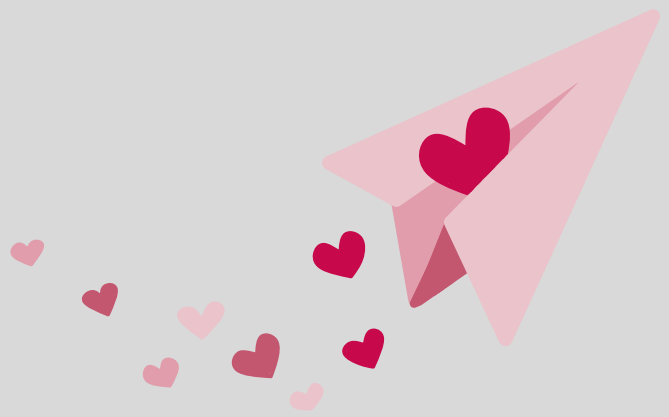


February 2025 KENNEDY NEWSLETTER



Dear Kennedy Elementary Families,

As we continue through this school year, I want to take a moment to recognize the importance of mental health and self-care for our students and families. In a time where so many things are pulling at our attention and focus, it's easy to forget how essential it is to take care of our emotional well-being.

Children are learning how to navigate the world, manage their emotions, and build resilience—and it all starts with the support they receive at home and school. As parents and caregivers, you are their first teachers when it comes to emotional health. I encourage you to continue having open conversations with your child about feelings, stress, and how they can practice self-care. Teaching them the importance of taking breaks, expressing themselves, and asking for help can go a long way.

How can you support your child at home? Here are a few tips:

- **Check-in Regularly:** Ask your child about their day and how they're feeling. Even a simple "How was school today?" can open the door to meaningful conversations.
- **Encourage Relaxation:** Help your child unwind with activities they enjoy, whether it's reading, drawing, or spending time outdoors. Screen-free time is a must to help the brain unwind and relax.
- **Model Self-Care:** Children learn from what they see. Show them that mentally, physically, and emotionally caring for yourself is just as important as anything else.
- **Stay Connected:** If you ever notice your child seems overwhelmed or anxious, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're here to support your child's well-being.

In closing, let's continue working together to create a supportive and nurturing environment where all our students can grow, learn, and thrive—academically and emotionally. I look forward to seeing our school community flourish as we prioritize mental health and self-care.

Warmly,

Shelly VanVoorst
Kennedy Elementary Principal

[HTTPS://WWW.MANISTEEMAKERS.ORG/](https://www.manisteemakers.org/)

Staff Highlight



Olivia works at Kennedy as a Behavioral Health Specialist. She initially started college as an elementary education major but soon realized her passion for mental health and decided to shift her focus. Olivia earned her bachelor's degree in Child Life Specialty from Aquinas College and is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work degree through Michigan State University—Go Green! Her favorite aspect of working at Kennedy is the supportive, tight-knit community, which includes both her students and coworkers. Outside of work, Olivia enjoys cooking, reading, and spending time outdoors with her husband and their new rescue puppy, Greta.

Olivia Nichols and Rescue Puppy



Feelings Game

Here is a fun and easy way to get the discussion going about feelings.

You can substitute M&Ms for skittles, fruits, marbles or even crayons!! Anything with these colors will work.

THE m&m's FEELINGS GAME		
FOR EVERY		SHARE
Red		<i>One thing that makes you HAPPY.</i>
Brown		<i>One thing that makes you SAD.</i>
Green		<i>One thing that makes you ANGRY.</i>
Yellow		<i>One thing that makes you EXCITED.</i>
Blue		<i>One POOR CHOICE you made today and what you could have done differently.</i>
Orange		<i>One GOOD CHOICE you made today.</i>