



# Kentwood Public Schools Case Study

Known for academic excellence, Kentwood Public Schools partners with parents and the community to educate children in a safe, secure environment. Dedicated to recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining top teachers and staff for the district, Kentwood PS relies on technology to improve efficiency.

## The Challenge

Like most states across the country, Michigan struggles with a teacher shortage. There's also a high turnover rate for paraprofessionals, interventionists, clerical staff, and after-school childcare staff.

The district invests a significant amount of time, resources, and money in new employees every year. To meet their goal of hiring, onboarding, and providing growth opportunities for over 70 new employees every year, the district had to find an efficient solution.

First, they need access to a large pool of applicants. Hiring and onboarding are time consuming, and paperwork circulates slowly through multiple departments. Each new employee would need job-specific training. After that, school administrators are expected to complete multiple evaluations for all new teachers and oversee their professional growth. Since new teachers alone require four observations annually, you can imagine the workload!

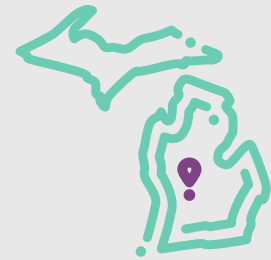
## The Solution

Because of his extensive background in IT, Kentwood PS hired Eric Schimmelman to launch and oversee a new technology initiative. The transition from a paper-based system to the new technology was a tremendous undertaking for the district.

*"We knew we had to get into an automated system."*

— Eric Schimmelman, Application Support Specialist,  
Kentwood Public Schools

A dedicated full-time specialist managed teacher absences with a notebook and pen, making phone calls every morning. Her retirement opened the door to switching to Frontline solutions. One of Eric's first tasks was to begin the process of helping the district transition to Frontline Recruiting & Hiring, followed by implementing Absence Management. Frontline Professional Growth was already in use, but Eric would soon realize it had far greater potential to support teachers and administrators. Frontline Central helped tie all the systems together.



## District Background

**LOCATION:** Kentwood, MI

**PRE-K ENROLLMENT:** 9,165

### FACILITIES:

- 10 elementary schools
- 3 middle schools
- 1 9th grade campus
- 1 high school

### STAFF:

- Certified staff: 618
- Classified staff: 985
- Administrators: 39

### DEMOGRAPHICS:

- Caucasian/White: 29.49%
- Asian: 14.9%
- Hispanic: 14.85%
- African American/Black: 32.87%
- Two or more races: 7.38%

## Solutions Used

### Frontline Professional Growth:

- Professional Learning Management
- Employee Evaluation Management
- Learning & Collaboration Resources

### Frontline Recruiting & Hiring: Applicant Tracking

### Frontline Absence & Time: Absence Management

### Frontline Central

## The Results

### RECRUIT, HIRE, AND ONBOARD. DONE!

*"I don't know how we would've onboarded the 20 extra teachers we hired during the first two weeks of the new school year without Frontline."*

— Eric Schimmelmann

Kentwood is using Frontline Recruiting & Hiring to seek qualified candidates. The HR team starts by posting job openings on K12JobSpot and letting the software do the recruiting for them. They can even send personalized recruiting messages to job seekers who meet their criteria and invite them to apply for open positions. Applicants never have to touch a paper form during the entire process from application to onboarding. Neither do Kentwood administrators doing the hiring.

Once candidates complete final interviews and are recommended for hire as teachers or support staff, required documents go out in an online packet for new employees. As soon as forms are submitted, Frontline Recruiting & Hiring handles all the pre-hire paperwork and background checks. Then it's all uploaded to Frontline Central.

Central stores documentation for each employee in its database. The system also generates and tracks annual contracts, work-related injuries, leave requests, insurance enrollments, resignation letters, and every other record required by the district for current teachers and staff.

HR, payroll, and benefits clerks are not siloed like they were before. They can track the progress of every task that flows to them through the system – no need to wonder if somebody dropped the ball along the way.

Before school started in the fall this year, Kentwood posted over 146 jobs and filled 72 positions. Everyone involved in the hiring and onboarding process is grateful that with Frontline, it takes just days to complete the hiring process for each new employee instead of weeks.

### STANDARDIZED OPERATING PROCEDURES INCREASE EFFICIENCY

Before Kentwood PS implemented Frontline, a hiring supervisor found and selected candidates, and then hired them, simple as that. But in reality, this very simplicity sometimes caused confusion because paperwork didn't always make the full circuit.

The electronic pipeline makes the hiring process much faster and more efficient. It eliminated crossed wires that sometimes resulted in hiring employees without all the boxes checked to justify positions and get them on the payroll.

New streamlined procedures require Kentwood PS supervisors to select one of the 300 job templates for different positions in the district. Submitting a requisition to post an opening and start the ball rolling is the first step in the hiring process. Once the position has made its way through the assigned approvers and a candidate is hired, onboarding is a breeze.

Managing paperwork for employee benefits used to be one of those jobs that required piles and piles of folders. Every insurance company required different forms. Full-time staff members qualified for various benefits based on their positions. After KPS implemented Frontline Central, the benefits coordinator traded the stacks of folders on the floor in her office for electronic documents. She now has access to customized forms for each position. New hires and current employees can complete and submit documents entirely online, eliminating the need for paper.

Eric proudly mentioned, "We've eliminated file cabinets!" Almost. Folders filled with employee records, past and present, used to take up half a building. Since the move to electronic storage, the remaining files are in a 10' x 10' room. Frontline Central now stores all records for 421 current employees hired in the past two years. HR staff is working on scanning and adding documents to Central for 1,000+ employees hired prior to the implementation of Central.

## TEACHER ABSENCES

Access to substitutes is essential to the district's goal of having a well-trained teaching staff. School secretaries check Frontline for teacher absences at the start of each day. Adjustments can be made to ensure that all open positions are covered. When teachers need time to collaborate on professional learning activities during the regular workday, they know how to enter a substitute request in advance through Frontline Professional Growth. Every request goes through an approval process, eliminating lost leave requests and unapproved absences.

Using Frontline systems enhances the image of the professional, well-organized district Kentwood PS works hard to maintain. Teachers feel confident that a qualified substitute will take their place in the classroom so students can continue learning.

Sometimes unexpected events – like the COVID-19 pandemic – turn things upside down, and even the best solutions can't solve substitute shortages. Kentwood came up with the creative solution of hiring site-based temporary employees to serve as substitute teachers. Frontline can help keep track of which positions are open throughout the school day, ensuring that someone is always available to provide instruction when needed.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STARTS DAY 1

Remember the paperwork that new hires complete and submit online? It includes instructions for setting up a Frontline account so new employees can use district email to communicate with HR and other district staff immediately. Along with email, they also have access to all required training courses through the Professional Learning Management tools in Frontline Professional Growth.

Each new teacher and support staff member must complete state-required Safety and Compliance training, along with job-specific courses. Before Frontline, individual users had to be enrolled manually in every course. Now, Kentwood PS bundles required training for each employee group in Professional Learning Management.

All new teachers in Michigan must complete a series of required courses for foundational knowledge and recertification credits. Those courses, including Best Practices

of Lesson Planning, Effective Questioning Techniques, Efficiently Managing Your Time, and PBIS in the Classroom, are available on demand in the Learning & Collaboration Resources component of Frontline Professional Growth. Kentwood teachers never have to go outside the district in search of professional learning opportunities.

Along with required training for new employees, in a typical year Kentwood offers almost a thousand professional development events across the district. All teachers and many other employee groups need to take continuing education classes for recertification and compliance. Professional Learning Management provides the tools the district needs to manage and track all employee PD, maintain electronic portfolios for teachers, and report recertification hours to the state automatically. It sure beats the old way of trying to keep track of professional development activities on paper!

*"What counts and what doesn't count was always a big issue. Now I can just pull a report and push it all to the state."*

— Eric Schimmelmann

## TAILOR-MADE EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

School administrators conduct multiple observations and evaluations for all new and tenured teachers each year. They use evaluation results to drive learning and track its impact on the classroom with Professional Learning Management. Administrators often recommend the resource library to individual teachers to ensure professional learning leads to growth. Teachers can also use the Learning & Collaboration Resources to satisfy state requirements.

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, bringing with it school closures, staff shortages, and an unprecedented teacher absentee rate, professional development screeched to a halt. Kentwood adapted the Employee Evaluation Management tools in Frontline Professional Growth to meet their needs. Thanks to all the backend management tools available, Eric was able to close out all tasks that didn't need to be completed and change the end-of-the-year composite score processing. He created customized forms to meet the unexpected challenges so that all teacher and staff evaluations could be documented and completed.

## AND THE BEST PART IS ...

"The most valuable part of Frontline is the online form submission." Eric says it's key to all recent improvements, including:

- Getting rid of paper
- Sending all forms electronically
- An employee database that has everything in it in one place
- No filing cabinets, no spreadsheets, no tracking down missing forms

After implementing Frontline solutions, Kentwood decided to revise their whole employee tree and review positions to evaluate how they all work together. Thanks to their successful transition to integrated technology platforms, the district can move confidently ahead on its path of continuous improvement.



## About Frontline Education

Frontline Education is the leading provider of school administration software, empowering strategic K-12 leaders with the right tools, data and insights to proactively manage human capital, business operations, student information and special education.

Educational organizations representing over 80,000 schools and millions of educators, administrators and support personnel have partnered with Frontline Education in their efforts to develop the next generation of learners. Frontline is dedicated to driving engagement across K-12 school systems

and supporting the continuous improvement of employee effectiveness and efficiency with solutions for proactive recruiting and hiring, absence and time, professional growth, student information systems, special education and Medicaid reimbursement, school health management, payroll, benefits and financial management.

Frontline Education corporate headquarters are in Malvern, PA, with offices in Roseville, CA; Salinas, CA; Andover, MA; Walled Lake, MI; New York, NY; Rockville Centre, NY; Brecksville, OH and Austin, TX.