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# We Lead Learning

Community newsletter from **Kent ISD** 

Welcome to *We Lead Learning*, a new newsletter for partners, supporters and interested community members of Kent ISD.

With this newsletter, we share many ways our team leads learning and serves students, educators, and you, our community members. Each issue, we will spotlight our outstanding student programs, highlight a story from School News Network, share how educators are helping student dreams come true, and more.

Thank you for your ongoing interest and involvement in public education.



## Great Start Readiness Program Open House

[Great Start Readiness Program](#) provides free preschool for four-year-olds of families who qualify. Research shows that children who take part in high-quality preschool are more

language and thinking skills, helps children learn to make friends and also spurs emotional development.

Interested families can learn more at "Preschool: Here I Come!" an area-wide GSRP open house Friday, April 28. Classrooms throughout Kent and parts of Barry Counties will be open so families can meet teachers, ask questions and complete the preschool intake application. [Visit our website for a list of times and locations.](#)

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## Your Dream is Our Dream

When Angel Vargas moved from Puerto Rico to Michigan, he had no idea what opportunities awaited him. After entering Kent ISD's [Empower U](#) Young Adult Transition program at Goodwill Industries, his entry into meaningful employment and increased independence began. You can hear his story in the latest episode of [Kent ISD's Your Dream is Our Dream](#) podcast featuring Angel, his step-dad Ramon, and his Empower U teacher Michael Spagnuolo. This podcast is produced in partnership with WGVU Public Media. You can listen on [WGVU's website](#), or find it on Spotify or Apple Podcasts. This initiative celebrates student success at all levels of education, one dream at a time.

Angel and Michael were both also featured in Goodwill Industries' newest Success Story video. [Watch the story](#) to see Angel on the job, and hear what he has learned so far through this program.

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## Celebrating School Staff

Educator Appreciation Week is May 7-13 and there are 26,965 school employees throughout Kent ISD. From teachers to librarians, maintenance staff, mental health workers, secretaries, accountants, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, principals and many more, we hope you'll celebrate and say thanks to the school employees in your life.

Our [THRIVE! Promoting Educator Wellness](#) initiative provides mental and physical wellness opportunities for school staff during this special week and throughout the year - because when teachers thrive, students thrive! There's still time to show your support for educators by joining the THRIVE! 5K run/walk on April 22. This family-friendly event is open to the entire community. Register to run today, or show up and cheer on the runners in our celebration of wellness!

[5K Registration](#)

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## North Rockford Middle School Student Wins Greater Grand Rapids Spelling Bee

“When I heard the word ‘quadrilateral’, I knew I was going to Washington,” said Brady Bowers, winner of the 46th annual [Greater Grand Rapids Spelling Bee](#) presented by Kent ISD. Brady (pictured second from right), a 13-year-old 7th grade student at North Rockford Middle School, enjoys advanced classes in math, science and Spanish immersion. He took home the top prize at the event on March 28 at Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, edging out fifteen student winners of regional qualifier bees in Kent, Ottawa, Newaygo, Allegan and Barry counties. He advances next to the Scripps National Spelling Bee near Washington D.C. May 28 - June 2.

[Watch Brady spell the winning word in this story from FOX17.](#)

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## Program Spotlight: Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Our programs for students who are deaf and hard of hearing began in 1899. That was before the invention of the airplane, crayons, and even the teddy bear! With \$150 per child funding from the Michigan Legislature, a day school using the oral method of teaching was established by legislator and Grand Rapids attorney, Sybrant Wesselius, who did not want to send his deaf daughter away to receive her education. The oral method teaches students who are deaf and hard of hearing to develop spoken language and listening through technology and observation. You can explore the history of this program, including a gallery of historic images, [on our website](#).

Today, students and families can choose between two different programs. The [Kent ISD Oral Deaf program](#) teaches deaf and hard-of-hearing students means of developing spoken language and listening through technology and observation. The [Total Communication program](#) teaches students American Sign Language and self-identity in deaf culture.

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## Summer Learning Opportunities

Summer can be a time of fun and relaxation for kids, but it's also a perfect opportunity to continue learning and encourage academic growth. For families looking to keep their kids engaged and learning throughout the season, Kent ISD's [Career Readiness](#) team has curated [a list of local opportunities](#) that will make summer learning both fun and effective. The list includes options for a wide variety of interests, like [Virtual Reality Camp](#), [Grand Rapids Community College Career Camps](#), and [art camps at the Grand Rapids Art Museum](#) (pictured above).

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## School News Network: Change begins with love

*Northview* — From a young age, Siena Ramirez was known by school officials, her peers and the media for her involvement in social and environmental justice, immigrant rights,

"I think it's more about loving everyone all the time, and I guess you could say that's a form of action," said the Northview High senior over a coffee at Lotus Brew/Dry Bar in Northeast Grand Rapids. "I like to use 'love' more than 'activism' because I feel like I always get labeled as that, and I would rather be about compassion and love, because that is what I am doing is about."

[Visit School News Network to read the full article and sign up to receive headlines each week.](#)

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Thank you for your contributions to the success of students across Kent ISD!

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