OLi⁴ in Action: Strengthening Instructional Leadership at Kent City Schools

DISTRICT PROFILE
Kent

Kent City School District
Kent Rider Pride

ENROLLMENT:
3,100 students

OLi⁴ PARTICIPATION:
2022-2025

At many high schools, instructional leadership can feel fragmented—departments working in silos, initiatives layered on top of one another, and limited time for true collaboration.

At Kent City Schools, that story is different.

Through sustained participation in OLi⁴, district and high school leaders have built something intentional: a shared leadership structure, a culture of implementation, and systems that strengthen instruction across departments.

And the impact is visible—not just in adult practice, but in student learning.

FROM ISOLATION TO COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

For Kent's assistant principals, OLi⁴ provided something critical: connection.

> *"This is my second year as an administrator," shared Ellen Penglaze, Assistant Principal. "It allowed me to build a foundation and strengthen myself as an instructional leader."*

For veteran leader Lindsay Zenker, the experience sharpened her leadership practice in new ways: *"Having that coach has been an added resource—a person I can throw all my ideas at before I take it to the team."*

Instead of navigating challenges alone, Kent's leadership team engaged in:

- Regional cohort learning
- Ongoing executive coaching
- Implementation science training
- Structured reflection with peers

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BUILDING SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT TEACHERS

Kent's work extends beyond individual growth. It is deeply systemic. From a district perspective, OLi⁴ helped Kent build a shared leadership framework that did not previously exist.

Today, Kent has:

- A district leadership team
- Building leadership teams in every school
- Operational teacher-based teams
- Structured data conversations aligned to MTSS
- Clear Tier 1 instructional focus across content areas

> ***When we first started, we didn't have a district leadership team. We had no shared leadership structure," Karen Rumley, Director of Instructional Program, explained.***

That infrastructure has strengthened:

- Communication between central office and buildings
- Consistency in instructional expectations
- Teacher clarity around standards and success criteria
- Collaborative problem-solving at the high school level

Karen Rumley also noted, "If you are taking even a fraction of that learning back and putting it into practice, it is making a difference for your district—and we see that in spades."

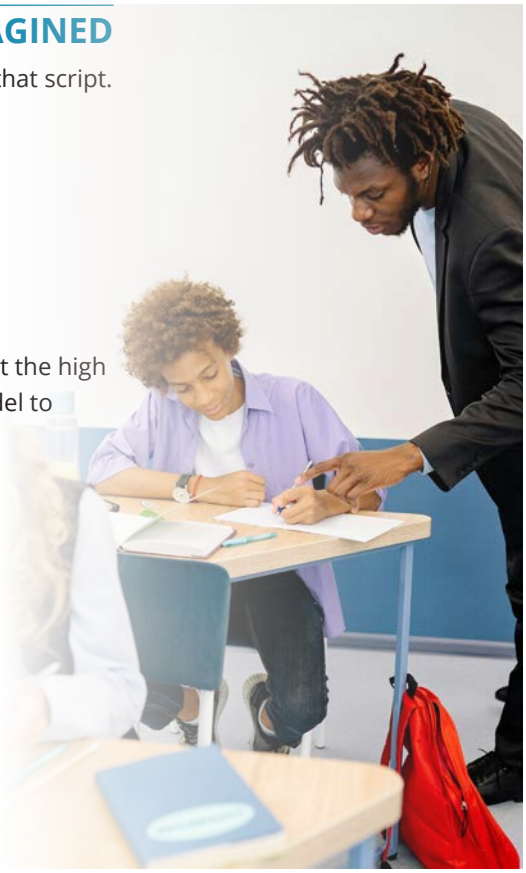
HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP—REIMAGINED

High schools are often perceived as content-driven environments. Kent flipped that script.

Through OLi⁴, the administrative team sharpened its focus on:

- Implementation fidelity
- Data-driven continuous improvement
- High-quality instructional materials
- Tier 1 strengthening across departments

OLi⁴ learning directly supported the implementation of The Writing Revolution at the high school. Leaders used implementation science principles and a "loose–tight" model to ensure alignment while honoring teacher voice.



The result was smoother rollout, deeper teacher buy-in, and stronger literacy conversations in professional learning communities (PLCs).

Teachers are now engaging in:

- ✓ Clearer standards alignment
- ✓ Learning intentions and success criteria
- ✓ More intentional assessment design
- ✓ Tough but productive conversations about rigor and materials

Instructional leadership is no longer an initiative—**it is embedded practice.**

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BEFORE ▸ AFTER: STRENGTHENED SYSTEMS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Before OLi⁴	After OLi⁴
No formal district leadership team	District leadership team established and functioning
Building leadership structures varied by school	Consistent building leadership and teacher-based teams operating districtwide
Instructional initiatives layered without cohesion	Clear implementation plan with "loose–tight" alignment
Limited cross-role collaboration	Principals, assistant principals, and district leaders learning together
Professional learning inconsistent	Multi-year leadership development with coaching

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

Leadership Growth
Multi-year OLi⁴ participation

Coaching support for principals and central office

First-year and veteran leaders building capacity together

System Alignment
District leadership team launched

Building and teacher-based teams operational

MTSS-informed data systems in place

Instructional Focus
High school literacy implementation strengthened

Tier 1 clarity prioritized

Assessment and curriculum conversations elevated

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR OHIO EDUCATORS

Kent's story demonstrates something important—high school instructional leadership can be systematic. It can be collaborative. It can be grounded in implementation science—not just inspiration. When leaders learn together, coach one another, and build structures that outlast individuals, improvement accelerates.

This is not about one workshop. It is about building leadership muscle across a district. And when leadership becomes coherent at every level—from central office to classroom:

- ✓ Teachers are better supported.
- ✓ Systems are more aligned.
- ✓ Students benefit from stronger, more intentional instruction.

That is the power of sustained leadership development.