Call 269-250-9333.



Favorite Books *(continued from page 24)*



Adventure Annie Goes to Kindergarten by Toni Buzzee

Annie Grace wears her "Adventure Annie" cape to her first day of kindergarten, and proceeds to barrel through the day, searching for adventure in every moment. Her interpretation of the class's Gold Star Rules isn't exactly what her teacher, Mr. Todd, had in mind, though. But somehow Annie does manage to save the day when two of her classmates get lost on their way to retrieve the afternoon snack. Spirited and funny, this is an introduction to kindergarten that will please kids and teachers alike.



Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate

A classic! This rhyming, brightly illustrated book is the perfect way to practice

the alphabet and to introduce young children to kindergarten. It's the first day of kindergarten and Miss Bindergarten is hard at work getting the classroom ready for her 26 new students. Meanwhile, Adam Krupp wakes up, Brenda Heath brushes her teeth, and Christopher Beaker finds his sneaker. Miss Bindergarten puts the finishing touches on the room just in time, and the students arrive. Now the fun can begin!

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL – GENERAL



Isabel and Her Colores Go To School

by Alessandra Alessandri

Isabel is anxious about her first day at Honeytree Elementary. Isabel speaks Spanish and doesn't understand much English. She is scared of everything that could go wrong. English, with its blustery blues and whites, just

feels wrong to Isabel. She prefers the warm oranges and pinks of Spanish. As she prepares for class at a new school, she knows she's going to have to learn — and she would rather not! Her first day is uncomfortable, until she discovers there's more than one way to communicate with friends. This is a universal story about feeling new and making new friends. In Spanish and English.



A New School Year: Stories in Six Voices by Sally Derby

In a unique narrative, readers meet a diverse group of six children ranging in age from Kindergarten through fifth grade. With nerves and excitement each child gears up for a new school year by hustling in the morning, meeting new teachers and new classmates during the day, and heading home with homework and relief by day's end.



How to Get Your Teacher Ready by Jean Reagan

This humorous book takes readers through a fun and busy school year. Written in tongue-in-cheek "how-to" style, a class of adorable students gives tips and tricks for getting a teacher ready — for the first day of school, and all the events and milestones that will follow (picture day, holiday concert, the 100th day of school, field day!). Along the way, children will see that getting their teacher ready is also getting themselves ready.



The Pigeon Has to Go to School! by Mo Willems

Pigeon has to go to school but has many excuses for getting out of it, including already knowing everything, learning so much his head pops off, and not being liked

by his teachers and other students. But he comes to realize that he's not alone in these worries and that everyone has to practice being good at school.



Dad's First Day by Mike Wohnoutka

Oliver and his dad spent all summer playing together, laughing together, singing together, and reading together! And now it's time for Oliver to start school! But ... his dad isn't quite ready. Suddenly, he feels nervous and his tummy hurts. Maybe they should stay home together! But Oliver isn't convinced. What if the first day is really fun? What if it's the start of an exciting year? In this charming story, Oliver and his dad face new beginnings and new adventures on the first day of school.

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Social Justice Youth Awards



NINE YOUNG people were honored with the City of Kalamazoo’s Social Justice Youth Awards on Jan. 22 at the City Commission meeting. The awards are presented annually as part of the city’s celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The winners are selected for exemplifying the civil rights leader’s values through their community service and volunteerism.

The awards are presented by each of the program’s sponsors: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Consumers Energy, Fifth Third Bank, Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War, Life EMS, the Lodge-Dennis family, and Schupan & Sons. Additionally, two awards were sponsored by the CSM Group and presented by Dr. Lewis Walker, a trailblazer for the progression of racial equity in Kalamazoo.

A recording of the awards presentation is available on the City of Kalamazoo’s YouTube channel.

This year’s winners are:

Clark Atkinson

Award presented by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Iota Sigma Omega

Atkinson is a high achiever with a 3.5 grade point average. He is well-rounded with significant involvement in academics, sports, and community organizations. As a strong leader, he provides mentorship to others. He is a member of Jeter’s Leaders, where he has facilitated and organized events of service in the community; vice president of the Kappa League; and a member of the Young Men Mentors Ministry at Mt. Zion Baptist Church and Men of Purpose.

He was the recipient of the 2023 NAACP Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch Dr. Charles Warfield Youth

Social Justice Youth Award winners 2024, left to right: Mayalena Alvarez, Jordan Pritchett, Clark Atkinson, Sadaya Hamby, Ohmaz Clark, Avery Pratt, Layla Wallace, Mahalia Guidry, and Annalise Ransom.

Community Service Award. Atkinson understands that maintaining an attitude of respect for others, being open-minded, and being willing to compromise are key to problem-solving.

Mayalena Alvarez

Award presented by Consumers Energy

Alvarez is an exceptional young leader in the Kalamazoo community. She is a bilingual tutor at El Concilio and a member of the Loy Norrix Latinx Club. She also volunteers for blood drives and the Loy Norrix Key Club.

Alvarez is part of Youth in Government, the only youth member of the Kalamazoo Plant it Forward Plant Swaps, and a member of the Green Club at school. On top of her volunteering and social justice work, she continues to excel in the classroom as a member of the National Honor Society.

Annalise Ransom

Award presented by Kalamazoo Non-Violent Opponents of War (KNOW)

Ransom volunteers with a number of organizations that seek to support success for diverse populations in Kalamazoo. She volunteers with RAWK (Read And Write Kalamazoo), which provides opportunities for students to express themselves through writing and publishing. She has also volunteered with Girls on the Run and served as a literacy volunteer with Head Start.

Ransom has had a number of leadership roles as well. She is secretary of DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) at Loy Norrix High school and serves as committee chair in management for the

Kalamazoo Youth Advisory Council of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation. As a part of the National Honor Society, Ransom has served on the executive board. She has worked on the organization’s food drive, blood drive, and blanket distribution project. She has a paid internship with Circa Design, where she is gaining skills in marketing.

Ohmaz Clark

Award presented by Life EMS

Clark is a compassionate young leader who has an outstanding focus on community service and a desire to treat all people with respect. He is treasurer of the Kalamazoo chapter of the Kappa League, a delegate to the Loy Norrix DECA business club, and a member of the LINK crew.

Clark has demonstrated leadership by helping plan his senior luncheon, serving as a student-to-student mentor, and participating on the executive board for the Class of 2024. Through his participation in the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), he has worked to expand the world of business to people of all races and ethnicities.

An academically strong student, he plans to attend either Wayne State University or Michigan State University in the fall.

Jordan Pritchett

Award presented by the Lodge-Dennis Family

Pritchett is a leader at Loy Norrix High School and in the Kalamazoo community. She is the co-chair of

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Social Justice Youth Awards (continued from page 26)

the Loy Norrix Student Senate. She has helped lead actions to improve the student experience at Loy Norrix including having a student-led approach to reducing suspensions.

She served on the Kalamazoo Public School Equity Task Force and was responsible for surveying Loy Norrix students on equity issues and reporting the findings to the KPS Board of Education. Pritchett organized community town hall meetings to foster open dialogue and raise awareness about critical global matters.

She is the Class of 2025 Executive Board treasurer and is a leader in the KRESA Education for the Arts dance Program. She is a leader in her class and feels the need to put in additional efforts to ensure all voices are heard as she improves the school community.

Mahalia Guidry

Award presented by Schupan & Sons

Guidry is an active youth ambassador in our community and works hard to be a champion for different events in Kalamazoo. She is active in the Turn 2 Foundation meetings and discussions, working well with her peers and adults alike. She also volunteers for RAWK (Read And Write Kalamazoo) and has worked with the Boys & Girls Club and Merze Tate Explorers.

Guidry is respected by her peers and the adults she interacts with. She speaks out against injustices she observes in Kalamazoo and the world. Her involvement and assistance to the director of Merze Tate Explorers helps young Black women grow through their attendance of different events and activities.

Sadaya Hamby

Award presented by Dr. Lewis Walker, sponsored by CSM Group

Hamby is a talented, caring and focused leader dedicated to helping create a world where equity and justice are a reality for all. She is constantly seeking ways to improve her leadership skills and develop her academic skills.

For nearly four years, she has participated in Jeter’s Leaders, documenting more than 400 volunteer hours with the organization. She participated in a Jeter’s Leaders research group, which focused on understanding diversity and inclusion in America. The research findings will be presented to young people from across America at the next Jeter’s Leaders Leadership Conference. She was secretary of the Jeter’s Leaders Executive Council for the 2022-23 year and is the Vice President for 2023-24.

She has been a site mentor for the Boys & Girls Club and volunteered and participated in events such as the Out of the Darkness: Suicide Awareness Walk, Walk to Charlie’s Place, Kalamazoo Central Mock Trial, and with National Honors Society and Gryphon Place.

Awards were also presented to Gull Lake High School and Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center student Avery Pratt and Western Michigan University student Layla Wallace.

girls who code

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