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**FAQs**

**What is an ISD?**

An ISD is a regional education service agency. The job of this agency is to help local school districts with programs and services that are best done on a regional basis – things that are highly specialized or that would be far too expensive on an individual basis. The 57 ISDs in Michigan help communities make the best use of resources in educating students. We collaborate with our districts, higher education, non-profit organizations, business and others to bring key programs and services to our schools.

Within this regional collaboration, the ISDs provide programs like Early Childhood, Tech Centers and Special Education Centers which help educate youth with specialized equipment, technology and expertise that would be far too costly for any local district to fund. Support services like bulk purchasing, technology or payroll may also be on the list of services asked of an ISD. As the school districts request new programs and services, ISDs create them to meet local needs. This is why the exact services vary so much from one ISD to another.

**Who does an ISD serve?**

ISDs serve school districts, educators and students within their geographical area, and ultimately, the community. They provide the programs, services and initiatives needed to help educate all students.

Kent ISD serves 20 public school districts and 3 non-public school districts in Kent and much of Barry counties, which means more than 300 schools, and more than 117,000 students and 8,000 educators. Our Districts include:

**Public Districts**

Byron Center Public Schools

Caledonia Community Schools

Cedar Springs Public Schools

Comstock Park Public Schools

East Grand Rapids Public Schools

Forest Hills Public Schools

Godfrey Lee Public Schools

Godwin Heights Public Schools

Grand Rapids Public Schools

Grandville Public Schools

Kelloggsville Public Schools

Kenowa Hills Public Schools

Kent City Community Schools

Kentwood Public Schools

Lowell Area Schools

Northview Public Schools

Rockford Public Schools

Sparta Area Schools

Thornapple Kellogg Schools

Wyoming Public Schools

**Non-public Districts**

Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids Christian Schools

Calvin Christian Schools

**Where did they come from?**

The educational service agencies, or ISDs, were created by laws passed in 1962. The duties of these organizations were 1) to make sure the school districts counted students accurately so they could obtain the correct state funds, and 2) to provide the services and programs that would be too expensive for a local district to provide on its own. We were established to be regional collaborators and help keep costs down for the schools. That’s what we were created to do and, 50 years later, continue to do. This is a job that has taken on ever- greater significance in the past decade of school funding cuts and rapidly rising costs.

Kent ISD is one of the largest in the state, serving more than 300 schools and 23 school districts, more than 117,000 students and 8,000 educators. Kent ISD offers several hundred programs, initiatives and services on a regional basis, with the Tech Center alone offering 25 different career programs. Our Special Education area oversees 20 center programs on four campuses, and our professional development serves thousands of participants, just as examples.

**Why do they have such an odd name?**

An ISD is an “Intermediate School District.” The “Intermediate” word comes from the dictionary definition, which is “coming between two things.” In this case, it refers to coming between the Michigan Department of Education and the local school district. The ISDs still fulfill this original purpose in many ways, including managing pupil accounting and pass-through funding from the state to the schools. They also help districts understand and implement new regulations and requirements, like the new Michigan Merit Curriculum or Medicaid reimbursement rules.

The “School District” portion of the name refers to our primary customer, the local district. In addition, the boundaries, or district, an ISD covers include a specific number of school districts. The number of districts varies between ISDs. Some ISDs serve districts in just one county, while others may encompass several counties.

Some ISDs have changed their name to more clearly explain how they serve education. Examples include Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency, Allegan Area Educational Service Agency, Oakland Schools.

We are called Kent ISD and no longer use the spelled out version of “intermediate school district.”

**How is an ISD funded?**

Most ISDs get funding from a variety of sources, including property taxes, state and federal departments of education, grants and awards from local or national organizations, and fees for services. Most ISDs levy a millage to help fund the programs and services offered to local districts.

Kent ISD is funded all of these ways, plus has a charter millage (based on property taxes) that helps keep our funding stable. This means we can more easily offer the services our customer school districts want, from one year to the next.

**Who oversees an ISD?**

Each ISD has its own School Board which approves all official policies, budgets, staff and plans in public open meetings. The board hires and evaluates the ISD Superintendent, who then manages the services and staff of the organization. Members of this board are nominated by the school boards of local districts and serve for a set term of years. Typically, the community members nominated to an ISD board have served as school board members in a local district.

Additional accountability to the community comes from public meetings, along with the official documents, budgets, independent financial audits, plus the extensive reports and large amounts of information on the ISD’s public website. Periodic elections to vote on millage renewals or other important issues give voters ISD responsibility. The Michigan Department of Education helps ensure ISDs are in compliance with state regulations and requirements.

Even more oversight comes from the local association of school boards, the superintendents association, Special Education administrators, parents and others. Our ISDs are accountable under these state and federal laws:

* Open Meetings Act
* Annual public budget hearings
* Freedom of Information Act
* State School Code
* Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
* Michigan's Rules for Special Education
* No Child Left Behind Act

Kent ISD’s School Board members and their terms of office are:

Andrea Haidle, President – through May 2017

Claudia Bajema, Vice President – through May 2017

Bill Joseph, Secretary – through May 2013

Steve Zinger, Treasurer – through May 2013

Fred Thorne, Trustee – through May 2015

The School Board’s schedule of meetings for the school year can be found on our website – kentisd.org.

**What do ISDs do for my local schools and community?**

Kent ISD creates innovative new programs to help meet the needs of all students in our community. We train teachers on the newest techniques in teaching students, create partnerships with the business and non-profit communities and help our districts save money and resources.

Kent ISD provides Early Childhood programs like Bright Beginnings and Early On, operates Kent Career Tech Center and 20 Special Education center programs which help educate youth with specialized equipment, technology and expertise that would be far too costly for any local district to fund. We negotiate a range of services and pricing on behalf of our districts, including an instant alert system, electrical/HVAC service, trash removal and web-based courses for students.