

THE **Kirtland** CONNECTION

A Quarterly Newsletter for Kirtland Local Schools

Spring 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Hello Kirtland Local Schools' Community,

As we transition from the cold and dark days of winter to the vibrant days of spring, we are delighted to share many of the great accomplishments of our school district in this edition of the *Kirtland Connection*. Our students continue

to inspire us with their remarkable achievements, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Inside our classrooms, our students are excelling academically. I have the fortune of getting to walk around campus daily to witness our teachers inspiring learning and our students engaged and working hard. We were recently able to watch three of our students compete on Academic Challenge and they did extremely well. The district will be honoring our 26 AP Scholars for their amazing accomplishments at the upcoming April Board of Education meeting!

Our students are not only succeeding academically but also thriving outside the classroom. From participating

in extracurricular activities such as athletics, music, robotics and the arts to volunteering for community service projects, our students are actively engaged in numerous experiences that help them develop into well-rounded individuals.

As we celebrate the successes of our students, it is important to recognize the invaluable support of our dedicated educators, staff, coaches, parents, and community members who play a pivotal role in nurturing our students' growth and development. Their unwavering commitment to providing our students with a nurturing and supportive environment is instrumental in helping them reach their full potential.

As we look forward to the joys of spring and the opportunities it brings, let us continue to support and celebrate the achievements of our students. Thank you for your dedication to the success of our school district and go Hornets!

Sincerely,

Chad VanArnhem, Superintendent

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DO YOU HAVE AN INCOMING KINDERGARTEN STUDENT FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR?

If you have not already completed the Google Form to submit your information, please contact Mrs. Kutscher in the KES office!

Contact Information:

Email: Anna.Kutscher@kirtlandschools.org

Phone: 440.256.3344

KIRTLAND'S SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZED

Special Education and Pupil Services Director, Kristen Schutte, recognized the special education department for their hard work and positive reports from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW).

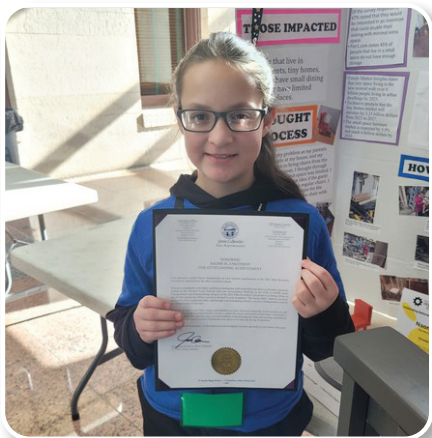
Every year, districts receive a Special Education Profile that shows their progress over time in meeting their goals for students with disabilities. The design of the Special Education Profile helps districts use data about the academic growth of groups of students to keep improving their special education programs. ODEW collected special education data from the 2021-2023 school years to provide the district with a Special

Education Rating and annual profile. The district received an annual rating of "Meets Requirements" with a score of 4.0/4.0.

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. They have helped the district implement IDEA to improve services for students and ensure students are receiving equitable services and support.



NAOMI BLANKENSHIP RECOGNIZED BY STATE REPRESENTATIVE



Kirtland Middle School sixth-grade student Naomi Blankenship competed in the 2023 Ohio Invention Convention alongside sixth-twelfth grade students from across Ohio. The Invention Convention curriculum teaches creative problem-solving skills, innovative thought-processes and promotes 21st century critical-thinking, creativity and communication skills to children.

For the Cleveland area, Blankenship won the second-place spot in the "Transportation and Manufacturing" category with her "The Secret Seat" invention.

KIRTLAND CHAMPIONS FITNESS FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

At a time when many districts responded to academic challenges by reducing recess time, PE, Health, or Family and Consumer Science classes, Kirtland Local Schools did what seemed counterintuitive; they increased their focus on fitness, wellness, and nutrition districtwide. According to the superintendent, Chad VanArnhem, test scores at all levels, including SAT scores, are at their highest ever.

Kirtland initiated fitness in schools with the establishment of “Just Run” clubs in 2014. Moreover, the current movement and wellness priority connects fitness, learning, and social emotional development.



The emphasis on wellness begins early at Kirtland, with access to a fitness room at the elementary school. The converted classroom is used as part of the MTSS process, with all students visiting the fitness room at least once per week and some

students with attention concerns incorporating physical activity at the start of each day. The room is part of a robust elementary initiative that includes student fitness challenges, yoga practice, and an “Action for Happiness” calendar. Additionally, classrooms participate in “Walking Wednesdays,” snow or shine, to connect with the outdoors.

The middle school is planning to open its first fitness room this year. They also provide a nine-week wellness class during advisory where the focus is on overall wellbeing, including such initiatives as “Reducing Your Screen Time” challenges and “Wellness Bingo.” Rec time is offered during lunch, and movement breaks are standard during block classes, too.

The high school continues the tradition by offering a wellness and nutrition class taught by a history teacher, who happens to be a CrossFit champion. Initiatives go beyond fitness, as the high school hosted a gratitude challenge as part of their wellness movement. They also get students involved, having one of the most active Sources of Strength programs in the area.

Here, student leaders promote eight key life strengths, including healthy activity, mental and physical health to their peers.



“We have always known that fitness and wellness make students more focused and ready to learn.”

Chad VanArnhem, Kirtland Local Schools Superintendent

Fitness and wellness have become part of the fabric of Kirtland Schools, and this year nutrition has been added to the district “Focus of the Month.” Activities include but are not limited to reading food labels, and “Try it Tuesdays,” where nutrition staff package bite size healthy foods for sampling and discussion.

“We have always known that fitness and wellness make students more focused and ready to learn,” said VanArnhem. “We formalized simple principles and created opportunities (movement breaks, reflection time, breathing, and physical activity) so that everyone has the ability to participate.”

Kirtland doesn’t leave out staff either. Teachers compete in staff challenges, lead “Wellness Wednesday” walks, and join friendly staff and cross-building competitions. There is also a staff fitness room, and every staff professional development day begins with 30 minutes of a wellness or fitness activity. Kirtland also offers a related book study and in-district flu shots.

For more information on Kirtland Local Schools, visit their Student Wellness webpage.



KIRTLAND STUDENTS UNITE FOR SERVICE THROUGH NEW K-KIDS CLUB

Students across generations are coming together to make a difference in Kirtland. Kirtland Elementary recently launched a new K-Kids Club, sponsored by the high school's Key Club and the local Kirtland Kiwanis organization. This group provides young students with hands-on opportunities to serve their community.

“Our goal is for students to learn the importance of servant leadership, get excited about service projects outside school, and carry this mindset forward as Kirtland Hornets,” said Principal Katy Nagaj.

In their inaugural meeting in January, elementary students made Valentine's cards for local senior citizens alongside Key Club mentors. Club leaders have bold visions for monthly service activities that utilize talents across age levels for community good. Over 40 KES students have signed up to participate in the club.

“The whole idea of K-Kids is to instill service and leadership values early on – tools they can use their whole lives,” said Kiwanis advisor Rick Fox.

The club came to fruition through 16-year-old Emily Ridgeway, a high school junior and Key Club member. Inspired by a similar initiative at another district, Emily brought the concept to administrators.

As a youth basketball referee, Emily interacts with elementary students weekly and considers interacting with them as a highlight of her week. Now, Emily and



her fellow Key Club members guide elementary students while also learning leadership themselves. It's a mutually empowering mentorship aligned with the district's emphasis on “older students helping younger ones become leaders,” said Nagaj.

With dedicated commitment from Key Club, Kirtland administration, and Kirtland Kiwanis advisors, all pieces aligned to launch this first regional K-Kids club. A February 6 charter celebration introduced the group as the 101st K-Kids chapter in Ohio.

“This is just the beginning of their leadership journey,” said Nagaj. “We want students to understand how they can help places in our tight-knit community – that's the importance of service.”

KIRTLAND SEVENTH GRADER WINS LAKE COUNTY SPELLING BEE

Five Kirtland students competed in the annual District Spelling Bee on January 26. From Kirtland Middle School (KMS) Lilly Giavara, Grace Kostelnik, and Tommy Loncar represented the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade respectively. Representing Kirtland Elementary School (KES) was fourth-grader Bobby Ruggeri and fifth-grader Henriette Famularcano.



Following the successful collective spelling of a total of 223 words, Grace Kostelnik was crowned the 2024 Kirtland

Local School District Spelling Bee Champion.

On February 1, Grace traveled to the Educational Service Center of the Western Reserve to compete against other top spellers in Lake County where she once again came out on top and was named 2024 Lake County Spelling Bee Champion.

Grace competed fiercely in the Tri-County Spelling Bee on February 28 against winners from both Geauga and Ashtabula County and took second place. Grace is the alternate for the Washington D.C. National Competition in April.

These spelling bees are in conjunction with the Scripps National Spelling Bee which was established in 1925 and administered by the E.W. Scripps Company in Cincinnati, Ohio.



FIRST TECH CHALLENGE PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH SKILLS FOR OUTSIDE INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Kirtland High School senior Tabitha Blankenship and the Kirtland First Tech Challenge Team (FTC) participated in a Qualifier Competition at Kent State University with 24 other schools from across Northeast Ohio. These competition experiences allow the students to strengthen their problem-solving and teamwork skills while also learning to think like engineers by designing, building, and coding the robots that they compete with.

The FTC teams compete with the robots that they have been building this school year in an effort to advance to the state competition. The Electric Hornets FTC Team advanced to the State Championship competition on March 9 where they battled with 36 opposing teams for a chance to compete in the National Competition. While their season is over, their Coach Mike Rudder went home with the



Compass award, an award given to recognize the best coach/mentor of all the participating teams.

Blankenship not only participates in the Kirtland FTC team but also helps mentor students in grades 4-8 who participate in the FIRST LEGO League. The FLL students are challenged to use their basic STEM knowledge through this hands-on robotics program.

Through her participation and the knowledge she has gained being part of the Kirtland FTC team and her time spent mentoring younger STEM students, Blankenship has secured an internship at Rockwell Automation.

“It just really helped me with everything that I do like,” said Blankenship. “The programming has helped me with going to school with all the things that I do there and with my job and, and it got me those opportunities,” said Blankenship.

KES UNVEILS NEW WELLNESS ROOM FOR STUDENT BRAIN BREAKS

The Abriana Camino Wellness Room is a new addition to Kirtland Elementary School (KES) this school year. Once a former classroom, it is now a place where students can ride stationary bikes, jump on trampolines, practice deep breathing on yoga mats, use resistance bands, and participate in a wide variety of physical activities for a fun brain break during their day.

The goal of the wellness room is for physical activity to make the students feel more relaxed and ready to learn once they are back in the classroom. Hopefully, these breaks will allow KES students to feel more focused and attentive. “There is a significant amount of research that supports the idea that physical activity can help reduce many of the challenges that schools are facing today while improving academics,” said Superintendent Chad VanArnhem. “Some of these challenges include anxiety, depression, attention issues, obesity and dropping academics.”

While teachers bring their classes down once a week, they sometimes make additional visits to provide their students with extra “brain breaks.” The room is set-up for group activities with the inclusion of Smart TVs, however the students can also choose their own solo activities or participate in a series of stations.

The wellness room became a reality using funds raised from the school’s annual-walk-a-thon and an anonymous donation for the room to be named after Abriana Camino, a KES second-grade student who passed away last school year. “Our students, keeping Abriana alive in our spirit and memories – they were excited to know that this would be named after her, and the family was extremely grateful,” said KES Principal Katy Nagaj.



Future plans for the room include adding a dedicated “calm space” where students are able to recalibrate their emotions and de-escalate before returning to class.

The wellness room is just one of the many wellness based initiatives KES and the district as a whole has implemented following the COVID-19 pandemic.

KIRTLAND, WEST GEAUGA HIGH SCHOOLS COMPETE IN SPIRITED PRINCIPALS CUP

Kirtland High School recently put their skills to the test in a spirited yet good-natured competition against West Geauga High School on February 23. The Battle of 306 Principals Cup Assembly featured several Minute to Win It games featuring Kirtland staff and student volunteers as well as High School Principal Victor Puskas in a mid-day school-wide assembly. Reflecting the schools' geographic ties, with both situated along Ohio State Route 306, the event's name gave a nod to their shared address.

Each school gathered in their gym and were able to keep track of their competition through a live-stream allowing it to feel like a real game show. The games included classics like the Hula Hoop Pass, Elephant March, and Stack Attack, each challenging the participants to use teamwork and quick thinking to be the first team to complete the challenge.

By the final round, each team had won several competitions leaving the finale in the hands of their principals. Puskas, in his first year as Kirtland High School Principal, comes from serving several years as West Geauga High School Assistant Principal and faced-off with West Geauga High School Principal Ryan Patti.

They competed in both an Around The World three point shot competition and Find the Worm where each player is given a large pile of whipped cream on a plate with several

gummy worms hidden inside and have to get them out without using their hands.

While neither school came out the clear winner, the true triumph of the day was providing the students a reprieve from their schedules for a unique and school-spirit boosting event. "It was a chance for neighboring schools to come together and have some fun," said Puskas. "It was a great activity to break up the monotony of the students' daily schedules, especially during February which is normally pretty challenging to get through for everyone."

The event was well received by the students and staff at Kirtland and Puskas and his team aim to bring back the event next year with a fundraising element. "We competed in a friendly competition and it was fun, but maybe next year we can incorporate raising money in some way for a charity both schools agree on and really make it worthwhile to continue doing," said Puskas.

Thanks to the Kirtland High School Student Council and Technology Director Greg Cosimi for getting this new event off the ground.



WINTER SPORTS SHORTS

Kirtland's 2023-2024 winter sports season came to a close on Monday, March 4 when the Hornets lost to Fairview in a Division III boys' basketball district semifinal.

The Hornets finished the season 17-8 overall and 8-2 in the Chagrin Valley Conference Valley Division.

Senior Nick Barisic earned third team All-Northeast Lakes District and first team All-Chagrin Valley Conference, Junior Vince Carriero was an honorable mention All-District selection and a second team All-CVC honoree.

Senior Gino Blasini also was named second team All-CVC while senior Jack Green and sophomore Jake LaVerde earned honorable mention all-conference honors.

Kirtland's girls' basketball team finished its season 12-11 overall and 5-5 in league play.

Hornets junior Kristiana Katic was a dominant force for the Hornets in earning second team All-Northeast Lakes District and first team All-CVC honors. Junior Emily Ridgeway also was named first team All-CVC and she earned honorable mention all-district honors.

Junior Kennedy Boyd and sophomore Lauren Palagy were named honorable mention All-CVC.

Kirtland's young wrestling team gained valuable experience this season.

Despite not having a wrestler place at the CVC tournament, nor the sectional tournament, the Hornets



prepared for a bright future with their hard work.

Jerry Zovko was the lone Kirtland wrestler to claim a victory at the CVC tournament.

Kirtland's girls' swim team placed fourth in the Valley Division at the CVC championships with Sofia Barisic winning conference titles in the 100-yard freestyle and the 100-yard backstroke, and Claire Dumstorff winning a title in the 100-yard breaststroke.

Via their conference titles, both Barisic and Dumstorff earned first team All-CVC honors.

Barisic, Dumstorff, Giorgi Mei, and Sophia Shepard claimed second team All-CVC honors in the 200-yard medley relay and Nina Vujica and Nora Withrow both earned honorable mention all-conference honors.

Scan the QR Code to RSVP for Senior Citizen Appreciation Night Dinner and Play



Kirtland Local School's Senior Citizen Appreciation Night

PIZZA/ PASTA DINNER & PLAY

K THURSDAY, APRIL 25
DINNER AT 6:00 P.M.

Kirtland High School Cafeteria

PLAY BEGINS AT 7:00PM

ALL SENIOR CITIZENS LIVING IN THE KIRTLAND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ARE INVITED!

Play: Moriarty's Revenge
by Christopher Burruto

Dinner Cost: \$5 for pizza and pasta dinner.
Payment can be dropped off at the Kirtland Community Center.

Checks should be made out to
Kirtland Local Schools.



Free admission to see the play with dinner purchase!



RSVP: <https://www.kirtlandcommunity.com/event-details/dinner-and-a-play-with-kirtland-schools>



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UPCOMING EVENTS



- April 15 – Regular Board of Education Meeting
- April 24 – Spring Choir Concert (Grades 5-7)
- April 25 – Spring Choir Concert (Grades 8-12)
- April 25 – Senior Citizen Appreciation Night
- April 26 – School Play at 7:00 pm in Hornet Hall
- April 27 – School Play at 3:00 pm in Hornet Hall
- April 27 – PTA Spring Auction
- April 30 – KHS Band and Jazz Band Concert
- May 1 – KMS and 5th Grade Band and Jazz Band Concert
- May 3 – NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
- May 3 – Prom
- May 20 – Regular Board of Education Meeting
- May 26 – Graduation
- May 27 – Memorial Day – NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS
- May 29 – Last Day of School
- June 17– Regular Board of Education Meeting

*****ECRWSEDDM*****
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KIRTLAND, OH 44094

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