

## **A Message from New Superintendent: Mr. Michael Zoerhoff**

Today's world is fast paced and constantly changing. Knowledge and skill expectations continue to grow and job competition in a global marketplace is fierce. Students and parents can feel overwhelmed facing life's challenges.

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As a new Superintendent with two children, like you my family is preparing for the new school year. Every parent wants a teacher who will engage both the mind and heart of the child. This is Kentwood Public Schools: Our teachers and staff members encourage students to recognize their potential, but in addition, they create classroom environments that help students reach their potential.

At Kentwood Public Schools we are focused on three things:

1. **Equipping students to excel through innovative teaching, learning, and performing environments:** Our teachers and staff members challenge and equip students to excel academically, in the arts, and on the athletic field.
2. **Engaging our students and schools with a focus on achievement and continuous improvement:** This is a data-driven district where metrics and assessments help students and parents understand what is needed to succeed, both in school and beyond.
3. **Creating a global school community where high expectations and positive relationships matter:** Using the *Capturing Kid's Hearts* program, our students know that teachers care and that support systems are available in this challenging, changing world.

In this world of change, the Kentwood tradition of continuous improvement equips students for the opportunities that happen after graduation. A great example of this is Derrick Arthur, a 2009 graduate of East Kentwood High and a 2013 graduate of the Ivy League Columbia University. Prepared to succeed on a global stage, Derrick today is using his degree in comparative literature to teach English in China. Prestigious universities like Columbia look for students like Derrick who can perform on a global stage.

Another example is 2012 graduate Natalie Means. In 2013, Natalie spent six months in South Africa and three months in Brazil teaching underprivileged youth. She told me that the outstanding global education from KPS prepared her to work with many different cultures and make a difference around the world. Natalie also told me that her former Kentwood teachers continued to contact her through social media and offered encouragement for what she was doing. Her quote that stood out to me was "Kentwood is a family that extends well beyond high school."

Kentwood students have the ability to problem-solve and engage with diverse perspectives. I am honored to lead a district where over sixty languages and countries are represented and where students from around the world gather to learn, study, and engage with each other.

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As we begin the year, let's also celebrate some of the good news from the past year: Recently the Mackinac Center ranked five of our elementary schools in the top 75 schools in the State. The Michigan Department of Education recognized three of our elementary schools, Glenwood, Townline, and Southwood, for achievement and becoming "Beating the Odds" schools.

The 2013 graduating senior class received over 1.75 million dollars in academic scholarships. Our EKHS band received division I for the 12<sup>th</sup> year in a row. The boy's track and soccer teams again won State Championships. The list goes on and on for the outstanding achievement of our students and staff!

The success of the district and the students happens because of the hard work and unwavering commitment shown by the staff at Kentwood Public Schools. In the year ahead, we will continue to share the story of what is happening across the district.

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***We take seriously our partnership with the parents and community members and plan to continue the tradition of on-going communication and parental involvement.***

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I hope to see you at one of the community meetings, superintendent forums or parent nights. We will again take a community survey this year. We do this because we take seriously our partnership with the community and with parents. As always, please share your concerns and your stories of success. Together, we will make the 2013-14 school year a success!