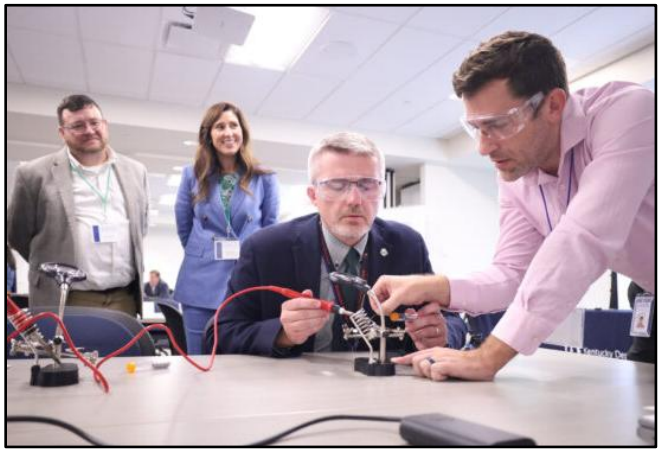
Commissioner's Report – October 2026
Kentucky Board of Education

Summer is over, fall has arrived and school districts are in full swing. Schools are off to a strong start, supported by dedicated teachers, administrators and other support staff committed to helping every student advance academically.

We ended September by celebrating vibrant learning during All In for Ag Education Week. Coordinated by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Team Kentucky, the twice-yearly event provides students opportunities to experience vibrant learning in one of the most crucial industries to our economy.



Commissioner Robbie Fletcher uses a soldering iron to construct an LED light.

The fall 2026 event highlighted the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Raising Hope program, which promotes farm safety and farmer health, including mental health. Jessamine Career and Technology Center hosted the kickoff, featuring a rally, a touch-a-tractor event and an equipment demonstration.

Throughout the rest of the week, we visited Pulaski County Elementary School, Northern Elementary School (Pendleton County), Lewisburg Elementary School (Logan County), and Morgantown Elementary School (Butler County) to see students engage in agriculture-related vibrant learning and to learn how the Raising Hope program has been growing in these communities. We also celebrated Gallatin/Grant County Farm Bureau Safety Day, where students explored agriculture careers and safe farm equipment operation.

Agriculture offers vibrant, relevant learning that connects student learning directly to their communities. The focus on safety this year adds a crucial element to the development of our young students interested in agriculture and emphasizes student and community wellbeing.

In September, KDE hosted a series of regional listening sessions with principals, superintendents and educational partners across the Commonwealth to inform the Kentucky Leadership Development Program, a new statewide initiative established in response to Senate Bill 4 (2026). The direct, practical input will help ensure the Kentucky Leadership Development Program reflects the realities of principal leadership rather than being developed without the input of the leaders it is meant to serve. These listening sessions and the feedback KDE received are instrumental as the program moves from development to implementation.

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Division of State Schools Update

KY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (KSB)

1. **Campus Happenings**
    1. The Kentucky School for the Blind welcomed students and families back for the 2026–2027 school year during Back-to-School Registration on Aug. 16. The event provided an opportunity for students to reconnect with staff, prepare for the year ahead, and, for residential students, move into the dorms and settle into campus life. Families were also supported by the generosity of the East End Lions Club, which hosted a cookout during registration, providing hamburgers and hot dogs for attendees. The event was coordinated by Michael McCarty, a KSB alumnus and current president of the club, whose continued support reflects the strong partnership between KSB and the local community.
    2. The new school year is off to an exciting start at KSB. They are thrilled to welcome back many of their returning students as well as several new full-time students joining their Wildcat family. Classrooms are once again filled with energy, reconnecting friendships, and the joy of learning. Staff have been working hard to create engaging and meaningful learning experiences as they begin another year of growth, achievement and new opportunities. They look forward to a successful school year ahead and are excited to see all that our students will accomplish in the months to come.
    3. The 49th annual Bill Roby Games will be held on Sept. 17 at KSB. This long-standing tradition brings together students who are blind and visually impaired for a day of exciting track and field competition, including running events, relays and field activities that showcase skill, determination and sportsmanship. Named in honor of Bill Roby, a dedicated community supporter and original sponsor of the event, the games have become a highlight of the school year. KSB welcomes participants from across Kentucky and neighboring states to compete, connect and celebrate their abilities. They look forward to this special event each year and are excited to once again host students, families and visiting schools for a day filled with energy, encouragement and Wildcat pride.

Campus Updates

KSB is excited to announce that the Kentucky School for the Blind Greenhouse was completed in time for the 2026–2027 school year. The idea of a greenhouse for KSB originated from the Downtown Lion's Club. Several years of collaboration resulted in shared funding from the Kentucky Downtown Lion's Club, the Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation and the Kentucky Department of Education to develop a greenhouse program that would offer KSB students an opportunity for pre-employment training, tactile science learning and gardening experiences—all leading toward independent living.

They are confident that the greenhouse will elevate their career education by sparking long-term interest in horticulture and gardening. Kosair for Kids, the William M. Wood Foundation and the Snowy Owl Foundation have also come on board to help them maintain their greenhouse program. They are very grateful for the generosity of their donors, whose support ensures that their students feel seen, supported and invested in.

Updates and highlights from the program will be shared through KSB's communication channels.

New Staff

1. Kimberli McCauley – Middle School Math Teacher
2. Lauren Beach - Physical Therapist
3. Raina Coffey – Paraeducator
4. Jane Seif – Paraeducator
5. Yan Lan – Paraeducator
6. Benny Blanton – Director of Student Life
7. Joyanna Phelps – Recreational Director

Upcoming Events

1. **Sept. 9:** KSB Varsity Track and Field at Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
2. **Sept. 11-12:** KSB Varsity Track and Field at Tennessee School for the Blind
3. **Sept. 17:** 49th Bill Roby Games
4. **Sept. 25-26:** KSB Varsity Track and Field at NCASB Track and Field Championships at the Ohio State School for the Blind

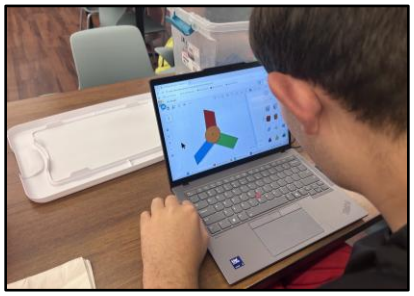
Pictures:



Ms. Connie, who has worked with this student in past, welcomes this new student at KSB during registration.



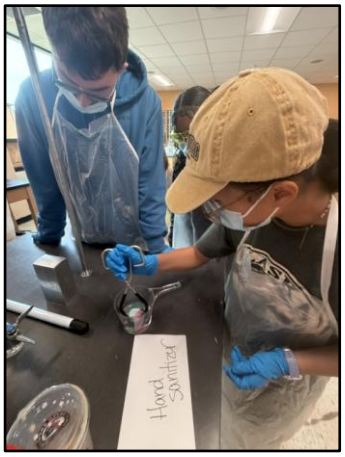
Students gather outside the new greenhouse and read the interpretive panel as a group.



A student in STEM class is working on his 3D design using Tinkercad.

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Above Left and Center: Students in high school science practice the scientific method by observing the reactions of a hands-on experiment involving bath bombs submerged in different substances.



PE started the school year building teamwork and communication skills through the activity of a human knot. Students had to untangle themselves using problem solving and cooperation to find a solution.

Division of State Schools Update

KENTUCKY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (KSD)

Campus Happenings

1. Registration Day was held on Aug. 23 at Thomas Hall. Despite limited space due to ongoing building renovations, the event ran smoothly and was a tremendous success. Students and their families were excited to reconnect, return to campus and prepare for a fantastic school year ahead. Families explored the Thomas Hall Gym, where they connected with campus programs and resources and received assistance with online registration. Staff members were available throughout the event to answer questions, provide guidance and help ensure a seamless experience for everyone.

   Through a partnership with Happy Feet, every student received a brand-new pair of shoes to help start the school year off on the right foot. Finn's Ice Cream Company also joined the celebration, providing ice cream for students and their families, which was greatly appreciated. During Registration Day, students had the opportunity to meet their teachers and houseparents, helping them feel welcomed, supported and prepared for the year ahead.

   Registration Day also served as move-in day for residential students. Families were able to tour the dorms, meet residential staff, and ensure their students were comfortably settled before departing. The enthusiasm and excitement displayed throughout the day were evident, and students left feeling confident, connected and ready for a successful school year.

2. The first week of school brought some challenges for both students and teachers as several buildings remain closed due to ongoing renovations. To accommodate everyone, some high school classes were temporarily relocated to the gym. Despite these adjustments, students have adapted remarkably well and have maintained a positive attitude throughout the transition. Their teachers have done an outstanding job managing the changes and creating a successful learning environment, even as things continue to shift around campus. Their flexibility, dedication and positive approach have helped ensure a smooth start to the school year.

3. KSD is excited to have their fall sports season underway. Volleyball and cross-country practices began immediately after the first day of school, and both teams are preparing for upcoming competitions. It was wonderful to see KSD student athletes back in action and enjoying the opportunities that sports provide. Overall, the school year is off to a successful start, and they look forward to a great year ahead.

Campus Updates

The campus construction projects continue to make progress, although several have experienced delays and ongoing challenges. At Grow Hall, setbacks were encountered when lighting fixtures arrived on campus and were found to be non-operational. Replacement fixtures are currently being awaited, with the facility anticipated to be ready to begin serving meals by Sept. 13. At Kerr Hall, construction is largely complete; however, final completion is dependent upon state inspections. Ceiling tiles and tabs will be replaced following the inspection process, with construction expected to be completed by Sept. 28.

Significant work remains at Middleton Hall, and an additional extension has been requested to accommodate the remaining scope of the project. Exterior work continues, while interior crews are currently focused on spray insulation, plumbing fixtures, shower trim, HVAC registers and controls, vanity tops, fire alarm installation, and wood door installation. The anticipated completion date for Middleton Hall is Nov. 13. Meanwhile, work at Brady Hall has been temporarily paused in the dormitory areas to accommodate student occupancy, although construction continues on the upper floor. The project includes HVAC replacement and electrical upgrades. At this time, there is no anticipated completion date for Brady Hall, and construction activities are expected to continue into the new year.

New Staff

1. Katie Newton- Moderate and Severe Disabilities Teacher
2. Autumn Newsome- Outreach Consultant
3. Erica Spoonamore- Middle School Science Teacher
4. Heather Helton- Instructional Assistant
5. Lyric Campbell- Student Development Associate
6. Anna Beard- Middle School Math Teacher
7. Claire Pilson- Student Development Associate

Upcoming Events

1. Sept. 11-13: Volleyball Meet at Arkansas School for the Deaf
2. Oct. 1-4: Volleyball Mason- Dixion Tournament at Mississippi School for the Deaf
3. Oct. 20-23: Future Farmers of America National Conference in Indianapolis, Ind.
4. Nov. 12-15: Boys and Girls Basketball Tournament at Georgia School for the Deaf

Pictures:



A teacher talks to a student as they work on their Perkins Braille Writer.



Five students sit at their desks while two individuals stand in front of the class.



Elementary students and staff sit on the floor in a circle, with one student standing, during a lesson at school.

Kentucky Tech System of Area Technology Centers (ATCs) Updates

Summary:

The Kentucky Department of Education's Kentucky Tech system of 50 state-operated Area Technology Centers (ATCs) provide high-quality career and technical educaiton programs and pathways for 115 local school districts and their students. Most of the 50 state-operated ATCs service rural districts comprised of 70% or greater populations of low-income residents.

The mission of Kentucky Tech and career and technical education is to assist in providing students with necessary skills for a successful transition to postsecondary education or work. The ATCs vision is to actively engage all students in the mastery of academic, technical and employability skills to be ready to enter the workforce and/or college upon graduation.

The Kentucky Tech system of state operated area technology centers had a busy summer hosting middle school career exploration summer camps. Summer camps provide students with early, hands-on exposure to high-demand careers and technical skill areas. Through engaging, age-appropriate experiences, students can explore a variety of career pathways, discover their interests and talents and connect classroom learning to real-world opportunities. These camps help students make more informed decisions about future high school coursework and career goals while increasing awareness of career and technical education programs available in their communities and their state-operated area technology centers.

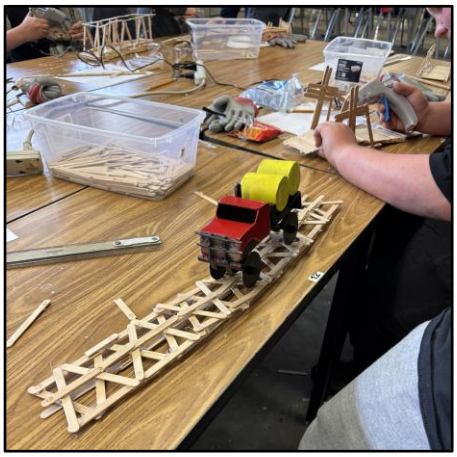
Corbin ATC

Corbin ATC, which serves students from Corbin Independent, Whitley County Schools and Williamsburg Independent, welcomed 13 middle school students to a three-day summer camp allowing students to explore pathways in construction, law and public safety, engineering and Health Science. During the camp, students constructed popsicle stick bridges and pop bottle rockets, heard from a Kentucky State Police trooper, learned to take fingerprints, practiced packing wounds and completed an obstacle course.



Left: Middle school students heard from a Kentucky State Police trooper at the Corbin ATC.







Above and Right: Middle school students constructed bridges using craft sticks during the three-day summer camp at Corbin ATC.

Paducah Innovation HUB

Paducah Innovation HUB (ATC) serves students from Paducah, McCraken County and St. Mary's High School.

The Paducah ATC recently hosted its 2026 Nontraditional Career Camp for 38 middle school students from across the region. Students explored careers in carpentry, welding, auto technology and health science through hands-on activities and real-world projects. Participants also used the CareerViewXR virtual reality platform to experience immersive job shadow opportunities across a variety of industries.

Guest speakers from Mercy Health, James Marine and local businesses shared their career journeys and discussed opportunities in high-demand fields. The camp successfully increased student awareness of nontraditional careers while helping them connect their interests and skills to future career possibilities.



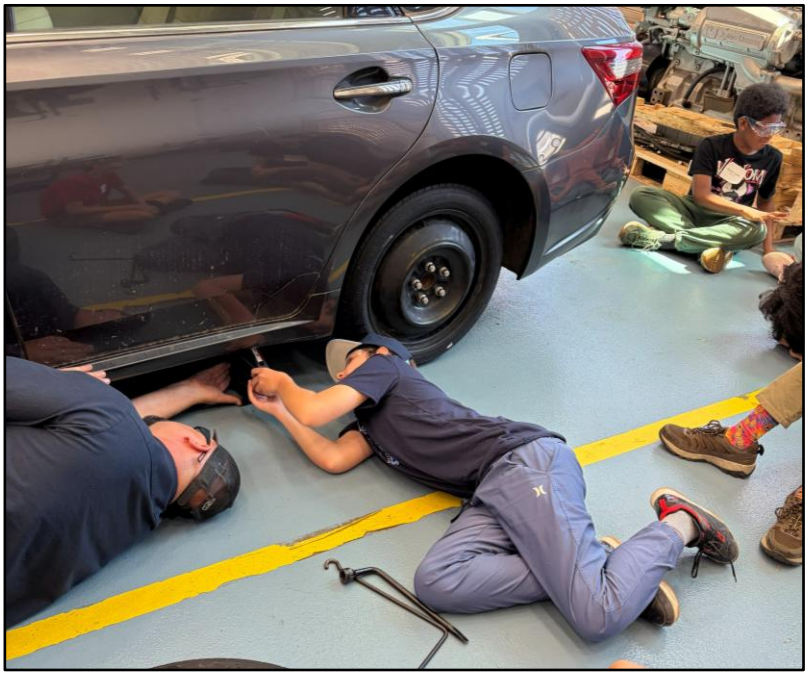
Above and Right: The Paducah ATC recently hosted its 2026 Nontraditional Career Camp for 38 middle school students from across the region.







Above and Right: Students worked on various projects and had several speakers.



Webster County ATC

Webster County ATC, which serves students from Webster County, partnered with Webster County High School's Apex 2.0 program to host middle school career exploration summer camps. Students had the opportunity to explore several programs and created wooden birdhouses, solar ovens, a personal budget, first aid basics, created a first aid kit and participated in a reality store.





Above and Right: Students at Webster County ATC built birdhouses.