

# NKCES Report – February 2025

Our mission at NKCES: We connect, grow, and serve our community of educators.

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BEECHWOOD INDEPENDENT

## Executive Director Update:

BELLEVUE INDEPENDENT

BOONE COUNTY

BRACKEN COUNTY

CAMPBELL COUNTY

CARROLL COUNTY

COVINGTON INDEPENDENT

DAYTON INDEPENDENT

**Team Meeting, February 3:** It was fantastic to reconnect with the team in February after our January meeting was unfortunately canceled due to snow. The opportunity to gather, share ideas, and collaborate was truly refreshing. Everyone brought their unique perspectives, making the discussions engaging and productive.

**Executive Committee Meeting, February 5:** The executive committee meets to review the Board agenda and provide input. The committee also discussed upcoming events and regional items. Due to snow, this meeting was moved to a virtual event.

ERLANGER-ELSMERE INDEPENDENT

FLEMING COUNTY

FORT THOMAS INDEPENDENT

GRANT COUNTY

GREENUP COUNTY

KENTON COUNTY

LEWIS COUNTY

LUDLOW INDEPENDENT

MASON COUNTY

NEWPORT INDEPENDENT

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

OWEN COUNTY

PENDLETON COUNTY

SOUTHGATE INDEPENDENT

WALTON-VERONA INDEPENDENT

WILLIAMSTOWN INDEPENDENT

**Schools To Watch, Leesburg, February 6-7:** During the Schools to Watch visit to Leesburg Elementary in Lexington, Kentucky, Dr. Razor and the Schools to Watch team engaged in an immersive evaluation of the school's educational environment. Over the course of their visit, the team toured various classrooms, observing teaching methods and student engagement in action. They conducted interviews with staff, parents and students to gain insights into the school's culture, academic programs, and support systems.

The team noted the strong sense of community and collaboration among faculty, as well as innovative teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning styles. Students expressed enthusiasm for their learning experiences, highlighting supportive relationships with teachers and active participation in their education. The visit underscored Leesburg's commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere, positioning it as a model for successful educational practices within the Schools to Watch program.

**NKCES Synergy Team Meeting, February 10:** Each month the NKCES leadership team meets to discuss pertinent topics. The NKCES leadership team recently engaged in a transformative book study centered around "The Art of Possibility" by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander. This insightful exploration has inspired team members to embrace innovative thinking and foster a culture of creativity within the organization. In addition to fostering creativity and leadership development, the NKCES leadership team is committed to enhancing organizational growth through a strategic focus on social media and branding, aiming to strengthen its online presence and effectively communicate its vision and initiatives to a broader audience.

**RIVET, HQIR Meeting, February 10:** The RIVET, HQIR meeting brought together key participants, including representatives from KDE (Kentucky Department of Education), Dr. Razor, Chief Academic Officer Melody Stacy, Director of Learning and Empowerment, Michelle Klein, and Assistant Director of Learning and Empowerment, Emily Giles. The focus of the meeting was to discuss initiatives and strategies aimed at enhancing educational outcomes and improving the overall efficiency of

educational programs. Participants exchanged insights on various topics, including curriculum development, student engagement, and data-driven decision-making. Collaborative efforts were emphasized to ensure that all stakeholders are aligned in their goals for advancing educational excellence in the district.

**CLAG Meeting, February 11:** Our recent CLAG (Campbell County Leaders Action Group) meeting was a huge success. Leaders from across Campbell County school districts came together to share innovative ideas, collaborate on solutions, and strengthen our commitment to making Campbell County the destination for families to live and thrive. From enhancing education programs to fostering community partnerships, the presentations highlighted the incredible work happening in our schools. Together, we are shaping a future where every child and family can succeed!

**Superintendent Webcast, February 11:** Dr. Amy Razor joined other education leaders from across the state to hear from Dr. Fletcher and his team on critical issues as well as statewide initiatives.

**NKCES Board Meeting, February 12:** The NKCES February Board meeting highlighted significant updates and initiatives aimed at enhancing educational outcomes in the region.

**Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher Town Hall, February 12:** Commissioner Robbie Fletcher traveled to Scott High School and led an evening of engaging community conversations highlighting Kentucky's new accountability system framework.

**Facility Tours, February 19:** Dr. Robb Smith arranged for district leaders to participate, showcasing significant renovations across local schools. The tour began at the newly renovated Ludlow Independent Schools, highlighting the district's substantial investment in improving educational environments. Following Ludlow, the group proceeded to Beechwood Independent School, where they explored impressive renovations that further enhanced the learning experience. Overall, the tours underscored the district's commitment to providing modern and effective facilities for students and staff. This time provided a forum for superintendents to engage in collaborative discussions.

**Virtual Meeting with NKU President, Cady Short-Thompson, February 20:** NKU President Cady Short-Thompson requested a meeting with Dr. Razor to introduce her to Holly Chason, Executive Director of Planning and Institutional Research. The discussion centered on enhancing collaboration between Northern Kentucky University (NKU) and the Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES) through data utilization. They also discussed potential partnerships in special education and strategies for addressing math deficiencies, reaffirming the importance of data in driving educational enhancements and collaboration.

**NKCES Resource Fair, February 21:** The NKCES team successfully organized and executed the inaugural Resource Fair at NKU, where many trusted partners participated and made connections with district leaders. Understanding how valuable district leaders' time is, this Resource Fair was planned around our monthly PL Consortium, Title, and DoSE Meeting. We are so grateful to all who participated and hope you found incredible value in this event.

**Munetrix, February 24:** Dr. Razor participated in a brief overview of the Munetrix system. Munetrix is a cloud-based software that helps schools and districts analyze data to improve academic, operational, and fiscal performance. Munetrix combines data from schools with publicly available data.

**Facilities:**

**Building Update:** As our organization grows, we find it more challenging to host larger groups at NKCES as space is limited. The parking lot is an area of concern and we are seeking bids to resolve this issue. As part of the Arts In Mind project, the long-awaited outdoor learning space is nearing completion. The larger portions of the project are complete; we have some electrical work for lighting and sound that will be installed this spring as well as sunshades to keep the space cooler in the hotter months. We can't wait to share this space with our members; the possibilities are endless!

**Professional Learning (PL) Update:**

**February Professional Learning:** NKCES supported 103 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during February, serving 1,832 educators.

**Professional Learning (PL) Consortium:** The 24.25 NKCES PL Consortium continued in February with a collaborative meeting. The meeting was held at NKU Student Union Center during the NKCES Resource Fair. Topics included [NKCES Learning and Empowerment & SERTAC](#), and planning for the monthly district share-outs. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**Title I & Title II Meeting:** The 24.25 NKCES Title I/Title II Consortium continued in February with a collaborative meeting. The meeting was held at NKU Student Union Center during the NKCES Resource Fair. Topics included Title I Private, Non Public, HomeSchool Notification of Participation - Dates (*February 3, 2025 – Data pull from Diocese, [Diocesan Confidentiality Agreement](#), March 3, 2025 – Mail to Non-public Schools, and March 17, 2025 – Due date for documentation returned to districts*). New Regulatory Guidance: [Supporting High-Quality Preschool with Title I Funds](#), Final FY25 Allocations in GMAP, and [Regional District Policy and Procedure spreadsheet](#) discussion. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting:** The 24.25 NKCES DAC Consortium continued in February with a collaborative meeting. Topics included ACT (Juniors, Non-Test Activities & Parental Consent, Sophomores - New System), AKSA (Materials arriving week of 3.24 or 3.31), ACCESS, EOP (2.24 - 3.28, Testing tickets now available in E-SESS), K Screen Ordering ([Link](#) Due March 28th), and Regional Town Hall - Takeaways. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**Professional Learning Networks (PLNs):** PLNs provide opportunities for educators to grow professionally in collaborative environments focused on collective learning. [2024.25 NKCES PLN Dates](#).

NKCES is honored to offer a variety of professional learning opportunities. All of them can be found in our [Professional Learning Catalog](#).

**Special Education Update:**

**Ms. Brittney Howell (Regional Director of Special Education) and Ms. Michelle Klein (Director of Learning and Empowerment) held connection meetings with districts to facilitate their summer and back-to-school PL plans.** These sessions provided a comprehensive regional overview and allowed offering tailored support for each district's goals. These connection meetings emphasized that quality PL is crucial—it not only fosters educator growth but also ensures that every learning opportunity is strategically aligned with district objectives. By planning PL around clearly defined

goals, we can deliver focused, research-backed initiatives that enhance teaching practices and drive measurable student success, reinforcing our commitment to supporting each district's unique needs.

**Ms. Jacki Alexander and Ms. Annie Wheatcraft, our dedicated special education consultants, recently attended the Plain Talk: Literacy and Learning conference.** Hosted by The Center for Literacy and Learning, an organization committed to educational innovation and community support, they gathered innovative strategies for literacy differentiation and instruction. This event equipped them with new approaches to tailor teaching methods for diverse student needs to bring back to the region for our teachers. Their enhanced expertise will continue to bolster our region's efforts in supporting robust literacy instruction.

**Ms. Jacki Alexander and the team members from Learning and Empowerment team successfully led Adolescent Literacy Day 1.** The NKCES team engaged more than 20 educators from across the region in research-based Tier 1 instruction practices. The training equipped participants with effective strategies and a variety of tools to enhance literacy skills and improve text accessibility for diverse student populations. The team looks forward to Day 2 of Literacy Camp, which will focus on practical methods for supporting struggling readers in the classroom.

**Ms. Barbara Wietlisbach, NKCES Assistive Technology (AT) Consultant,** collaborated with a special education teacher in Dayton Independent Schools to implement an annotation tool that provides a range of reading and writing supports, enhancing accessibility and engagement for students with diverse learning needs. Additionally, the AT consultant worked with a speech therapist in the Erlanger-Elsmere Independent School District to develop implementation strategies for students requiring Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. This collaboration focused on optimizing AAC tool usage to improve communication and learning outcomes for students with speech and language challenges. Overall, these efforts help educators provide more effective and inclusive support for their students.

**Ms. Kim Snowball provided Math Professional Learning Community & Instructional Support.** NKCES has strengthened Math Professional Learning Communities by integrating systems for SDI lesson planning, developing IEP Goals at a Glance, and supporting HQIR PLC Cadre in data collection, inquiry-based instruction, and open-ended questioning. Districts received classroom observation support to analyze teaching strengths and growth areas. Additionally, Instructional Coaches' toolboxes have been enhanced through Jim Knight's Better Conversations book study, provided schema-based instruction training for solving word problems, and led math standards training for new teachers.

### **Learning and Empowerment Team:**

#### **Northern Kentucky Institute for Arts Education (NKIAE):**

In February, Cohort 4 of the *Arts In Mind* program, including 30 schools from 15 districts, began the process of Comprehensive Arts Planning. Schools started with a needs assessment and, by the end of March, will write an action plan to support arts education in the 2025-26 school year. On February 4, Mr. Joe Bertucci, along with Kim Thomson from Boone County Schools and Alissa Paasch from The Carnegie, presented a session at The Kennedy Center's *National Community Partnerships Convening* in Washington, D.C. That same week, NKCES was invited to present a session at the U.S. Department of Education's *Assistance for Arts Education Project Director's Convening* this March. We are excited to share highlights from our region at these national conferences. On February 17, Season 4 of *Arts Express: Dance*, our original video series supporting elementary dance standards, was filmed. The new season will be released this summer to support instruction in elementary classrooms across the region. In addition,

Mr. Bertucci led a professional learning cohort in the Erlanger-Elsmere School District, and he collaborated with other members of the NKCES team to support the Resource Fair.

### **Northern Kentucky Institute for Strategic Prevention (NKISP):**

Christi Jefferds and Tai Faulkner attended the 2025 CADCA Forum in Washington, DC, attended NKY ASAP's Best Practices and Policy Committee meeting, as well as other various partnership meetings. The team held their Institute meeting where Carol Lucio from SADD presented on Empowering Youth to make Healthy Decisions and shared the many free resources available through SADD. The team participated in the NKCES Resource Fair and attended Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes (PAVe) Super Trainer training. The team is now eligible to lead trainings to certify PAVE presenters. They are currently working on developing a module on Understanding and Implementing HB 142.

### **School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma Informed Services in Schools (TISS):**

The Northern Kentucky Institute for Empowerment (NKIE) includes the School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Supports (TISS) grant work within the NKCES member districts. SBMH annual report was submitted on February 12, 2025 and highlighted the phenomenal work going on throughout the region. The TISS team continues to collaborate with other NKCES teams to embed conversations around Conditions for Success in PL offerings. The SBMH and TISS team also worked in collaboration with all NKCES teams to organize the 1st annual NKCES Resource Fair which welcomed over 40 vetted vendors to support areas of the NKCES Flywheel.

### **Learning Acceleration:**

The Learning Acceleration team collaborated with members from other NKCES teams to design session 3 of High Quality Instructional Resources training with the content-specific High Quality Instructional Resources cohort incorporating Conditions for Success. In addition, professional learning opportunities were offered regionally for Sprouting New Teachers, Kagan for EL, Adolescent Literacy Camp Tier 2 instruction, Social Studies Series, and Instructional Coaches Professional Learning Network. The Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS) also partnered with EdCamp to plan and lead a great morning of learning for over 175 educators across the region.

### **Grant Consortium Update:**

**The group reviewed grants available and underway. Due dates and grants are listed below:**

- ☐ **2-28 AED 2025** \$2,000 each for Automatic External Defibrillators.
- \$70,000 for HQIR mat ☐ **3-6 Numeracy Counts** hematics curriculum and training.
- ☐ **3-7 Connecting Kids to Coverage** \$3,000,000 over 5 years. Will help connect families to Medicaid and CHIP and may help with medicaid issues such as billing. Bellevue, Dayton, and Southgate are working toward a submission.
- ☐ **3-10 UAIP 2025** \$100,000 to \$250,000 over 2 years for urban agriculture or innovative farm production. No districts have shown interest.
- ☐ **3-18 Strategic Prevention Framework** \$250,000 to \$600,000; amount depends on population served for prevention of substance use and capacity building. The co-op is working toward a regional application.
- ☐ **4-3 Renew America's Schools** Three phases to improve energy use at schools. Phase 1: \$300,000; Phase 2: \$500,000 - \$1,000,000; Phase 3: \$7,000,000 to \$14,000,000. Fleming County has expressed interest.
- ☐ **4-14 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program -- Pathways** \$400,000 X 3 years to build youth-based response to opioids and other substance misuse/mental health issues including pathways for youth to mental health careers. Bracken County and Mason County have expressed interest in a partner grant.

### **Grants Pending**

- [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#)

- [Comprehensive Literacy](#)
- Equipment Assistance

**Regional School Programs (RSP) Update:**

- Principal Turner met virtually with Christina Green from KDE regarding alternative program meetings throughout the state.
- We are working on our KSA testing draft schedule for RSP
- RSP is working on our amended 24-25 calendar due to weather days
- RSP's AmeriCorps Coach continues to bring in career presenters for our secondary students.