



TRANSFORMING FUTURES

Kalamazoo RESA Annual Report
2023-24

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Transforming Futures Together

Dear KRESA Community,

As we reflect on the 2023-24 school year and look toward the future, one thing remains constant: our commitment to continuous improvement in service to the learners, families, and educators of the Greater Kalamazoo region. Education is ever-evolving, and we understand the importance of growing alongside the needs of our community.

This year, we are proud to unveil our refreshed vision, mission and brand identity, encapsulating the spirit of collaboration and innovation that defines Kalamazoo RESA. With a deep commitment to our values—Collaboration, Innovation, Compassion, Respect, and Integrity—we are excited to share how these principles shape our path forward.

Our Shared Commitment

The transformation reflected in our new brand mirrors the changes we aim to inspire in our community. Together, we will continue building an educational environment where innovation thrives, equity is a priority, and every learner has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Your partnership is vital as we work to transform futures, one learner at a time.

Yours in education,

Dr. Dedrick Martin
Superintendent



Guiding Our Journey

Our new vision and mission will serve as our north star, guiding our efforts to deliver transformative educational services:

VISION

A transformative, equitable, and innovative education for all in the Greater Kalamazoo region.

MISSION

We deliver transformative, equitable, and innovative programs, and specialized services that empower learners, families, and schools to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Introducing Our Brand Transformation

As Kalamazoo RESA continues to grow in its impact and reach, our refreshed brand reflects the forward-thinking and inclusive spirit that defines our work. While the programs and services you rely on remain the same, this transformation better represents the breadth of our work and our commitment to empowering learners, families, and educators. Our rebrand marks an exciting new chapter—honoring our legacy while embracing the future with a renewed focus on our core values.

Our logo:

The small leaf or antenna – breaks free from the box – evoking growth and "breaking out of the box" for transformation



Moving to full color provides a broad palette for all of the sub-brands

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Supporting Education Holistically

Each of KRESA's Centers of Excellence represents a distinct category—or pillar—of our work, encompassing a wide range of supports tailored to meet the needs of learners, families, and educators. By organizing our services into these focused areas, we highlight our holistic approach to education and our dedication to empowering every individual at every stage of their journey.



KALAMAZOO RESA Early Childhood

Early Childhood: *Providing foundational support for children ages 0–5 through early care and education programs, including free and low-cost pre-kindergarten.*

The incorporation of leaf-like elements in this logo represents growth and nurturing; just as seeds evolve into complex organisms with roots, branches and leaves that grow ever upward, so do our youngest learners. The two outer leaves wrap around the center one, just as we too support the whole child and family through our programs and services.



KALAMAZOO RESA Career Connect

Career Connect: *Preparing K-12 students and young adults for future careers with courses, coaching, work-based learning, and other programs.*

The directional arrows symbolize the transformative experiences and meaningful relationships that guide learners as they navigate various career pathways. The image also reflects the dynamic and lifelong nature of career development, emphasizing continuous progress, learning, and growth.



KALAMAZOO RESA Special Education

Special Education: *Supporting learners with diverse needs through tailored services and resources, from early intervention to transition services.*

This image represents the essential linking elements that special education inspires through the relationships, collaboration, and support systems that bring educators, families, and resources together to foster inclusion, growth, and transformation in our learners.



KALAMAZOO RESA Educator Supports

Educator Supports: *Offering professional development, coaching, and resources to empower educators and enhance classroom experiences.*

Apples have long been seen as symbols of knowledge and learning. The design also evokes the concept of a seed being planted and nurtured, symbolizing the role of educators in our learners' growth and development. The forward-leaning direction represents the innovative, dynamic, and evolving nature of educational best practices and our commitment to creating an environment where both educators and learners can thrive.



KALAMAZOO RESA Operational Supports

Operational Supports: *Delivering essential services that keep schools running smoothly, including technology, transportation, payroll, and communications.*

This image reflects the role Operational Supports plays in providing essential structural support, giving KRESA a solid foundation. The interconnected supports with multiple beams and joints work in harmony together. Just like a building's infrastructure is often hidden from view, but vital for structural integrity, these supports may not be visible to all but are critical for front-facing programs and services to shine.



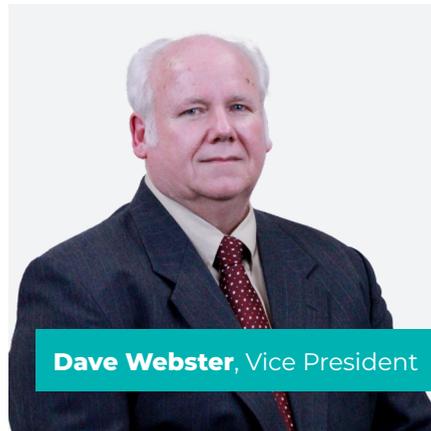
GUIDING THE MISSION

Insights from the KRESA Board of Education

The Kalamazoo RESA Board of Education plays a vital role in driving our mission of transforming futures. Here is what inspires them to serve and what guides their work:



Skip Knowles, President



Dave Webster, Vice President



Dr. Delores Myers, Treasurer



Lynne Cowart, Secretary



Randy VanAntwerp, Trustee

Why do you serve on the KRESA Board of Education?

"I always remember it's about the little ones, even as they grow bigger. Kids and educational services are of utmost importance to me."

Why do you serve on the KRESA Board of Education?

"I believe every child deserves the resources and opportunities to succeed, and I'm proud to help make that happen."

Why do you serve on the KRESA Board of Education?

"Education is the cornerstone of a thriving community, and KRESA is leading the way."

Why do you serve on the KRESA Board of Education?

"Providing high-quality education for all children is one of our community's most important responsibilities."

Why do you serve on the KRESA Board of Education?

"To give back to the community by supporting students in Kalamazoo County."

How important is community support to KRESA's work?

"KRESA voters have been incredibly generous. Their support makes exceptional service possible."

During your time on the Board, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

"The creation of a world-class career center, made possible by generous donors and industry partners, is a testament to the inspiring community support."

What guiding principles shape your work as a Board member?

"I'm committed to financial stewardship and supporting programs that transform lives."

During your time on the Board, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

"I'm inspired by the dedication of KRESA staff and by the community's generosity in supporting millages and programs."

During your time on the Board, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

"The redesign of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs shows how we're adapting to meet the evolving needs of our students."



CONSTITUENT DISTRICTS

- Climax-Scotts Community Schools
- Comstock Public Schools
- Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools
- Gull Lake Community Schools
- Kalamazoo Public Schools
- Parchment School District
- Portage Public Schools
- Schoolcraft Community Schools
- Vicksburg Community Schools
- Forest Academy
- Kalamazoo Covenant Academy
- Oakland Academy
- Paramount Charter Academy
- Youth Advancement Academy
- 18 Nonpublic Schools in Kalamazoo County



NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

It is the policy of Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency that no discriminating practices based on gender/sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, height, weight, color, age, national origin, disability or any other status covered by federal, state or local law be allowed during any program, activity, service or in employment. The following positions at Kalamazoo RESA have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy: Superintendent Dr. Dedrick Martin and Assistant Superintendent Mindy Miller. Contact information: (269) 250-9200, 1819 E. Milham Ave, Portage, MI 49002.

TRANSFORMING FUTURES TOGETHER

How KRESA Helps Local Districts Thrive

As Superintendent of Comstock Public Schools since 2018, Dr. Jeffrey J. Thoenes brings a passion for student success and innovation to his district. Under his leadership, Comstock students have experienced transformative support through partnerships with Kalamazoo RESA.

Resources provided by KRESA that empower educators and transform classrooms include:

■ Funding and Services:

KRESA helps secure and distribute vital services and resources to local districts.

“KRESA provides invaluable support for career and technical education and special education funding. It has successfully organized county-wide millages to secure much-needed funding and resources. KRESA is to be lauded for its work to create the centralized Career Connect Campus for its technical education programming, which opens for the start of the 2025-26 school year.”

■ Instructional Coaches:

KRESA provides expert coaches to mentor teachers and principals, enhancing best practices in instruction.

“KRESA provides curricular and school improvement support for Comstock Public Schools through the Regional Assistance Grant. Through this grant, KRESA provides instructional coaches who meet with and mentor our principals and teachers in instructional best practices.”

■ Innovative Technology:

A pilot program for the Amira AI reading tool brought 500 licenses and teacher training to Comstock, boosting reading fluency and comprehension among young learners.

“Initially, the company offered us 50 student licenses and training for two or three teachers. However, after meeting the leadership team at Comstock Elementary, the company agreed to provide 500 licenses and training for 25 teachers. We are excited and energized by this collaboration!”



“KRESA’s leadership is shaping futures by creating opportunities for every student to thrive.” — Dr. Jeffrey J. Thoenes, Superintendent, Comstock Public Schools

EARLY CHILDHOOD

KRESA Head Start

Supporting Young Children and Their Families Every Step of the Way

KRESA is dedicated to laying the foundation for lifelong learning and success through our Early Childhood programs. A cornerstone of this commitment is the Head Start program, which provides free pre-kindergarten education for eligible children ages 3-5, along with equitable, comprehensive services for the whole family.

Head Start Program Highlights

Target Age Group

Children ages 3-5

Family Engagement

A Family Advocate partners with families to provide support in meeting families' needs and encourages their engagement through home visits, volunteering, and attending family events and workshops.

Comprehensive Services

Equitable, high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences to support the whole child and whole family that focuses on overall cognitive, physical, emotional, and social development.

Equity and Inclusion

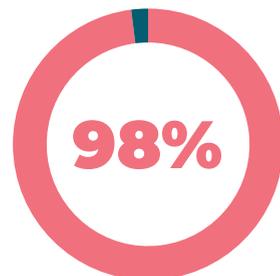
Commitment to creating environments where everyone feels welcome, safe, valued, and empowered.

Head Start Outcomes

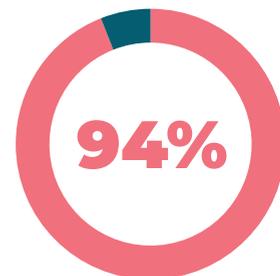
Social-Emotional Learning:

Increase positive engagement, emotional regulation, resilience, and taking care of one's own needs appropriately.

Students Meeting or Exceeding Widely Held Expectations (according to TS Gold)



3-year-old classrooms



4-year-old classrooms

Investing in Those Who Inspire

KRESA Builds Educators' Impact and Careers

Driven by Passion

For Danielle Moore, teaching is a mission rooted in compassion and a vision for brighter futures. As an associate teacher in Kalamazoo RESA's Head Start and Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), she creates a nurturing and engaging classroom environment for three-year-olds. Her days are filled with facilitating hands-on activities, fostering foundational skills, and building meaningful connections with families.

From leading interactive story time to hands-on science experiments, Danielle brings energy and creativity to her classroom. She also plays a crucial role in family engagement, working with families to ensure they feel connected and supported in their child's educational journey.

"Teaching isn't just about academics—it's about helping children believe in themselves," Danielle says. "That's what drives me every day."

Growing as an Educator

Danielle's journey in early childhood education received a significant boost through the Targeted Assistance Grant (TAG), a program that empowers educators by providing financial support for advancing their degrees and certifications.

Through the TAG program, Danielle was able to purchase essential classroom supplies and invest in a laptop to support her studies. These resources made a significant difference in her journey toward earning her degree and advancing her career within Head Start.

This recognition also highlighted her purpose as an educator, reinforced her commitment to early childhood education, and served as a powerful validation of her impact.

"When I asked my site supervisor, Tricia Ryan, and my lead teacher, Diane Connell, for recommendations, their heartfelt feedback about my work ethic and ability to connect with students and families was deeply affirming," Danielle said.

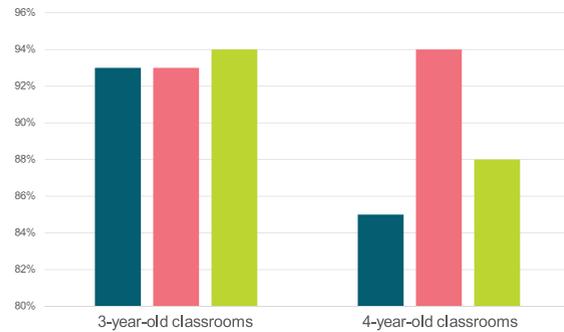


Head Start Outcomes

Language and Literacy Development:

Strengthening vocabulary, comprehension, and phonemic awareness.

Students Meeting or Exceeding Widely Held Expectations (according to TS Gold)

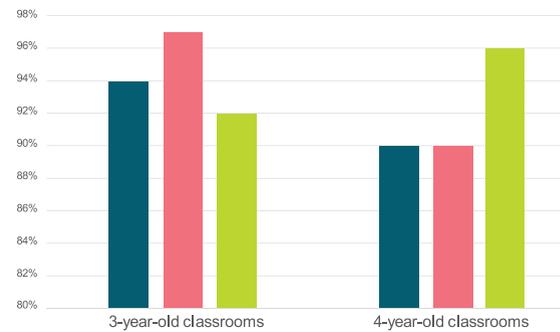


- Comprehends language
- Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary
- Speaks clearly

Cognition and Problem Solving:

Early mathematics and scientific reasoning skills.

Students Meeting or Exceeding Widely Held Expectations (according to TS Gold)

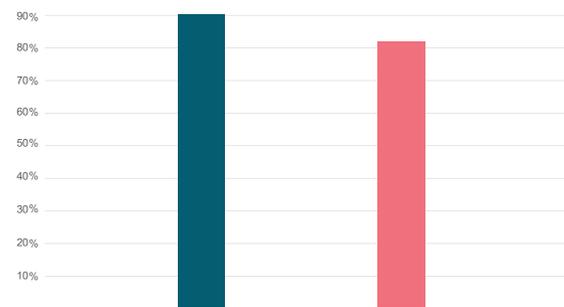


- Uses number concepts & operations
- Measures objects
- Demonstrates knowledge of patterns

Health and Well-being:

Ensuring ongoing access to dental and medical care while promoting healthy lifestyles for the entire family.

Accessible Health and Oral Care

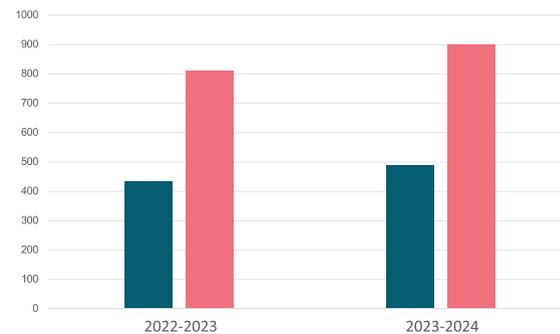


- Established Medical Home
- Established Dental Home

Family Engagement and Advocacy:

Supporting families through workshops, home visits, and robust community resources.

Family Advocates: Families as Learners, Positive Parent-Child Relationships



- Total number of families
- Family advocate home visits completed

Great Start Readiness Program

Preparing Every Child for Kindergarten and Beyond

Reaching Local Communities:

54

classrooms supported across 9 local school districts and 12 community organizations

995

children were provided quality preschool experiences, including those in blended Head Start/GSRP classrooms

Investing in Educators:

42

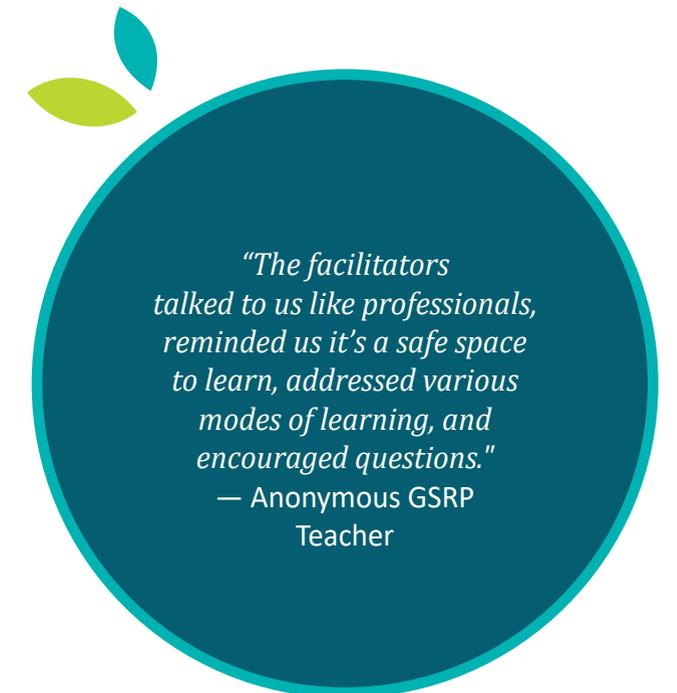
professional training sessions held for 733 educators

98%

of participants said the sessions gave them useful ideas to improve their work



Hosted the largest-ever Early Childhood Institute, with 483 educators from across Kalamazoo County attending.



Great Start Collaborative

The Great Start Collaborative (GSC) brings together families, educators, and community leaders to strengthen early childhood programs, support parents and caregivers, and early childhood programs that benefit all young learners in Kalamazoo County.

Engaging Families & Communities

Our collaborative efforts are fueled by the passion and dedication of seven GSC Parent Representatives and, on average, 13 core members from the Great Start Family Coalition (GSFC). With a growing network, we reached 135 families through our regular email newsletters, resource connections, updates, and opportunities to get involved.

Practical Support for Families

Parent Village Meetings:

Based on Dr. Dana Suskind's book Parent Nation, the GSC Family Coalition facilitated a five-month series of Parent Village meetings. These discussions explored themes such as Community, Collective Identity, Elevating Expectations of Society, Changemaker Roles, and Fighting for Change, empowering parents to reimagine a better future for families and children.

Strong Roots Parent Cafés:

These virtual gatherings provided a welcoming space for parents to share experiences, offer mutual support, and access essential resources. A mixture of returning participants and new attendees enriched conversations, leading to valuable resource sharing and connections to community events.

"I leave each Café feeling more refreshed and connected. Sometimes the best thing is the reminder that we are not alone in our parenting journey."

— Parent Cafés Participant

Meal Planning Webinars:

In response to input from our Family Coalition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) staff, we hosted a meal-planning webinar series. 37 parents/caregivers participated in the series. The turnout highlighted the need for practical meal-planning support. Each participating family received online resource lists, WIC cookbooks, Sesame Street food-themed coloring books with crayons, and a gift card to assist with meal planning.

"I love the cookbook... I did not see anything in there that I was used to eating or have had before, but I have to make some changes in my eating habits and this cookbook will help myself and my family."

— Parent Participant

Talking is Teaching: Empowering Families with Literacy Tools

Talking is Teaching is a national campaign that encourages parents and caregivers to talk, read, and sing with their young children to support early brain and language development. As part of the Talking is Teaching initiative, GSC expanded access to literacy resources:



175

families received six months of home library boxes



150

families received 1st-birthday and prenatal literacy bags monthly



600+

families received literacy toolkits in diaper packages each month



5,600

literacy materials distributed at community events



2,706

additional literacy bags and toolkits were distributed



20%

in Spanish

Together, through 25 community partnerships this past year, Talking is Teaching had over 20,000 points of engagement with families on early literacy messaging.

CAREER CONNECT

Career Connect Campus: From Vision to Reality

Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce Through Innovation

KRESA Career Connect is a continuum of career education programs that empowers the next generation of learners to explore career pathways and develop real-world skills. KRESA's Career Connect Campus, slated to open for classes in the fall of 2025, is a world-class facility that represents our community's vision for equitable, transformative career and technical education in the Greater Kalamazoo region. Designed to bridge the gap between education and industry, this groundbreaking campus will equip students from across the county with the experience and credentials they need to enter today's workforce and succeed.

By the Numbers:

- 1,200 - Student capacity at opening
- 167,000+ sq ft
- 22 instructional labs + 1 greenhouse
- 1,265 pieces of lab equipment, excluding hand tools (as of last count)
- 17 instructional studios
- 22 courses offered 2 times per day
- 25 planned industry recognized credentials (and growing)
- 64 staff
- 19 advisory committees with 235+ advisors
- 3 dedicated large conference spaces + 1 industry meeting space



Career Connect's programs include

- Career Awareness & Exploration (CAE)
- Work-Based Learning (WBL)
- Career & Technical Education (CTE)
- Education for the Arts (EFA)
- Early/Middle College (EMC)
- Career Coaching
- MyCITY
- 2Gen

Building Futures Together

A Special Thank You to Our Career Connect Advisory Partners

Our Career Connect advisory partners are essential to our mission of transforming futures by bridging the gap between industry and education. Their insights and expertise help shape cutting-edge programs, prepare students for emerging industries, and ensure we stay ahead of technology and workforce trends. Thank you to our advisors for being an integral part of this transformational journey.

- Advia Credit Union
- AGL Building
- Air Zoo
- AIS Construction Equipment
- Allnex USA
- Andy J. Egan Co.
- Arbor Financial Credit Union
- Argenta Park
- Armor Physical Therapy
- Ascension Borgess Hospital
- Aanalytics
- AVB
- Better Business Bureau
- Better World Builders
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Michigan
- Board Foot Co.
- Bogan Developments
- Bronson Healthcare Group
- Building Dreams Construction
- Buist Electric
- Can-Do Kalamazoo
- Carleton Equipment Co.
- Charles River Laboratories
- City of Kalamazoo
- Communities In Schools of Kalamazoo
- Community Homeworks
- Consort Display Group
- Consumers Credit Union
- Consumers Energy
- CSM Group
- Dabney & Co.
- DeNooyer Ford
- Department of Natural Resources
- Duncan Aviation
- Edward Lowe Foundation
- Eight Thirty Seven
- El Concilio
- Factory Coffee
- Family Health Center
- Ferris State University
- Flowerfield Farmstead
- Flowserve
- Forrest Company
- Further Degree
- Genemarkers
- Getman Corporation
- Girls on the Run of Greater Kalamazoo
- Glas Associates
- Global Clinical Connections
- Greenleaf Hospitality Group
- Greenleaf Trust
- Harroun Fire Protection
- Helping Hands Wellness Center
- Hi-Tech Electric Company
- Hollander Development
- Home Builders Association of Western Michigan
- Honor Credit Union
- Humphrey Products
- Hunter Engineering
- Ignertia
- Ivy Rehab
- Junior Achievement of Southwest Michigan
- Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office
- Kalamazoo Literacy Council
- Kalamazoo Nature Center
- Kalamazoo Public Safety
- Kalamazoo Township Police Department
- Kalamazoo Valley Community College
- Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport
- Kalsee Credit Union
- Kasyris Occupational Therapy
- Kellogg Community College
- KSS Enterprises
- KYD Net (Kalamazoo Youth Development Network)
- Kzoo Kuts
- L.L. Johnson Lumber Mfg. Co. & Johnson's Workbench
- Lake Michigan Credit Union
- Landscape Forms
- Laser Abilities
- Life EMS Ambulance
- Lincoln Financial Group
- LKF Marketing
- MANN+HUMMEL
- Maple Hill Auto Group
- Martz Home Builders, LLC
- May Automotive
- Michigan Career and Technical Institute
- Meemic Insurance Company
- Metro Toyota
- Michigan Farm Bureau
- Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights
- Michigan State University Extension - Kalamazoo County
- Midwest Communications
- Millennium Restaurant Group
- Netaworld
- Newell Brands
- Old National Bank
- Omega Computer Services
- Papa's Peanut Brittle
- Paper City Development, LLC
- Parker Hannifin Hydraulic Systems Division
- Peacock Insurance
- Pfizer
- PNC Bank
- Polytek
- Portage Department of Public Safety
- Predominant Controls
- Primerica
- Pro Services
- Public Media Network
- R.W. LaPine
- Ralph Moyle, Inc.
- SalesPage Technologies
- Sarkozy Bakery
- Seelye Ford of Kalamazoo
- Shambaugh & Son
- SkyVenture Aviation
- Southwest Michigan First
- SPARK Business Works
- Startup Zoo
- Staybridge Suites Kalamazoo
- Stephenson Farm & Market
- Stryker
- Stuffed Brain Studio
- Styled by Charmaine
- Tekna
- The Kalamazoo Promise
- This is a bookstore & Bookbug
- W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- Walbridge Construction
- Wenke Greenhouses
- Western Michigan University
- Zays Home Improvement LLC
- Zeigler Automotive Group
- Zoetis

- Kellogg Community College
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- Portage Public Schools
- Schoolcraft Community Schools
- Vicksburg Community Schools

MyCITY Internship Experiences

Unlocking Career Pathways for Young Professionals

MyCITY is a vital part of Kalamazoo RESA Career Connect's career pathway planning programs. Designed for youth ages 14–24 across Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and St. Joseph counties, it provides paid opportunities for career exploration, skill-building, and internships. Through fall, spring, and summer sessions, participants discover career paths, connect with employers, and gain real-world experience—all while being supported by dedicated career coaches. The program equips young people with the tools and confidence to pursue meaningful careers, contributing to a stronger and more prepared workforce in Southwest Michigan.

MyCITY Participants:

MyCITY Supervisors:



"My favorite thing about my internship is meeting new people, and gaining more job experience and learning more skills."

Jayshon, Retail Intern with Charitable Union

Career Goal: Real Estate Investor

Skills Learned: Communication, customer service, and teamwork

"I've always been creative, and my internship at Wayland gave me a chance to use those skills in a practical way. Building benches and learning carpentry showed me what I can accomplish. MyCITY connected me with an apprenticeship opportunity, bringing me closer to my dream of designing and building structures."

Narihya, Construction Trades Intern with Wayland Carpenters and Millwrights

Career Goal: Architect or Carpenter

Skills Learned: Tool safety, teamwork, and problem-solving

"Before my internship, I didn't know anything about childcare and by the end of my internship, I was creating calendars where I was planning the activities!"

Eboni, Early Childhood Education Intern with Starting Point Preschool

Career Goal: Childcare Worker

Skills Learned: Social skills, emotional intelligence, and classroom management

"Programs like MyCITY give young people the experiences they need to succeed. Watching interns collaborate and grow reminds me of the power of mentorship and hands-on learning."

Kaleb Leirman, Public Media Network

"It's amazing to mentor the next generation of teachers. Watching interns grow alongside our students is so rewarding. We hope some will return as future educators."

April Kelly, Starting Point Preschool

"MyCITY gives me a chance to work with a wide range of people. It allows them to see what we do and how we help people. It also allows them the opportunity to learn about all the services we have to offer."

Nicole Frohlich, Charitable Union

Education for the Arts (EFA)

Cultivating Creativity and Lifelong Skills

Through Career Connect's Education for the Arts (EFA) program, Kalamazoo RESA creates dynamic opportunities for students to develop life skills that extend opportunities in the community. In partnership with KRESA's Young Adult Program (YAP), EFA's annual Multisensory Arts Project allows students to immerse themselves in a sensory-friendly, interactive theater experience.

What is the Young Adult Program (YAP)?

The Young Adult Program (YAP) is a Kalamazoo RESA school offering transition services for students with diverse abilities that focuses on essential life skills like self-advocacy, communication, and job training, helping students prepare for independence and community life after school.

Arts Education in Action

This year's Multisensory Arts Project, "Philomena's Song," is an interactive theater experience designed to be fully accessible for students of all abilities. YAP students played key roles in the production, contributing to the music and performance in ways that helped them develop skills in collaboration, communication, and artistic expression. Throughout the performance, students are guided by sensory-friendly cues, transition songs, and interactive activities.

"Sensory-friendly productions like "Philomena's Song" teach students about emotions, strategies like deep breathing, and creative self-expression, all in a setting where they feel truly included." — YAP Educator



YAP students, Daniel Vanravenswaay and Isaac Duhn, took leading roles, creating and performing music for this year's show.

"Watching my students engage in the arts, both as creators and participants, reinforces just how much they are each able to achieve." — YAP Educator

Student Spotlight – Transforming Ideas into Art

Daniel Vanravenswaay, a student in Kalamazoo RESA's Young Adult Program, took on a unique role in this year's Multisensory Arts Project, responsible for everything from backstage assistance to story creation.

Daniel's journey with this production began with an idea inspired by a TV show he enjoyed, featuring a phoenix named Philomena. He shared his concept with the EFA team, who then used his initial spark to develop the plot for Philomena's Song, allowing Daniel to see his ideas transformed into a full-scale performance.

"The best part about working on this project was being able to watch my friends put on the show. It felt really exciting to see how my ideas inspired everyone else." — Daniel Vanravenswaay



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Turning Barriers Into Triumphs

KRESA's Special Education programs provide seamless support that guides students from early intervention to adulthood, ensuring they have the tools, confidence, and opportunities to succeed in school and beyond. Whether helping a toddler speak their first words, teaching workplace skills to young adults, or empowering students to thrive in general education settings, our mission is to meet each individual where they are and support their unique journey.

Building Bright Futures from the Start

Early On – Ages 0-3

Early On is where the journey begins, providing personalized home visits to support families with infants and toddlers experiencing developmental delays, fostering growth in communication, motor skills, and social-emotional development during these critical early years.

495

children received services, changing the trajectory of their early development

1,600

home visits were provided to 156 families

Seeds for Success – Ages 0-5

Seeds for Success provides vital support through free home visits focused on parenting practices and developmental growth. Partnerships with organizations like the Care Collective ensure families have access to essentials such as diapers and wipes, helping address both developmental and practical needs.

128

of 176 evaluations were conducted in familiar preschool settings, ensuring authentic assessments

Preprimary Evaluation Team (PET) – Ages 0-5

PET conducts free, strengths-based evaluations to guide individualized plans that prepare children for the next steps in their educational journey.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) – Ages 3-5

ECSE offers a nurturing, center-based school environment designed for preschool-aged children with significant language, learning, and behavioral needs, preparing young learners for successful transitions to local schools.



13 students transitioned to local preschools and kindergartens.

10 of these students were equipped with speech-generating devices to support communication and connection.

Supporting Growth and Inclusion

KRESA Specialized Instructional Services (KSIS) – Grades K-12

As students grow, Kalamazoo RESA's programs continue to meet their evolving needs. The KSIS Autism Program fosters emotional and behavioral growth, helping students manage challenges and become more independent.

6

KSIS students transitioned to less restrictive environments

Visually Impaired (VI) Services – Grades K-12

For students who are blind or have visual impairments, Visually Impaired Services provide specialized tools and instruction to allow students access to curriculum and build their independence.

67

VI students supported across seven districts

Young Adult Program (YAP) – Ages 18-26

Kalamazoo RESA's Young Adult Program (YAP) bridges this critical stage by providing personalized support, life skills training, and real-world experiences. From developing workplace skills to fostering community connections, YAP equips students with the tools they need to achieve their goals and lead fulfilling, independent lives.

91%

of YAP students participated in community activities for an average of 4.5 hours weekly, building essential life skills

60

YAP students (30%) gained valuable experience through off-site job placements at 11 community businesses



Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services

Turning Barriers Into Triumphs

For Portage Central High School student Jeffery Wilson, being deaf has never meant a life with limitations. With KRESA's Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) team by his side, Jeffery not only thrives in the classroom but also breaks through barriers on the football team.

Jeffery's Story

Growing up with profound hearing loss, Jeffery Wilson faced challenges in communication and accessibility. From the fourth grade, he relied on a cochlear implant to navigate sounds—but it was KRESA's D/HH team and interpreter, Emily Brown, who helped him achieve his full potential. Emily has been with Jeffery every step of the way, signing class instructions, translating game-day strategies, and standing by him on the football field. With her support, Jeffery not only keeps up but excels.

"Being deaf is just part of who I am. Thanks to my interpreter, I don't miss anything in class or on the field." — Jeffery Wilson

Specialized Services for Every Student

Kalamazoo RESA's D/HH team offers game-changing support for students with hearing loss. Our specialists work closely with families and school staff to craft personalized plans. With KRESA's support, students like Jeffery can fully engage in school and extracurriculars, confident that they're receiving equitable, high-quality educational experiences.



"When I'm out there, I just want to be treated like everyone else. My interpreter makes sure that's possible." — Jeffery Wilson

13

students served by 11 dedicated interpreters

25+

tailored supports provided by KRESA's D/HH team



Juvenile Home Schools

Empowering Students to Overcome Barriers

The Juvenile Home Schools (JHS) provide a transformative space for students navigating the juvenile justice system. Through innovative programming, personalized attention, and meaningful connections, JHS empowers students to build resilience, develop critical skills and envision brighter futures. JHS graduate Xavion Chandler-Williams' journey is a testament to the power of education and the unwavering support of the JHS community.

Xavion's Journey at JHS

For Xavion Chandler-Williams, KRESA's Juvenile Home School (JHS) was more than just a place to learn—it was a lifeline. After experiencing difficulties in a traditional school environment, Xavion found himself at JHS, where staff were able to give him the individualized attention and support he needed to succeed.

Xavion Chandler-Williams has turned his time at the Juvenile Home Schools into a springboard for success. With the skills and confidence he developed through JHS programs, he is now pursuing higher education and career opportunities, guided by the goals he set with his counselors and career coach.



"Helping at WoodsEdge gave me a new perspective on what matters most and the challenges others face."

— Xavion Chandler-Williams

"I honestly felt that the Juvenile Home School staff truly cared about me as an individual. They helped me improve my social skills and made sure I stayed on track academically," Xavion shared.

Staff like Mr. Jansma, Ms. Jones, and Mr. Monroe played critical roles in checking in daily with Xavion, to provide the structure and encouragement that works for him. Meanwhile, school counselor Mr. Martin and KRESA Career Coach Donnie Herber helped Xavion align his academic progress with his career aspirations, even arranging a tour at Western Michigan University.

JHS At-A-Glance

- JHS serves students through two programs:
 - Youth Center School (YCS) for residential youth
 - Intensive Learning Center (ILC) for court-ordered students
- Classes are capped at 10 students for personalized attention.
- Students gain life skills through service-learning and hands-on activities like volunteering and STEM projects.
- JHS collaborates with Family Court, local schools, and community partners to ensure success.



"Our mission is to help students grow academically and socially, restoring connections to family and community."

— Principal Laura Draper

Transforming Behavior Support at WoodsEdge

How the Ukeru Method Builds Safer Learning Environments

WoodsEdge Learning Center (WELC), KRESA's highly specialized school serving students with significant disabilities, has taken a transformative step toward fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment through Ukeru, a trauma-informed approach to managing challenging behaviors. This program emphasizes compassion, communication, and co-regulation, empowering students to process emotions safely while ensuring the well-being of staff and peers.

By implementing Ukeru, WoodsEdge has drastically reduced the use of emergency interventions like restraints and seclusions, creating a more positive space where students feel supported and understood.

A New Approach to Managing Challenging Behavior

The Ukeru method centers on understanding behavior as a form of communication, prioritizing safety and comfort over control. Through specialized training, staff learn strategies to de-escalate situations and build trust with students. These strategies include:

- Verbal and nonverbal communication techniques.
- Blocking actions to ensure physical safety.
- Recognizing and addressing the impact of trauma on behavior.

"Ukeru gives students the time and space to work through challenges, with staff providing guidance in the moment. It fosters positive relationships and reduces the risk of injury for all involved." — Megan Lozen, Coordinator at WoodsEdge Learning Center



The Impact of Ukeru at WoodsEdge

Since adopting Ukeru, WoodsEdge has achieved remarkable progress in reducing behavior-related incidents. After an initial five-month pilot program, WoodsEdge staff saw immediate results:

Emergency Restraint

↓ Reduced by **91%**

Emergency Seclusion

↓ Reduced by **97%**

Extended Seclusion

✕ Eliminated Entirely
(100% Reduction)

Staff/Student Injury

↓ Reduced by **87%**

Why Ukeru Matters:

- Empowers staff with effective, non-intrusive behavior management tools.
- Builds trust and safety to support students' emotional and academic growth.
- Reduces the risk of harm, fostering a better environment for learning and development.

"Our students feel happier and safer. They know staff are here to help them, which has led to stronger relationships and a renewed sense of trust." — Cory Merfeld, Behavior Technician, WoodsEdge Learning Center

EDUCATOR SUPPORTS

Supporting Educators, Elevating Education

KRESA is committed to supporting educators across the Greater Kalamazoo region through coaching, professional development, and consulting services. These essential supports ensure that educators have access to the latest resources and best practices available to deliver the highest quality education.

Responsive Professional Learning Offerings

Our professional learning programs are thoughtfully tailored to reflect the evolving needs of local educators. We actively seek feedback from districts, align our offerings with their continuous improvement goals, and engage curriculum directors to gather meaningful insights to inform our approach for learning. By staying informed of state developments and educational trends, KRESA ensures that our content area specialists create impactful, relevant training.

Last year alone, KRESA conducted 90 professional development sessions in districts.

Instructional Services also delivered a notable county-wide literacy curriculum event called UFLI which brought multiple districts together for shared learning.

Coaching for All Educators

KRESA's coaching services extend beyond new or struggling teachers; seasoned educators also look to us for support in incorporating best practices and deepening their understanding of new educational concepts, such as disciplinary literacy.

With the landscape of education constantly evolving and the diverse needs of today's learners, even experienced teachers find value in coaching that helps them adapt and succeed in dynamic classroom environments.

"Our work with KRESA coaches has transformed how we run reading groups, providing strategies and feedback that make a difference for both educators and students."
— Teacher, Schoolcraft

Our commitment to supporting educators across the county is integral to strengthening schools and creating an environment where both teachers and students can thrive.



Professional Learning

90

KRESA provided in-district professional learning sessions impacting 1,287 educators

53

KRESA county-wide professional learning sessions impacting 795 educators



Percentage of participants who found the learning valuable



Coaching Supports

10,535+

students indirectly impacted through student-centered coaching



Consulting Supports



Kalamazoo County districts supported

Leadership Network Participation

KRESA hosts 9 educator collaborative networks totaling 56 meetings with 646 participants from 7 counties, 3 universities, and 3 professional organizations.





District Partnerships:

227

consulting days provided to 100% of Kalamazoo County districts.

100%

local districts partnered, supporting multi-lingual learners, instructional technology, and continuous improvement.

6

local districts placed with Early Literacy District Coaches.

4

districts received grants for the Early Literacy Diverse Classroom Library initiative.

"Kalamazoo RESA coaches have supported me with positive behavior systems and science, math, and language arts instruction throughout my career. It's so rewarding to be part of a team working to support teachers to help all students achieve success." — Amy Triplett, Literacy Coach

"Having behavior specialists model responses for classroom disruptions and provide feedback was incredibly beneficial. We are now equipped to better respond to our students' needs and implement meaningful plans." — Teacher, Behavior Support Team

"KRESA coaches are exceptional. They support staff where they are, without judgment, while helping them grow leadership capacity. Their partnership has been invaluable to our district." — Literacy Specialist, Galesburg-Augusta Community Schools

"With coaching, I've been able to create a classroom environment that runs smoother and explore more opportunities for my students to succeed in general education classes." — Teacher, ASD Program

"Participation in KRESA services has helped us navigate challenges in education with resilience and adaptability, thanks to the coaching, mentoring, and expert guidance they provide." — School Leader, Portage Public Schools

OPERATIONAL SUPPORTS

Transportation Services

Where Skills Meet the Road

KRESA delivers transportation management and state-mandated safety training to ensure the safe and reliable transportation of students across local districts and southwest Michigan.



What We Offer

Defensive Driving Certification:

- Longest-running public/private training collaboration in the U.S. since 1978.
- Hands-on training at Eaton Proving Grounds enhances driver safety skills.

School Bus Driver Training:

- 250 new drivers complete the Beginning Bus Driver Training course each year.
- Continuing education ensures every driver meets state-mandated safety standards.

Commercial Driver's License Road Skills Testing:

- Certified third-party examiners provide state-approved testing to ensure readiness.

Impact

140

school districts served

2,500

bus drivers trained annually

9

ISDs in the RTSI consortium



“

Still to this day, my drivers are recounting their experience and how much they learned from hands-on driving in extreme situations. They all say they feel much more confident in their own abilities to respond safely. It boosted the confidence of my team behind the wheel.” — Penny S. Evert, Whitehall District Schools

“

The feedback was unanimous: informative and fun. One of our drivers was reluctant to try the maneuvers, but afterward, he was so glad he did. It gave him knowledge that enhances his performance as a driver. It left us a stronger team, more confident to serve our students.” — Jennifer Frank, Hopkins Public Schools

“

Drivers learn to predict, 'What will I do in this situation?' and minimize emergencies. This training adds tools to their tool bag, helping them react appropriately, anticipate hazards, and safely navigate around them. Defensive driving can help keep everyone safe.” — Terry Lechenet, Van Buren ISD

Communications and Community Engagement

Strengthening Partnerships, Supporting Our Community

The Communications and Community Engagement (CCE) team connects KRESA with the community by building partnerships, sharing impactful stories, and driving collaboration to support transformational educational opportunities.



Compassion in Action

In the wake of devastating tornadoes, the KRESA community stepped up to support students and families, assembling care packages and opening our West Campus as a safe haven for those in need.

ADVANCING A CULTURE OF BELONGING

Aligning Systems for Continuous Improvement

In March 2024, the KRESA Board of Education approved the creation of a Director of Culture and Belonging role, a key step in advancing our commitment to fostering a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment. The Director of Culture and Belonging role is embedded in the Human Resources Department by design to support advancing our core value of Respect – Valuing All People through the full employee lifecycle at KRESA. We know that if employees are highly engaged and highly satisfied, we will be able to better serve children, families, and the community. Human Resources staff will partner with our Centers of Excellence and the Culture and Belonging Team to lead efforts to embed inclusive practices across programs, policies, curriculum, and professional development. KRESA is excited to create meaningful, sustainable change with more capacity thanks to this investment.

1990s

The KRESA Diversity Committee laid the foundation by raising awareness about equity issues and supporting staff participation in “Healing Racism” programming.

2000s

The committee evolved into the KRESA Inclusion and Diversity Team.

2015

The KRESA Board of Education approved the “Action Plan to Achieve a Positive, Safe, and Inclusive Organizational Work Environment,” solidifying institutional commitment to these values.

2018

The ABAR Leadership Team was established to ensure accountability and drive change.

2020

KRESA hired an Instructional Services & Community Supports Culture and Climate Support Specialist.

2024

The organization created the role of Director of Culture and Belonging, cementing KRESA’s dedication to systemic equity and inclusion.



Dr. Diane Owen-Rogers
Director of Culture and Belonging

OUR CORE VALUES

Collaboration We work together

Innovation We find a better way

Compassion We lead with heart

Integrity We maintain trust

Respect We value all people

KRESA's Culture and Belonging Team

Since its formation in 2018, the Culture and Belonging Team (formerly the ABAR Leadership Team) has been at the forefront of analyzing and transforming institutional policies, procedures, and systems to ensure accountability to historically marginalized groups. The team fosters a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion, working to align our practices with the values we uphold.

The Year in Review:

Professional Learning Opportunities Provided

- Monthly agency-wide Professional Learning Communities
- Multiple Administration Team meeting presentations
- Multiple KRESA Instructional Leadership Team meeting presentations and book study
- Agency-wide cultural competency and bias training
- "Reimagining Education for ALL" Equity Speaker Series sessions in collaboration with KRESA Instructional Services & Community Supports
- Business Office and Human Resources learning series

Speaker Series: “Reimagining Education for ALL”

1,254
participants

25
school districts and organizations

Professional Learning Impact

19
sessions

130+
staff engaged

2023-24 Team Members

- Rebecca Attila-Fried
- Sarah Dickman
- Kevin Dodd
- Jamiese Edmonson
- Joan Hawxhurst
- Donny Herber
- Christyn Johnson
- Kimberly Larson
- Titania "Ti" Lee
- Diane Owen-Rogers
- Vinson Phillips
- Rachel Roberts
- Pat Simpson
- Rachel St. John
- Sara Stockinger
- Cara Weiler

34 KRESA staff have served as team members since 2018

Southwest MiTech

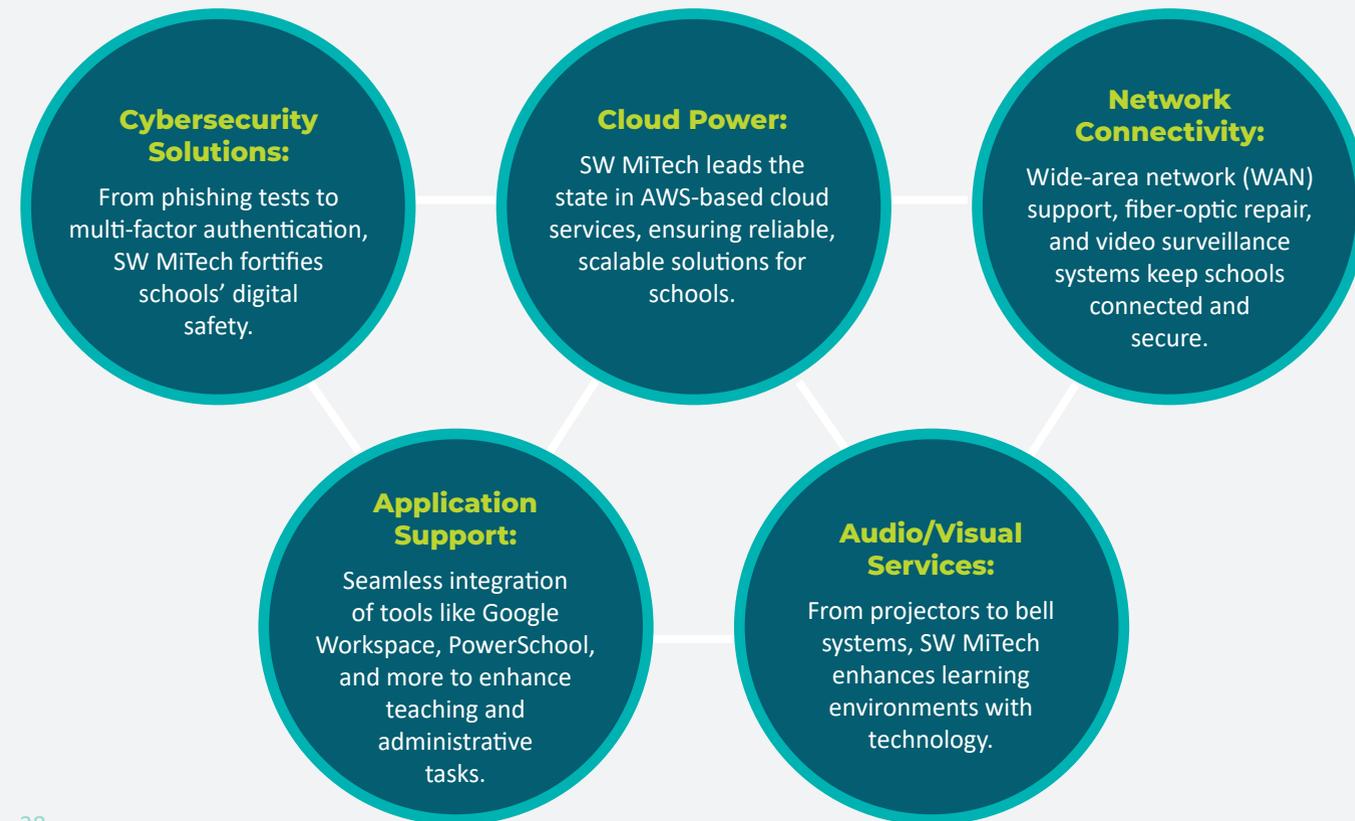
Delivering Transformative Technology Solutions

A Unified Technology Department for Schools Across Southwest Michigan

Technology drives education, and by acting as a unified tech department, Southwest MiTech ensures that schools in Allegan, Barry, and Kalamazoo Counties have access to robust, reliable, and affordable tech services and solutions. From state-of-the-art hardware and software to unparalleled support, Southwest MiTech ensures local schools thrive in today's digital age. We free educators to focus on what they do best—teaching.



Services at a Glance



Estimated Partner Savings

\$451,989.58

Fast Facts



Lower Costs

Shared staffing and infrastructure reduce expenses for partner districts.



Enterprise Efficiency

Bringing corporate-level tech solutions to local districts of all sizes.



50+ Experts

Access to a highly skilled team of certified technology professionals.



Tech Helpdesk

Reliable, friendly support available Monday–Friday.



Data-Driven

Continuous improvement backed by robust analytics.



MiTech Cloud Services – Leading the Way

SW MiTech is the first and only educational service agency in the nation to achieve Amazon Web Services (AWS) Select Tier Partner status, ensuring the schools we serve can access the most advanced cloud technologies available.

KRESA Business Office

Funding Our Future

At Kalamazoo RESA, our mission to transform futures begins with good financial stewardship. We serve as a conduit for critical resources, ensuring every dollar contributes to the success of students and the vitality of our community.

The Kalamazoo RESA Business Office supports the success of school districts and students through the accurate and effective management of financial resources and business functions. The Business Office manages the financials of approximately 30 departments and programs within Kalamazoo RESA, as well as four local school districts.

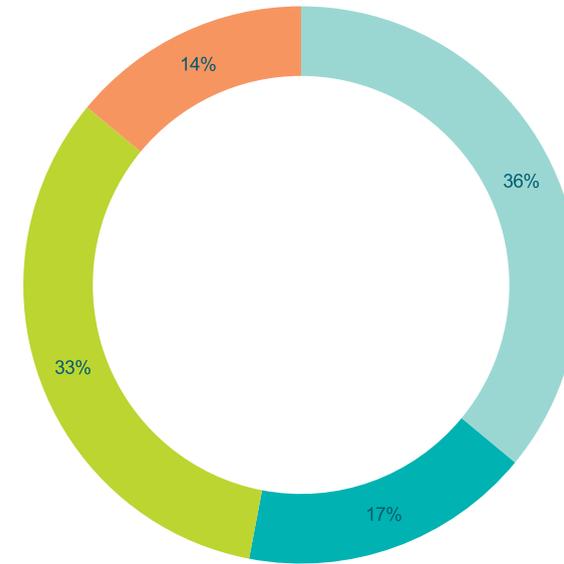
\$280.6 million

managed, including \$25.2 million in federal grants

\$534,887

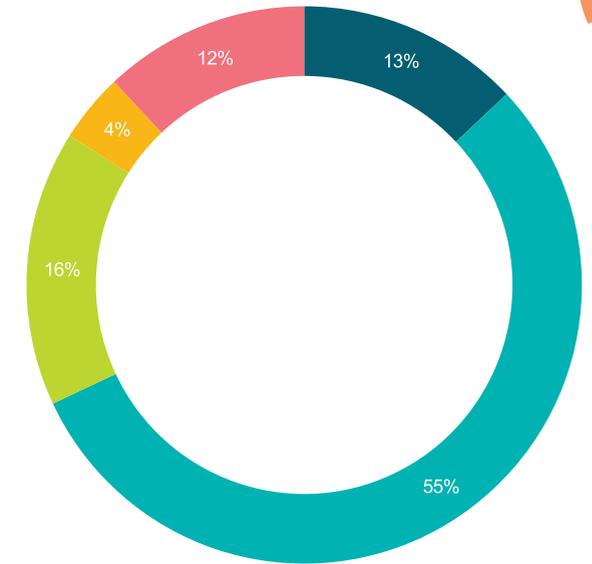
estimated savings by local school districts through collaboration and consolidation of business functions to Kalamazoo RESA

KRESA Funding Sources



- Property Taxes
- Federal Grants
- State Aid and Grants
- Other Local Sources

KRESA Spending by Center of Excellence



- Early Childhood
- Special Education
- Career Connect
- Educator Supports
- Operational Supports

Enhancement Millage

On May 2, 2023, voters approved the renewal of the 1.5-mill Regional Educational Enhancement Millage with 59.4% support. This funding, approximately \$16 million, helps cover local district operating expenditures, empowering schools to address their unique priorities.

- KRESA collects and directly passes every dollar of funds to local districts and charter schools.
- Each school receives the same per-student amount—approximately \$425 per pupil.



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Printed by the
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