



We Could Fly Like Birds



Writing from the
Kalamazoo Literacy Pathway
2025–2026

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Read and Write Kalamazoo exists to
celebrate and amplify youth voices
through the cultivation of reading and writing skills
via **joy, creativity, equity, and access.**

Youth scholars of the **Kalamazoo Literacy Pathway (KLP)** along with their parents have been working together through different writing prompts over the course of the 2025–2026 academic year, exploring themes of the world and community, self love and love for others, family, and imagination. The Kalamazoo Literacy Pathway is a multigenerational literacy learning cohort in which scholars and parents learn and work alongside each other, with the intention of strengthening parents' confidence and ability in being the first teacher of their children, and giving youth the opportunity to grow their literacy skills in a supportive environment; *"A focus on the whole family"*. The program serves a cohort of six families at Interfaith Homes on Kalamazoo's Northside, and this anthology marks the culmination of the cohort's first year of learning together.

We are proud of the work we have been able to do with these beautiful families and scholars, and hope this anthology will serve as a celebration of each of their voices and stories, as well as the multigenerational representation, with the youngest writers being 5 years old to ages 30 and up. The structure of this publication was intended to showcase the writing of each family alongside each other, beginning with the mother and their children's writing following. Each person received the same prompt. The title, *"We Could Fly Like Birds"* comes from **Santoessa Pratt**, one of the dedicated mothers from the KLP group who has been an integral part to our first year

of programming. Thank you, Santoesha, for sharing your story with us and allowing us to be a part of it.

A special thanks to the organizations and dedicated members that make up the Kalamazoo Literacy Pathway leadership team—Executive Director **Kristen Potts** of SLD Read, Executive Director **Michael Evans** & Volunteer and Internship Coordinator **Abbey Weathers** of The Kalamazoo Literacy Council, Chief Impact Officer **Artella Cohn** of Communities In Schools, Assistant Executive Director **JaMeelah Williams** and Program Coordinator **Josiah Cedo** of Read and Write Kalamazoo, and **Ms. Roeshell Ollie** of the Interfaith Homes Neighborhood Network Center and The Kalamazoo Literacy Council.

Thank you to the K-College student volunteers who joined us during CAPS sessions to support the KLP scholars in their writing and even writing some of their own responses, which you will find woven into the pages of this anthology. A special thank you as well to **Christine** and **Beth** of The Kalamazoo Literacy Council, who came in to assist the mothers of the cohort with creating their very own book club, serving as guides and companions in their reading journey together. Thank you to **Victoria Marcetti**, RAWK's beloved Book Wizard, for your work in compiling and creating these anthology booklets. We could not have done it without your expertise and dedication to amplifying youth voices.

Read and Write Kalamazoo exists, in large part, because of community members like **YOU** who continue to join us in celebrating and amplifying youth voices in Kalamazoo. We would also like to express deep gratitude to the following foundations and organizations for their support and belief in RAWK's mission: **KYDNetwork, The Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation, The Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, The Kalamazoo Community Foundation, The Stryker Johnston Foundation, The Lawrence and Sylvia Wong Foundation, The Okun Foundation, The Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation** and the many individual donors for the monetary contributions we received throughout the year that show your belief in our passion to celebrate and amplify youth voices. We would also like to thank our board of directors for giving their time, energy, and expertise to furthering RAWK's mission.

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Chapter I

*Write a Letter to Your
Past Self or Future Self*

A letter to my past self

by Santoesha Pratt

Baby, it's a whole new world! Everything is totally different for you now. They will tease you but they actually like you a lot! They will become your friend soon! Get out of your head and say what you feel! They're gonna hate and treat you bad anyway! People suck! Get a backpack with wheels so that you can really throw hands and show them white people your Black girl strength! Also, don't be afraid to lay them LOW cuz being nice ain't gone get you nowhere.

Untitled

Christian

Hello older me, 28 year old Christian,

I hope you become an actor one day and can give my mom a beautiful car if she still can't. I hope to have enough \$ to buy her a beautiful house and I hope to make a lot of good movies and be an artist. Younger me now I'm going on 11. I hope I can get some notebooks for my stories to write. Older me, if you can see this, I hope you remember where this came from. God bless and bless my mom and I hope that my grandpa is still alive when I'm 28.

God I'm talking to you right now
I pray any problems going on for my
Mom get better and that we will be able
To get a car soon and have a better life and
Not worry about bullies

MOM, FLIP THE PAPER → I'm watching you
hehehehehe

A Letter to My Past Self...

by Chelli Smith

Dear 1997 self:

First of all, we lived past Y2K and the Mayan calendar mess, your brother became a father (shocking!), you became a mom (yeah, that's weird AF, I know!). Kelis is a Christmas baby, Zendaya is an August baby and a "rainbow baby"

Future Me

by Zendaya

Dear future Zendaya,

I hope you became a doctor. If you do, congratulations, this is young Zendaya. Life is super good. I am eight and a half years old at this time. I am going to be 9 years old in three months on August 23rd. If you end up being a doctor, first before you do, you need to go to K College and you can also become a tutor. I want to be a kitty cat doctor like a vet to heal pets. Your life is going to be so much fun and i hope when you see this message you are having a great day.

Love,
Young Zendaya

A Letter to My Children & Me

by Linda Miles

Dear Thalyssa Wolfe,

When I had you five years ago I never thought in a million years that you came out to be the little smart and intelligent little girl that you became and you grown up me and your daddy. I love the way you love to dance to country music and your dream is to have a boots on the ground party this summer.

I'm writing a letter to my children. A letter to my 12 kids is a beautiful way to create a lasting keepsake. Whether it is a collective letter or individual notes, focusing on your love, specific memories, and your hopes for them makes it meaningful. Key themes to include are unconditional love for all my kids and grandchildren.

And to myself,
I am so proud of myself. When was the last time you said these words to yourself? The last few years have been difficult for everyone. Particularly on our mental health.

To Me

by Thalyssa

I want to feed a bird when I grow up and I want to be a pilot and a doctor and to help people feel better and I want to be a teacher and a principal and a nice girl and I want to help people read books. I want to be nice like my mom and my sister. I want to be a bus driver and drive everyone to school. I want to make tea for my mom and feed the whole family. I want to feed a lion, a zebra, all the animals. I will help everybody.

My Letters

by Marquisha

Dear 5 year old Thalyssa Wolfe,

Hi. I know your having a ball in Pre-K making friends. You learned how to sing abc's and 123's. You are a smart brave lil girl and I'm so proud of you. You know your shapes. Your learning new things, always care for yourself. Keep being happy and believing in yourself you got this sissy.

Love, Marquisha

Dear Me,

Hi me. My goal for future me is to finish school, go to college and continue my career. I want to become a nail tech, can I? Yes I can if I learn and continue what I do and continue with my goals. I can always believe in myself.

Love, Marquisha

Dear Me

by Julianna

Hi me from the future

How are you in the future? How old are you? What is your job in the future, are you a doctor?

Do you have pets?

Do you have a rich husband?

Do you have a therapist?

Untitled

by Marcia McGee

Dear Marcia,

I want a baby puppy. I want it to have gray fur and blue eyes. I would name it Rose Bud and her nickname is Butterscotch. My future with Rose Bud is I would play with her. I love you. I care.

Untitled

by Moses

Dear future Moses,

I'm 10 years old. I hope you are doing well. How are my sisters doing? How is my dad doing?

Untitled

by A. Zuniga

Dear past self,

I don't remember much about you, childhood is a bit fuzzy, but I do remember feeling entirely alone, so I can say it does get better. Today as I'm writing this letter to you, we are currently 19 years old, and so much positive things have happened. For example you are in a very happy relationship, I know crazy, anyway he is a very good person, and he is very loving and patient, we are actually going to be moving in together soon, I'm so excited. You made it to college taking classes as an engineer, you have a dog named Gina, she's the most perfect dog ever. You learn a lot about life, and learn to enjoy it.

Future Me

by Naveah Newell

A list of things I want in my future

1. I want a cane corso dog
2. I want to be an artist
3. I want to have a big house to myself
4. I want to help the homeless

Future Me

by Liberty Newell

When I get older I want to be a NBA basketball player

Dear future me,

Next year I want to get/be better at basketball.

Meaning I want to get better at making three point shots and putting better deference and stealing the ball from other players. I also want to carry my team more than I do now and I also want to have more confidence in me and my team.

Chapter 2

*If You Could Imagine a New
World Different From Ours,
What Would It Be Like?*

Untitled

by Santoesha Pratt

The world would be a happy place. Love, peace, goodness. The world would be like the garden of Eden before the sin. There would be no snow. The temperature would be perfect! Everyone would enjoy the constant temperature. Imagination would be endless. We could fly like birds. We could swim down in the bottom of the ocean like fish. We would sing and dance and have the best feasts ever for every meal! It would be like heaven!

~ The End ~

My World

by Christian

I would turn the world into my world. So there would be dinosaurs and different creatures I create! Watch out for Hipponofsaurus in big lakes! Cowersaurus has a wife and kids so it is very territorial! Do not go to the old facility place. There are great hybrids there like the Dyfro and the Turnadon!

Untitled

by Chelli Smith

We live in a brave new world...I guess

I imagine a world without “#45/47” as president, a world without misogynoir (racism and misogyny).

Untitled

by Zendaya

If I had a superpower it would be teleportation. If I could change the world, on my planet we would have free pizza.

A new world

by Linda Miles

A transformed, glorious reality where human beings experience beauty and power beyond current limitations. States where individuals are united, perhaps in an afterlife or a utopian future, free from the struggles of the current “fallen” world.

Princess world

by Thalyssa

If I changed the world I would make a princess castle building out of bricks so the wind can't blow it down. I would make it always cold so I can play in the snow with my snowpants, hat, gloves, boots, and scarf.

Untitled

by Marcia McGee

If I had a superpower it would be black lightning and ice power because she is the strongest person and that she is my favorite character and she is my friend because she is nice and kind. I love you superpower.

If I could create a new world it would be like kindness everywhere and I will respect others feelings and the environment. And make sure that Black and white people can be at the same place and the other peoples. Future will be better for other people.

Untitled

by Akaash Raghunath

If I had superpower, I would wield the ability to turn any kind of atom into cheese. Including the atoms constructing cheese. This would destabilize our universal laws and create a maleficent realm of psychosis. Inducing cheesexception. I'd be called Curdle Carl and I would be the harbinger of extinction, agony, and moldy milk. Do not trifle with the man of the brie.

In a land of my own design, that would be no primitive constructions, the likes of paper money, physics, or basketball. Progressive reforms would be unnecessary, and no government would exist in a state of perpetual anarchy.

Untitled

by Miranda Moreno

If I had super powers I would talk to animals and be called mystical Miranda. I would make sure animals feel heard.

If I could create a new world I would make one where people listen to one another with compassion, treat each other with respect, and respond with humility. Scarcity doesn't exist, well beings are much more important than any possessions.

Writing Prompts

by Lourdie Clark

If I had superpowers, I would have the power to make love and joy, and all things positive contagious. So eventually the world would become a happier, safer, and kinder place. I would be named Ms. Lourdie.

If I created a new world, I would make sure that there's enough space for everyone to live, that there's enough sources of water, and lands with produce. The people would not know of any hate, people only know of love and kindness, and weapons are only used when absolutely necessary, otherwise they are locked away securely. Animals roam freely but there are secure fences around areas that humans inhabit. Music is a big part of everyone's day to day life.

CAPS Prompts

by Lexa

If I was a superhero, I would have the power to manipulate time and my hero name would be The Time Bomb.

If I could create a new world, I would keep nature, bring back the extinct animals but make the big ones pet size, and have everyone as a hive mind. Bringing back the dodo bird would be funny and delectable in the kitchen and bringing back t-rex as a pet would sound cool. Having everyone in a hive mind would be beneficial because then we would all mentally be under one person to lead us all. Politics wouldn't be an issue, religion wouldn't have to be a problem and wars would end because we wouldn't have any enemies to worry about.

Untitled

by Juan

I would have superspeed to travel anywhere in the world and my name would be the quickster.

If I could create a new world, I would make money trees but only at my house and would make the world full of cheese

Untitled

Areya

My superpower would be superspeed. My superhero name would be Blink because I will be gone in a blink of an eye.

Untitled

Promise

If I can have a super power, it will be invisibility.

If I can change the world it will be no bullies. There will be no mean people.

Untitled

by Marcus L.

If I had superpowers, my power would be to control technology, and my superhero name would be tech man.

If I could create a new world it would be very similar to our own world, but with more nice people for everyone. And nobody would ever go hungry or be discriminated against.

In my new world

by Nyzir

In my new world animals would be able to co-exist with humans. There would be dragons too. Humans would be born into clans and those certain clans have certain animals. There's a sort of hierarchy with the strongest animal and the weakest animal. Kind of like the food chain.

Untitled

by Moses Newell

My name is Moses Newell. If I had superpowers I would choose super speed. I want a world with a SuperMan.

Chapter 3

All About Love

What is love to me?

by Santoesha Pratt

What does love mean to me? Love is God. Love is 1 Corinthians 13. Love isn't always easy! Love is a choice! Love is forgiveness. Love is humble. I show love to myself by forgiving others who have harmed me. I show love to me by doing things like the Kalamazoo Literacy Pathway to help me step outside the box and it brings me peace, balance, and clarity. I show love to others by listening to their problems and being encouraging.

I show love

by Zendaya

When people are sad I can ask them are they okay
and do they want a hug. I show love by giving hugs.
I show love by telling them that they are beautiful
and pretty no matter what. I show love to myself by
telling myself I'm the prettiest girl in the world and I'm
going to go to K College even if I'm not the best at
everything.

Valentine's Day

by Zendaya

Love and care
I love my mom. My mom is special because my mom
is everything. ♡♡♡
She is hope
She gives me hugs, the best hugs ♡♡♡

Godzilla

by Baby Q

The person I love is Godzilla. He is special because he loves his small 5 brothers. He is also big, strong, and spawns. He is special in my life because I look up to him. He is very caring and takes care of himself. He also has a small dog named Godzilla. I would like to give Godzilla a hug! He is also very friendly! He has over 100 friends! He is cool because his mom has ice powers! He also has 5 T-rex friends!

Valentine's day

by Julianna

I help my mommy with my little sister and brother. That is how I show love to my mommy. I show love to myself by loving and caring for myself.

Love

by Simone McIntosh

My meaning of love is a continuous action rooted in respect, patience, and active support for someone's well-being. I practice self-love by setting healthy boundaries and allowing myself to rest without guilt, and pursuing hobbies that bring me genuine peace. I show love to others through active listening and offering help without being asked. And expressing explicit gratitude for their presence in my life.

I show love by

by Mr. Pedro

I show love to the people in my life by caring about them and trying my best to be there for them during difficult times since people tend to feel their lowest when they are going through hardships. I always try to be that stress reliever to help my friends unload their hardships and be a person that they can depend on, if it's mutual of course. I show love to myself by doing the same and taking time out of my day by focusing on myself physically and mentally by going to the gym, walks, and most importantly listening to music. There is always more improvement to show myself more love and I am working on that.

I show love by

by Liberty Newell

A way that I show love to people that I love is by taking care of them. Something that makes my dad and my siblings special is because they take care of me. A person that I love is my dad and my siblings. I show love to myself by caring for myself and keeping myself looking good and clean.

Love my dad

by Moses Newell

I show love to my dad when I help him. I show love to myself by being nice to my body. My dad is special to me because he is my dad and he takes care of me.

I show love by...

by Mr. Carter

I show love to the people in my life by being there for them. I do my best for the people I love. I also make sure that I think of them whenever I can, and have their best interest in mind. For example, I've helped many loved ones get jobs and I've advised them through things that I can. I show love to myself through daily affirmations and prioritizing my well being. I put my energy into things that don't put me in worse conditions and I always hype myself up. I am my own biggest supporter.

Love

by Naveah Newell

I show love to my dad by helping him, hugging him, giving him water for his medicine in the morning and taking good care of him.

Love

by Jamela

My friends are special to me. I show love to my friends by helping them.

I can show love

by Camille James

I can show love to the people I love by saying nice things to them and spending time with them.

My sister

by Marcia McGee

I love my sister

My sister is funny and caring and likes to give me
hugs and cares about my feelings and we also play
together and she is special

I love my sis

I show love by

Marcus L.

I show love to the people in my life by spending
time with them. Having fun with them and making
memories with the people I love and care for is one of
my favorite ways to spend my time. I also like to show
love to those around me through words of affirmation,
and buying thoughtful gifts to show that I know the
person and that I value what they like. I show love to
myself by making time for myself to relax and spend
time doing the things that I love.

Hugs

by Juan

A way I show love to the people in my life is by giving hugs. Hugs are a sign to my friends and family that I care about them. It also gives a sense of togetherness. Another way I show love to the people in my life is by listening to their problems. Being able to listen and understand what someone might be going through shows the love and care you have for this person. The way that I show love to myself is by...

Chapter 4

Issues In Our Communities

My Community

by Santoesha Pratt

Black on Black crime is sad to me in our community. We need programs to help us come together. To bring peace and love. We need neighborhood watch to hold everyone accountable for violence and bullying.

My Community

by Chelli Smith

An issue plaguing the community is homelessness, and how people treat the homeless community.

I've been homeless before, and advocate for the community and am always frustrated with how the homeless community is treated especially with the "anti-homeless" architecture.

Community

by Zendaya

There is so many issues in our community. No money, no homes, no food, no sleep. No safety. What we can do about it is get them all \$11,000 for their needs.

Writing Prompt #4

by Cassidy Ferguson

An issue I see in my community is that many kids in Kalamazoo miss out on after school activities simply because they don't have reliable transportation to get there. When school buses only travel to or from schools, students are limited to whatever happens to fit those routes. That means opportunities like the Boys and Girls Club of Kalamazoo, are out of reach for many families who don't have flexible schedules or transportation. This isn't about interest or motivation, it's about access.

A solution would be for the district to provide transportation to at least one centralized after-school hub such as the Boys and Girls Club. If buses already run after school, extending one route from each school to one community location is far more achievable than trying to cover every possible activity.

To make this happen we could speak at board meetings, get signatures or partner with organizations that already support our youth. When transportation becomes a barrier, kids lose chances to build friendships, explore interests, and gain academic and social support that could make a real difference in their lives.

Issues in our community

by Juan

The issue I noticed in my community is racial harmony. As a hispanic male, discrimination is common to people like myself and other groups of color. Change for this issue is hard because for a long time this has been a norm, which is hard for people to move on from. The way we can change it is by being involved and learning what makes certain people them.

Untitled

by Nailia N.

An issue I have noticed in my community is safety. There are high crime rates in specific neighborhoods, gun violence and others. I think this issue is happening due to several reasons like poverty, lack of mental support and housing problems. It is very important to pay attention to this issue because people need to feel safe within their community—it is a basic need for all humans. I'm not sure about the solution to this issue as a community because it goes much deeper than we think and as I mentioned before, there could be various root reasons to it.

Community support

by Ms. Niy

An important issue I've noticed is high illiteracy rates in Black and Brown communities. A way to tackle this issue is providing more funding to schools in these neighborhoods, allow access to necessary resources such as libraries, books, tutors (such as programs like CAPS) raising awareness (because embarrassment is real) will encourage others to reach out and help organize a community willing to collaborate and tackle this problem. There is the library on wheels that visits these communities, but what is essential is consistency (which they are!), but a lot of programs and organizations talk about the issues but aren't able to gather enough support to help solve these issues. It's more of a question of who in power is willing to provide resources, actively taking the time to understand and assist. Investing in programs like CAPS, because we build interpersonal relationships and boost the productivity otherwise unavailable within their community spaces.

Community issues

by Pavel and Ash

Lack of healthy food, not just in the community but the whole country as a whole, is a pressing issue in my opinion. It comes from many factors, such as lack of knowledge about healthy lifestyle and diet, lack of accessibility to healthy food due to financial issues, misdirecting advertisements, etc.

As a community an important step towards solving this issue would be including healthy lifestyle awareness lessons in schools, teaching about diet and foods. Another solution would be to stop buying fast food and make food at home.

Lack of access to basic needs

by Lourdie Clark

An issue that I have noticed in my community is the lack of access to basic needs. There are no grocery stores in walking distance of my school. This means that you need to have a car which means more money.

If we could change the world

by Marcia McGee

If we could change the world we would keep everyone from littering so we can take care of the earth and keep our earth clean. We can have groups of people cleaning up after themselves.

Affirmations

Moses Newell

I am young and I am positive. I will not let anything stand in my way.

My community

by Marcus L.

The lack of racial harmony is the biggest issue to me. Racism and bigotry leads to people feeling ostracized and unwelcome in the community. We should all be united and work together as a society, not fighting each other.

A list of issues

by Naveah Newell

Bullying
Violence
Fighting
Cussing

(title)

by _____
(your name)

(title)

by

(your name)

(title)

by

(your name)

RAWK
Read and Write
Kalamazoo

