

This \$51 million Pre-K-12 campus is providing its students with an academic headstart

By Micah Ward August 5, 2022



After 10 years of planning, students at Berkshire Local Schools in Burton, Ohio, are preparing to experience next-level project-based learning on a brand-new, \$51 million campus that will serve 1,600 students with a state-of-the-art auditorium, multiple gymnasiums, and immersive learning spaces.

Berkshire Local Schools partnered with Kent State University, which allowed the site to be built on the university's Geauga campus. It combines three separate learning facilities (Burton Elementary, Ledgemont Elementary and Berkshire Junior High/High School) by utilizing three large wings for Pre-K/elementary, middle school and high school. Students can conveniently earn college credits while reducing the financial burden of college tuition.

"Kent State University has a program—kind of like an AP honors class—where kids can take college classes from Kent State, either within the school or at the Kent State campus," says marketing expert and education writer John Peretz. "Kids can actually graduate high school with an associate's degree from college."

Students also have access to courses that provide them with real-world job skills. They can choose to pursue a healthcare path by taking classes to prepare for medical jobs, such as nursing. They can also take courses in diesel mechanics, allowing for a direct pathway to well-paying trade jobs.

The new school emphasizes real-world, project-based learning, and being on the Kent State Geauga campus provides a roadmap to college, the trades, or entrepreneurship, said Berkshire Local Schools Superintendent John Stoddard in a [press release](#).

Focused on providing its students with project-based learning opportunities, the district partnered with Pittsburgh-based [Inventionland](#), a work environment and idea “incubator” that’s one of the largest of its kind in the U.S., to design unique learning spaces throughout the campus. Kindergarten students were built a cabin, while a castle was created for first- and second-grade students. There’s a treehouse for third- and fourth-graders, a pirate ship for fifth- and sixth-grade students, and a robot space for seventh- and eighth-graders.

“Rather than just teaching math and science, we’re going to give you real projects that really combine a lot of this,” says Peretz. “They have these really cool and immersive learning spaces; for example, the pirate ship and the tree house. We want the kids to be inspired creatively so that they’re really excited to learn in these new and more unusual environments.”
