

## NKCES Report – June/July 2025

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

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BEECHWOOD INDEPENDENT

BELLEVUE INDEPENDENT

BOONE COUNTY

BRACKEN COUNTY

CAMPBELL COUNTY

CARROLL COUNTY

COVINGTON INDEPENDENT

DAYTON INDEPENDENT

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

### Executive Director Update:

#### **Assistant Director of Learning & Empowerment Interviews,**

**May 30 & June 2:** In June, NKCES held a two-day interview process for the Assistant Director of Learning and Empowerment, during which each candidate participated in a single, in-depth interview with a panel of internal leaders and stakeholders. The process highlighted a strong pool of talented individuals, each bringing valuable experience and vision. Ultimately, Dr. Kim Weber was selected as the best fit for the role, recognized for her deep knowledge, leadership strengths, and alignment with NKCES's mission. She officially began serving in the position on July 1.

**NKCES Superintendent Retreat, June 11-13:** The annual Superintendent Retreat began with the June Board meeting on Wednesday evening, setting the stage for a meaningful day of learning and connection on Thursday. Dr. Razor opened the retreat with a warm welcome and a powerful message outlining her vision for the future of NKCES, grounded in our core values. Dr. Smith followed with an engaging and reflective session, exploring each superintendent's individual core values—a moment that was both insightful and energizing, deepening connections among peers. The day continued with dynamic professional learning led by Mr. William Blackford from Leader In Me, who shared impactful content on the four competencies of highly effective leadership. NKCES is proud to host this retreat annually, providing opportunities for collaboration and equipping districts with practical strategies they can carry forward into their own leadership work.

**Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, June 16:** NKCES hosted an internal Instructional Leadership Meeting focused on strengthening instructional practices, aligning support services, and fostering collaboration across teams. Staff engaged in strategic discussions, shared updates, and explored ways to enhance regional impact through cohesive, student-centered approaches.

**Telephone call with Mr. Jim Martin, Bloomboard, June 17:** Dr. Razor had a thoughtful and productive phone call with Mr. Jim Martin, Head of District Partnerships from BloomBoard to discuss the future of the partnership with NKCES. Jim will follow up with additional information to continue the conversation.

**Momentum Conference, June 18:** NKCES was a proud supporter of the Momentum Conference at STEAM Academy. This conference presented a powerful professional development opportunity. Educators participated in student-led panels, hands-on sessions around AI, arts, and competency-based learning, and networked around a shared vision of vibrant, student-centered classrooms. Momentum continues to accelerate Kentucky's shift toward deeper, more meaningful education.

**Schools To Watch National Conference, June 25-28:** Dr. Razor attended the National Conference in Washington D.C. as Co-Director of Schools To Watch in Kentucky. The National Schools to Watch Conference was a dynamic, full-scale gathering combining celebratory recognition, collaborative learning, strategic advocacy, and peer-driven innovation. Educators left energized with new tools, expanded networks, and renewed commitment to impactful middle-grade education.

**Educational Technology and AI Integration Specialist Interviews, July 1,2, & 7:** Over the course of our recent AI-focused interviews, we had the privilege of meeting with a number of highly talented and passionate candidates. The field was competitive, with each individual bringing unique strengths and a clear enthusiasm for the future of artificial intelligence in education and regional service.

One candidate in particular stood out—Mr. Clint Litzinger. His expertise and vision made a lasting impression on the interview team. We were thrilled to extend him an offer for the position. Mr. Litzinger has already brought energy and innovation to his role. We're excited to welcome him and look forward to the impact he will have as he begins serving the region in the dynamic and rapidly evolving world of AI.

**Finance Meeting, May 12:** Dr. Razor met with Finance Director Angie Perkins for their monthly finance meeting, focused on setting a strong financial foundation for the 2025–2026 school year. The discussion aligned priorities and laid the groundwork for a successful start to the new fiscal year. In addition to short-term goals, they also touched base on the sustainment plan through 2031 and future goals.

**Elevate NKY Meeting, July 8:** Dr. Smith and Dr. Razor met with Higher Education Liaison, Ms. Rachel Ball and Marketing and Social Media Coordinator, Ms. Candace Gibson to bring them up to speed on the current developments of Elevate NKY. The discussion focused on the ongoing efforts to identify a solution for automated, timely data updates to support a public-facing dashboard. This dashboard will serve as a tool to inform and engage the community by showcasing the meaningful impact Elevate NKY is making across the region.

**Bellevue Leadership Meeting, July 9-10:** It was a true pleasure to host the Bellevue Leadership Team at NKCES for their leadership meeting. The energy and collaboration shared during their time on campus were inspiring. There's a unique synergy that comes from having our districts engage directly within our space—an experience that reinforces our shared commitment to student success. The visit was a meaningful reminder of the strength and unity across our region.

**Owen County Leadership Retreat, July 9-10:** The Owen County School District held their leadership retreat at NKCES and invited members of our Learning and Empowerment Leadership team to support the refinement of their strategic plan. We are incredibly thankful to have been part of this meaningful work, which challenged our team to think deeply and contribute to a vision that will help shape the future of Owen County Schools. The two days spent with the Owen leadership team were inspiring, collaborative, and truly impactful. We are grateful for the opportunity to engage in such a purposeful partnership.

**Education Cooperative Executive Director Meeting, July 11:** Dr. Amy Razor joined the other Executive Directors, along with members of KDE, to discuss current events taking place on the educational landscape in Kentucky as a whole, as well as to report highlights from each Cooperative's region.

**Kenton County Retreat, July 15:** NKCES was honored to host the Kenton County District Leadership Team for their annual retreat. The synergy and collaboration in the room were truly inspiring to

witness. Dr. Webb and his team exemplify strong, visionary leadership, and their collective focus and commitment were evident throughout the day.

As part of the retreat, NKCES facilitated a team-building activity that brought out some friendly competition and a lot of laughter. The activity gave everyone a chance to get to know one another a little better, strengthen connections, and enjoy a fun, shared experience. By the end, the room was filled with energy, smiles, and a renewed sense of camaraderie.

**Erlanger-Elsmere Leadership Retreat, July 21-22:** We were thrilled to welcome the leadership team from Erlanger-Elsmere to NKCES. Their presence adds tremendous value to the collaborative energy we strive to foster among our member districts. It is an honor to host and engage with such dedicated educators, and we're excited to be part of the synergy that emerges when great minds come together. This is a wonderful time to build a strong rapport and explore how NKCES can support and integrate into the district's continued success in the upcoming school year.

**Kentucky Association of School Administrators Conference, July 23-25:** The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) Conference continues to be a premier event for educational leaders across the Commonwealth, and NKCES is proud to be part of such an inspiring and energizing experience. The conference provides a valuable opportunity to learn, connect, and refocus as we prepare for the upcoming school year.

Throughout the week, Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith, along with other members of the leadership team, had the opportunity to check in with many of our member districts as they held their leadership retreats during the conference. It was a pleasure to visit, offer support, and celebrate the important planning and vision work happening across our region. We are honored to walk alongside our districts and look forward to continuing our partnerships in the year ahead.

**NKCES Executive Committee Meeting, July 29:** The first NKCES Executive Committee meeting of the 2025–2026 school year kicked off with Dr. Razor expressing her excitement and momentum as we welcomed our new board president, Dr. Matt Baker, and incoming president, Superintendent Brian Robinson. With schools preparing to open in the coming weeks, the committee reviewed updated policies, procedures, and the NKCES handbook, along with revisions to the evaluation document. We're energized for another successful year of serving and supporting our districts.

**RSP Standing Committee Meeting, July 30:** The RSP Standing Committee held its first meeting of the 2025–2026 school year, led by Principal Stephanie Turner. The group reviewed program updates, including staffing, enrollment, and goals for the year. The meeting closed with plans for ongoing collaboration and future meeting dates.

### **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. We have secured a blacktop company, NKY Blacktop, to complete the project, and we have been working on a date that works for both parties, considering event scheduling and weather conditions.

### **Professional Learning (PL) Update:**

**June/July Professional Learning:** NKCES supported 116 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during June/July, serving 2,946 educators.

**Professional Learning (PL) Consortium:** The 2024.25 NKCES PL Consortium ended in April, and the dates have been set for the 2025.26 school year. These meetings are set to occur in-person from 10 am -12 pm on Aug 22, Sep 19, Oct 17, Nov 21, Jan 23, Feb 20, Mar 20, Apr 24.

**Title I & Title II Meeting:** The 2024.25 NKCES Title I/Title II Consortium ended in April and the dates have been set for the 2025.26 school year. These meetings are set to occur in person from 8 am - 930 am on Aug 22, Sep 19, Oct 17, Nov 21, Jan 23, Feb 20, Mar 20, Apr 24.

**District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting:** The 2024.25 NKCES DAC Consortium ended in April and the dates have been set for the 2025.26 school year. These meetings are set to occur virtually from 10 am -12 pm on Aug 5, Sep 16, Oct 14, Nov 18, Jan 13, Feb 17, Mar 17, Apr 14.

**Professional Learning Networks (PLNs):** PLNs provide opportunities for educators to grow professionally in collaborative environments focused on collective learning.

[2025.26 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:**

**NKCES Representation at National SELS:** NKCES proudly supported our outgoing DoSE Advisory Board Chair, Jodi Hall, as she attended the Special Education Legislative Summit (SELS) in Washington, D.C. Jodi was joined by Misti Carr, the new DoSE for Covington Independent Schools. Together, they represented Northern Kentucky with pride and purpose, advocating for students with disabilities and engaging with federal policymakers on key issues impacting special education.

**Owen County Strategic Planning Collaboration:** Regional DoSE Brittney Howell joined forces with Dr. Robb Smith, Dr. Amy Razor, Dr. Kim Webb, and Mrs. Emily Giles to lead Owen County Schools through a comprehensive strategic planning process. This work focused on refining the district's mission, vision, and core values, and ensuring alignment with their Profile of a Learner. The ultimate goal is to support systems that foster high-performing, inclusive environments, moving us closer to the NKCES vision of "creating a world yet to be."

**Conscious Discipline Institute Participation:** This summer, Emily Borchers and Annie Wheatcraft attended the Conscious Discipline Institute in Louisville, KY. This is a week-long, immersive professional learning experience designed to transform educator mindsets and practices. Conscious Discipline is an adults-first, research-based approach that promotes self-regulation, connection, and resilience. Through intensive training, Mrs. Borchers and Mrs. Wheatcraft learned strategies to foster emotional wellness, conflict resolution, and composure in both educators and students. These skills will help create safe,

supportive, and high-performing inclusive environments across NKCES districts, reinforcing our commitment to whole-child development and strong, positive relationships.

**SERTAC Summer Planning and Back-to-School Preparation:** June was a pivotal month for the SERTAC team, as consultants focused on strategic planning and coordination to prepare for an impactful start to the school year. The team developed regional and district-level trainings scheduled for July and August, ensuring schools are equipped with high-quality professional learning and resources to support inclusive practices and student success across Northern Kentucky.

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

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

In June, Joe Bertucci attended the Americans for the Arts Conference, connecting with local and national partners in support of arts education. In July, Mr. Bertucci met with district leaders from Boone and Campbell County School Districts to discuss best practices in addressing Kentucky's Academic Standards for Visual and Performing Arts. During the week of July 21-25, Mr. Bertucci led five days of professional learning for more than 180 teachers from 19 districts in a series of workshops supporting arts education and arts integration.

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

Throughout June and July, prevention efforts remained robust and collaborative. In June, NKISP submitted the Q2 Quarterly Performance Report to SAMHSA. June also brought a combined Steering Committee and NKISP Institute Meeting featuring guest speaker Stephanie Armbrister Strutner, presenting on effective partner engagement. Staff engaged with key partners—including NorthKey, CCDFA, NKY ASAP, and the American Heart Association—to plan youth programming and support regional initiatives. Additionally, final reporting was completed for the Activating Youth Voice grant, and planning is underway for two upcoming professional learning events in August focused on substance use prevention and education.

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

The SBMH and TISS teams have remained actively engaged in supporting trauma-informed practices and mental wellness across the region. This summer, the SBMH and TISS team led district leaders through participation in a book study on *Trauma-Sensitive Leadership* to deepen their understanding of creating resilient, supportive school cultures. In July, the SBMH and TISS teams, in collaboration with other NKCES departments, hosted a successful two-day regional training, "Chaos to Confidence," focused on building conditions for success in schools. The training featured three tailored pathways—for administrators, experienced teachers, and newer teachers—ensuring targeted support for all roles and serving over 50 educators. TISS and SBMH teams are now preparing for upcoming district-level trainings in August to continue strengthening trauma-informed systems and mental health supports in the 2025 school year.

#### **Learning Acceleration:**

The Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS) team launched the 2025–2026 Sprouting New Teachers cohort, welcoming 15 enthusiastic new teachers representing six districts. This cohort aims to provide targeted support, mentorship, and professional learning to early-career educators throughout the upcoming school year. In addition, the LAS team hosted a dynamic two-day Literacy Camp, serving over 30 educators who teach grades 3–12. The LAS team provided two days of regional OpenSciED training to

build capacity in high-quality science instruction. The LAS team also collaborated with other NKCES departments to support the successful Chaos to Confidence regional training in June. LAS is currently deep into planning for individualized district training set to begin in August.

### Grant Consortium Update:

#### Grants available

[KDE Community Education](#) \$20,000 with \$5,000 cash match. Due July 17. To hire a full-time community education coordinator and partner with community members to provide education in schools to any community member.

[KDE Fresh Fruits and Vegetables](#) \$50-\$75 per student. Due July 25. To provide healthy food options outside of meal service times.

[Ready4Life](#) Up to \$1,250,000 X 5 years. Due July 29. To promote healthy relationships and job and life success for high school students.

[CTE Innovation and Support](#) \$100,000. Due September 4. To support innovation in new or emerging career fields.

#### Grants Pending

- [3-7 Connecting Kids to Coverage Bellevue, Southgate, and Dayton](#)
- [3-17 Strategic Prevention Framework NKCES](#)
- [4-14 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program -- PathwaysMason and Bracken Counties](#)
- [5-5 Drug Free Communities](#) Erlanger Elsmere
- [6/18 and 6/26 School Violence Prevention Program](#) Bellevue and Owen Counties (separately)

Award announcements are expected in September.

#### Multi-District Grants in Implementation

- NK Institute for Strategic Prevention: See reports above.
- NK Institute for Arts Education: See reports above..
- Trauma Informed School Services and School Based Mental Health Services: See reports above.

#### Grant News

- Watch for the Grant Briefcase newsletter coming soon to your email inbox.
- All Grants Consortium meetings will be virtual this year.
- Open office hours began on the third Tuesday of each month, 12 to 4 at NKCES. This is an opportunity to send folks who want support on general grant information or for a particular application.

### Regional School Programs (RSP) Update:

- RSP has been working on some exciting new updates to our building, and we look forward to you seeing them as they become finished.
- RSP held a special Advisory Board Meeting on July 15th, and a District Partnership Meeting on July 30th, to review new proposed considerations and commitments for students referred to and placed at RSP.
- RSP's Leadership Team gathered in July for a retreat to connect, reflect, align, and prepare for the upcoming school year.
- RSP's first day of school for students will be August 13th, 2025.
- RSP will be doing our second annual Scorpion Stop-by to families on August 8th, 2025, to allow staff and students to reconnect, meet, and prepare for the upcoming school year.