THE Kirtland CONNECTION

A Quarterly Newsletter for Kirtland Local Schools | *Winter 2025*

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Hello Kirtland Local Schools' Community,

I am filled with pride as I reflect on the incredible progress we've made together through the first semester. The growth and success of our students are a direct result of the unwavering dedication of our amazing staff, the active support of our families, and the strength of our community. Our Strategic Plan will continue to guide us in providing *Personalized Learning, a Safe and Secure Environment, Well-Managed Finances and an Engaged Community* through the second half of the school year.

The first semester was filled with numerous awards and recognition for the district. Our district was rated five stars on our report card, is in the top 8% of public districts in Ohio, and only one of 18 districts to get five stars in every category. The special education department received a perfect rating from the state. KES received the gold rating for their PBIS program.

KHS has been named to the 2024 Advanced Placement Program (AP) School Honor Roll, earning a silver distinction. Kirtland Local Schools earned the *U.S. News & World Report* Best Elementary and Middle School Badges because they placed among the top 40% in the state. Ratings for the high schools come out in the spring. I am proud that our students have achieved this success while we focus on supporting the entire child. I am grateful for our staff providing movement breaks (wellness) and building strong relationships with our students. I truly believe our academic success does not come without having these in place.

We look to continue the success by having a very positive and productive second half of the school year.

For those in the community that would like to talk or hear about the schools, I have the third "Coffee and Conversations with the Superintendent" scheduled for April 2 at 8 a.m. at Honey'z. I hope to see many of you there.

Thank you all for your continued support,

Dr. Chad VanArnhem, Superintendent

Coffee & Conversation
with Superintendent Chad VanArnhem

April 2
8 a.m.

Held at 8 a.m. at Honey'z Cafe
9264 Chillicothe Dr. #3
(located next to the Kirtland Local Schools)

KIRTLAND SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RECEIVES A PERFECT SCORE

Kirtland Local Schools scored a perfect 4.0 on the 2023-24 Special Education Rating, marking its success in serving students with disabilities. Every year, districts receive a Special Education Rating that shows their progress over time in meeting their goals for students with disabilities.

The design of the Special Education Profile helps districts use data about the academic growth of groups of students to keep improving their special education programs.

Members of the department have worked to ensure that students entering kindergarten are ready to learn, students with disabilities are achieving at high levels in the general education environment, and they are prepared for life, work, and postsecondary education. Achieving this perfect rating could not have been possible without the diligent work of our hard-working and dedicated staff.

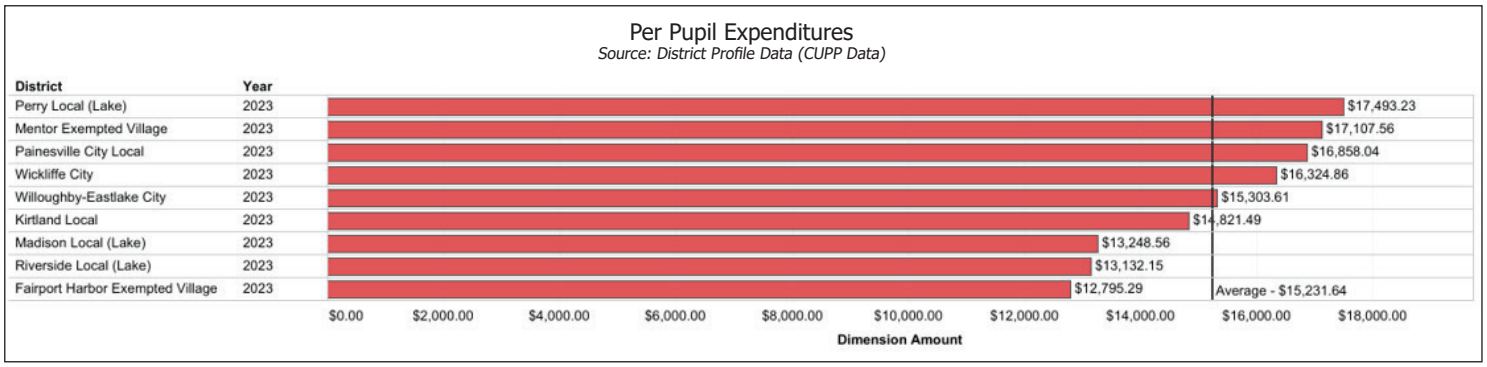
KIRTLAND LOCAL SCHOOLS: DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

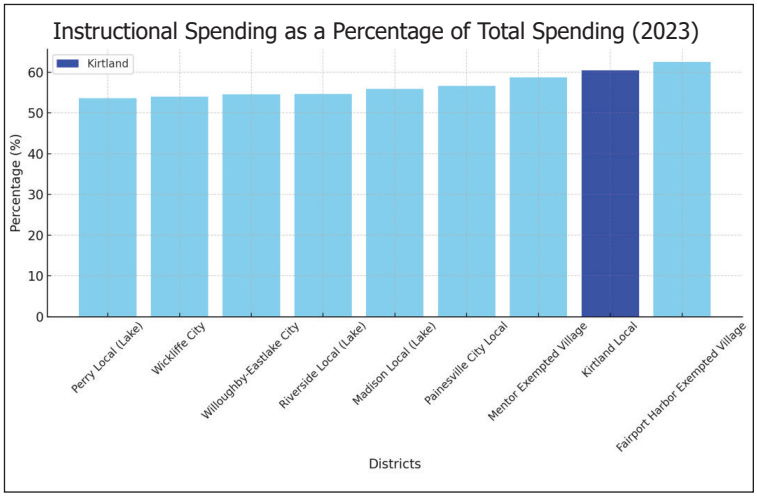
The Kirtland Local School District takes pride in providing outstanding education while being fiscally responsible.

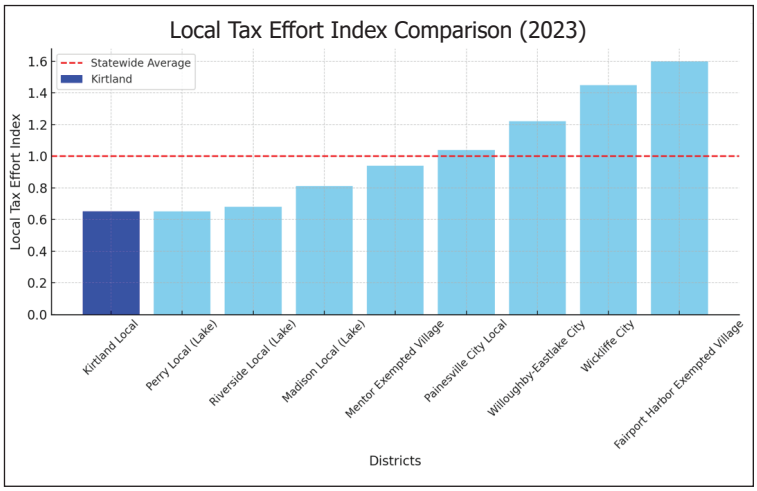
Here are three key financial highlights that demonstrate how we maximize every dollar to benefit our students and community:

1. Total Spend Per Student

- Kirtland's investment per pupil ensures access to high quality resources, programs, and facilities. Our spending is carefully aligned with our mission to provide an excellent education while staying efficient.
- Compared to similar districts and statewide averages, Kirtland stands out as a district that delivers exceptional value for the investment.







2. Instructional Spend Per Pupil

- A significant portion of our budget is dedicated to instructional spending, directly supporting classroom learning and student success.
- This percentage reflects our commitment to prioritizing academic achievement while maintaining a balanced budget.

3. Local Tax Effort

- **0.6452 (FY23)**: Kirtland's Local Tax Effort Index is significantly lower than similar districts **(0.7732)** and the statewide average **(1.0608)**. This means that Kirtland's residents pay less in local taxes compared to other communities while still supporting high-quality education.
- **No School District Income Tax:** Unlike many districts, Kirtland residents benefit from no additional school income tax, reflecting our ability to maintain quality education while minimizing the burden on taxpayers.

Why This Matters

The Kirtland Local School District is a leader in academic outcomes, extracurricular success and fiscal responsibility. By maintaining a low tax effort and prioritizing direct investments in our students, we ensure that our community receives the highest return on their investment. Our district was rated five stars on our report card, is in the top 8% of public districts in Ohio, and only one of 18 districts to get five stars in every category. All this has been done without going back to the taxpayers for new general fund money for the past 13 years!

Thank you for your continued support in making Kirtland Local Schools a model for excellence and efficiency.

KIRTLAND ELEMENTARY RECEIVES GOLD WITH STATE-LEVEL PBIS RECOGNITION

For the sixth year in a row, Kirtland Elementary School (KES) has achieved the highest individual school recognition in Ohio's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, earning the prestigious Gold Award for their exceptional commitment to creating a positive learning environment.

The Gold Award, presented by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce in conjunction with the Ohio PBIS Network, recognizes schools that demonstrate excellence in implementing comprehensive behavioral support systems that enhance student learning and social development.

"This achievement reflects our entire school community's dedication to fostering a supportive, encouraging environment where every student can thrive," said Principal Missy Godina. "Our PBIS framework isn't just a program—it's become part of our school's DNA, guiding how we interact, teach, and support one another every day."

KES earned this distinguished recognition through their implementation of various support strategies, including:

- Clear behavioral expectations across all school settings
- Consistent positive reinforcement systems
- Data-driven decision–making to support student success
- Targeted interventions for students needing additional support
- School-wide celebration of positive behaviors and achievements

The PBIS framework has been shown to improve academic performance, reduce disciplinary incidents, and create a more positive school climate. At Kirtland Elementary, this has resulted in measurable improvements in student behavior and academic engagement, creating an environment where students feel supported and motivated to succeed.

This recognition not only celebrates the school's current success but also sets the foundation for continued growth and excellence in supporting student behavior and achievement at Kirtland Elementary School.

ARMY VETERAN AUTHOR SHARES MILITARY STORIES WITH KIRTLAND ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Kirtland Elementary School (KES) welcomed children's author and 15-year Army veteran Dr. Robert Snyder for a special presentation this past November.

Snyder, a former elementary and current teacher educator at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, shared his award-winning children's books about military veterans with students. Among his works is a 2017 Notable Trade Book for Young People, recognized by the National Council for Social Studies and Children's Book Council.

"As a 15-year Army veteran and life-long teacher/professor of elementary education, it is my passion to help kindergarten through 6th graders learn about, appreciate, and understand the dedication and sacrifices our veterans make, including the joys and hardships faced by all military veterans in peacetime and in war," said Snyder.

As KES prepared to honor veterans on November 11, Snyder's visit offered students a personal look at military service through both his books and his own experiences as a soldier.

"Having an author who is also a veteran share his experiences helps our students better understand and appreciate the sacrifices of our service members," said Principal Missy Godina.

KIRTLAND READERS FIND SUCCESS THROUGH SPECIALIZED WILSON PROGRAM

Intervention Specialist Jamie Kamensky was recently featured in an educator spotlight by Wilson Language, showcasing the positive impact of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) on her Kirtland students.

Kamensky has been at Kirtland for eight years and has worked 13 years as an intervention specialist. This school year is her second year teaching WRS.

In the spotlight, Kamensky shared several success stories from her experience implementing WRS at Kirtland. One notable example involved a student who struggled with reading after educational disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through consistent WRS instruction three times per week, the student progressed rapidly from being a non-reader to mastering complex reading skills like suffixes and bonus letters.

"Witnessing her growth—from someone who struggled to communicate clearly to a confident reader—has been a humbling and heartwarming experience," said Kamensky.

Kamensky also described how the program builds student confidence. She recalled a shy student who began actively participating in class after starting WRS instruction. "She suddenly had the confidence and ability to show that she knew more than people realized," said Kamensky.

As a WRS Certified Instructor, Kamensky appreciates how the program teaches students the reasoning behind reading rules rather than just memorization.

"When students understand the reasoning, it clicks for them," said Kamensky. "They go from just memorizing to truly comprehending the material, and that's when the real progress happens."

This approach has proven particularly effective in helping struggling readers develop strong literacy skills and confidence in the classroom.

KIRTLAND HIGH SCHOOL NAMED TO ADVANCED PLACEMENT HONOR ROLL

Kirtland High School (KHS) has been named to the 2024 Advanced Placement Program (AP) School Honor Roll, earning a silver distinction. The College Board's AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while broadening access. Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness.

Kirtland High School had 53% of the Class of 2024 take at least one AP Exam during high school, 43% of seniors scoring a three or higher on at least one AP Exam, and 26% of seniors who took five or more AP Exams. KHS offers 14 AP courses; 22 sections taught by eight AP teachers.

"This recognition highlights the hard work and dedication of our students, as well as the care and dedication of our talented teaching staff," said Principal Victor Puskas. "This is also a credit to our families for supporting their children as they take rigorous AP courses. Our community should be proud of this recognition, knowing that our students are being challenged and prepared for the next step beyond high school."

"AP gives students the opportunity to engage with college-level work, to earn college credit and placement, and to potentially boost their grade point averages," said Trevor Packer, head of the AP program. "The schools that have earned this distinction are proof that it is possible to expand access to these college-level courses and still drive strong performance—they represent the best of AP."

53%
CLASS OF 2024 THAT TOOK AT LEAST ONE AP EXAM

43%
SENIORS SCORED A THREE OR HIGHER ON AT LEAST ONE AP EXAM

26%
SENIORS WHO TOOK FIVE OR MORE AP EXAMS

14
NUMBER OF AP COURSES OFFERED BY KHS

KIRTLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS RAISE MONEY FOR HURRICANE RELIEF CAUSES

Kirtland Middle School (KMS) students demonstrated their commitment to community service by raising $1,388 for hurricane relief through a school-wide penny war competition in October.

The week-long fundraiser was initiated by the eighth-grade teaching team after students expressed interest in becoming more involved in charitable causes. The competition surpassed its initial $500 goal. All funds raised were donated to the American Red Cross.

"We wanted to make sure the funds were put toward good use," said Intervention Specialist Kelly Hedger.

The penny war encouraged healthy competition among grade levels. Students deposited pennies in their grade's jar for positive points while using silver coins to subtract points from other grades. Students participated during lunch and study hall periods. By the end of the week, the eighth-grade students raised the most money collectively.

"Eighth graders took the most ownership over it and were really involved," said Hedger. "I think the eighth graders are well aware of what is going on in the world around them. They were excited to get involved in every step of the process by counting money, tracking it, and making announcements each day which continued to encourage the competition among grade levels."

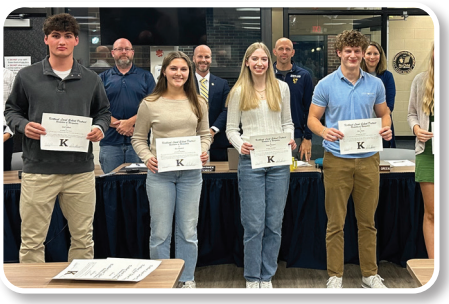
The eighth-grade teaching team consists of Mary Reilly (English), Katie Vitatoe (Science), Heidi Grunenberg (Social Studies), Angelina French (Math), and Kelly Hedger.

"This is the first time we've done something like this in a while and we are showing how motivated we are as a building," said Hedger. "We want to be supportive of things that happen outside of our school community."

The success of the penny war continued right into the next initiative at KMS. In November, the Honor Club collected pop can tabs to benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

KIRTLAND HIGH SCHOOL HONORS 41 ADVANCED PLACEMENT SCHOLARS

Congratulations to the 41 juniors and seniors who received AP Scholar status based on last school year's AP test scores. The AP Scholars who received scores of three or higher on three or more AP Exams are Faith Blankenship, Michael Dumstorff, Matilda Jankowski, Danny Alfieri, Jackson Carestio, Chloe Hansen, Susanne Hansen, Jeremy Mrva, Isabel Mueller, Maddox Perez, Niko Petrunic, Johnny Rascan, Chase Rodriguez, Kelsey Sayle, Sophia Shepard, Sophia Skrbis, Hannah Stroberg and Tyler Turk.



The AP Scholars with Honors who received an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of three or higher on four or more of these exams are Jacob LaVerde, Elise Beinhardt, Harper Hammond, Sean Lowery, Kyle Pilarczyk, Emily Ridgeway and Niko Samac.

The AP Scholars with Distinction who received an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of three or higher on five or more of these exams are Charlie Whittaker, William Burt, Vittoro Cantini, Maks Clipov, Knox Crisci, Clare Davidson, Bo Garth Famularcano, Kiera Fortney, Sam Gordon, Marin Haupt, Sean Kats, Vincent Loncar, Grace Mastrangelo, Max Paul, Ivana Rodin and Sylvia Vosicky.

KIRTLAND HIGH SCHOOL EAGLE SCOUT CREATES MEMORIAL TO HONOR POW/MIA VETERANS

In a display of leadership and community service, Kirtland High School (KHS) student Isabelle Copeland has completed her Eagle Scout project—a memorial bench dedicated to prisoners of war (POW) and service members missing in action (MIA). The bench, now a permanent fixture at the Kirtland Area Veterans Memorial, serves as a solemn reminder of the American service members who remain unaccounted for from various conflicts.

The project's unveiling at this year's Veterans Day ceremony provided a fitting tribute to those who have served, while demonstrating how our Kirtland students can make meaningful contributions to their community. The KHS band was also in attendance to perform The "Star-Spangled Banner" and military branch songs.

Keith McCrory, from Kirtland's Barber Williams American Legion 609, officiated the ceremony. He encouraged students to learn from veterans in their lives —whether family members, neighbors, or community members.

KIRTLAND MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS AWARDED CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION GRANT

Kirtland Local Schools was awarded a Career Technical Education (CTE) grant for over $277,000 to purchase equipment and professional development to provide students with a technology pathway for graduation that includes internship opportunities.

The purpose of the Ohio Career Technical Education Equipment Grant Program is to award competitive grants to schools to establish or expand CTE programs, with priority for programs that support careers in fields such as software developers, medical and healthcare services, machinists, construction laborers, electricians, engineers, and educators. It also is intended to establish or expand credentialing programs from the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation Innovative Workforce Incentive Program list.

With this funding, the district will create a comprehensive software development pathway starting in middle school and continuing through high school. All students in grades seven and eight now have the opportunity to learn Python programming basics through their technology classes. High School students can pursue more advanced Python programming courses and earn industry-recognized credentials that are valued by employers.

"Our students will be exposed to real world experiences and equipped with career technical skills to help them post-graduation," said Superintendent Chad VanArnhem. "We are excited about the opportunities that this grant will afford our students to be better prepared with career technical skills when they graduate from Kirtland."

A key feature of this program is the opportunity for students to participate in remote internships with technology companies. Through partnerships with organizations like INTERalliance, Standex, and Forward Edge, students can gain real-world experience while still in high school. These internships will allow students to work on actual software development projects and build valuable workplace skills.

The grant will fund new computer supplies at both the middle and high schools, creating modern spaces that mirror professional software development environments. Additionally, select teachers will receive extensive training to ensure they can effectively deliver this new curriculum.

The program will be fully implemented over the next three years. This initiative aligns with Ohio's growing technology sector, where software development jobs are among the fastest-growing and highest-paying careers in the state.

FALL SPORTS SHORTS

Kirtland's football team's bid for an eighth state championship came up short with a loss to Coldwater in the Division VI state title game, 31-7. The Hornets settled for their sixth state runner-up finish and a 15-1 record.

Head coach Tiger LaVerde was named the state's Division VI Co-Coach of the Year and 12 players earned All-Ohio honors.

The Hornets had six players named first-team including quarterback Jake LaVerde, running back Danny Alfieri, wide receiver/tight end Casey Carkhuff, offensive lineman Matthew Kahley, linebacker Tyler Turk, and defensive back Jack Lessick. Kahley became just the seventh Hornet under Coach LaVerde to be named All-Ohio three times.

Kirtland's second-team selections included sophomore offensive lineman Lucci Cantini, senior offensive lineman Jackson Carestio, and senior defensive back Nico Samac. Defensive linemen Ty Bledsoe, a junior, and Teddy Prusock, a senior, were named third team and junior kicker Xavier Lasecki was an honorable mention selection. Danny Alfieri was named the Chagrin Valley Conference Offensive Player of the Year while Casey Carkhuff earned the Defensive Player of the Year award, and 14 players were named all-conference.

Kirtland's girls' cross country team won its fifth straight Chagrin Valley Conference title then closed out the season with a strong showing at the OHSAA state meet. Izzie Copeland paced the Hornets with a 48th-place finish. Syliva Vosicky (104th), Ainsley Borthwick (130th), Kylie Sayle (144th), Grace Mastrangelo (148th), Megan Urbanick (167th, and Anna Hill (168th) competed for the Hornets in Columbus.

Head coach J.P. Moran was named the CVC Valley Division Coach of the Year and Copeland earned Runner of the Year honors. Vosicky, Sayle, and Borthwick earned first-team all-conference honors and Hill, Mastrangelo, and Urbanick were second-team selections. Kaitlyn D'Amato and Naomi Trillo were named honorable mention.

Kirtland's boys' cross country team placed fifth at the CVC meet with Joey Ciavarelli earning first-team all-conference honors and Ben Brandal earning second-team honors. Jeremy Mrva and Vince Loncar were honorable mention selections.

The Hornets' boys' golf team placed third in the CVC Valley Division. Nick Nead was named the conference Player of the Year and Ryan Green and Danny Shafer both earned second-team all-conference honors. Sammy Ridgeway and Maggie Kothera were honorable mention selections. Nead also won a sectional championship and then earned a spot in the OHSAA state tournament, where he shot a 159 over the two-day tournament to place 20th.

Kirtland's boys' soccer team finished 12-4-3 overall and won the CVC Valley Division with a 4-0 record. Head coach John Valentic was named CVC Valley Division Coach of the Year and Vince Carriero earned the Player of the Year honor. Carriero, Luka Oros, Marko Valentic, and Charlie Whitaker were named first-team all-conference. Tage Crisci, Will Burt, and Xavier Lasecki earned second-team honors, and Karlo Cubela and Corbin MacGillis earned honorable mention honors. Carriero also was named All-Ohio.

Kirtland's girls' soccer team finished the season 12-8-1 in head coach Josh Ladick's first year guiding the Hornets, who finished 3-1 to finish second in league play. Sylvia Vosicky, Olivia Pickens, and Payton Adkins each earned first-team all-conference honors and Alexis Vosicky, Megan Urbanick, and Kennedy Body were second-team selections. Lauren Palagyi and Isabel Mueller earned honorable mention honors. Sylvia Vosicky also earned All-Ohio honors.

Kirtland's volleyball team finished 18-7 overall and finished second in the CVC with an 8-2 mark. Nina Alfieri and Kristiana Katic both were named first-team all-conference, Ellie Spencer was a second-team selection, and Bria Golem and Carmen Kalous received honorable mention honors.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 4	Fifth Grade and High School Band Concert
February 7	Trimester 2 ends (KES)
February 10	Teacher Workday – NO SCHOOL
February 12	LCMEA Choir Festival
February 14	KES Heart Healthy Day
February 17	Presidents' Day - NO SCHOOL
February 28	NHS Kids' Night Out
March 3	KES PD – No School for KES Students
March 6	KES Bingo Night
March 7	Quarter 3 Ends (KMS/KHS)
March 11	ACT for Juniors
March 11	PTA Meeting
March 13	High School Winter Sports Banquet
March 21-25	KHS Music Dept. Trip to Memphis/New Orleans
March 24-28	Spring Break

*****ECRWSSEDDM*****

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