



# Newport Independent Schools

## MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Meeting Date: September 24, 2025

Prepared by: Autumn Slankard

### I. Executive Summary

This month, I engaged in a range of professional learning, collaboration, and district support activities focused on advancing MTSS, the implementation of high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs), and staff development. Highlights include participation in statewide and regional trainings (Kentucky MTSS, District Assessment Coordinator's Consortium, and Professional Learning Consortium) and strategic planning meetings with NKCES and members of KDE to guide HQIR implementation and our MTSS system. I collaborated with school leaders on initiatives such as MTSS planning, i-Ready data analysis, and professional growth planning. Additionally, I launched our instructional coaches' professional learning community, attended outreach programming at NKU to bring new resources into our schools, and maintained ongoing weekly collaboration with Dr. Hemmerle regarding our English Language Learner and Gifted and Talented programs.

### II. Key Updates & Highlights

#### A. Instruction & Academic Achievement

##### - Multi-Tiered System of Support

All schools have completed i-Ready testing, and Newport High School has gained access to CERT (College Equipped Readiness Tool) for their fall diagnostic assessment for grades 9-12. At Newport Primary and Intermediate Schools, the MTSS system remains focused on grouping students by targeted need and providing instruction accordingly. Despite having fewer staff members than in previous years, both schools continue to demonstrate creativity and dedication in meeting the needs of all students. At the high school level, I collaborated with the instructional coach to develop a system for analyzing i-Ready data and addressing targeted areas during intervention and extension ("What I Need") time in grades 7-8. The urgency to respond to student performance created challenges in implementation, including teacher buy-in and confusion with student placement. The NHS leadership team and I reflected through the lens of Kotter's Change Model and identified opportunities to strengthen the early stages of building readiness for change. Moving forward, NHS will address these steps in upcoming faculty meetings, with a focus on clear, consistent communication and intentional alignment with the framework. My ongoing goal is to support the leadership team by building capacity,

providing guidance, and ensuring they have the autonomy to make decisions that best serve their students. The focus of this will be to build coherence in the academic system.

#### - HQIR Implementation

The Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES) has committed to supporting the district in the development and implementation of a comprehensive, long-term plan for HQIR implementation. This initiative will integrate teacher leaders and administrative teams into a structured process to ensure alignment, fidelity of implementation, and measurable impact on student learning outcomes. The partnership establishes a sustainable framework designed to strengthen instructional practices, provide ongoing accountability, and create leadership opportunities for our teachers. The focus of this will be to build consistency in academic instruction in our classrooms.

### **B. College Entrance Exam**

Commissioner of Education Robbie Fletcher has advised that, although the protest regarding the transition from the ACT to the SAT remains unresolved, districts should proceed with preparations for junior students to take the SAT in the spring. He noted that resolution of the protest could take up to eight weeks. During the recent regional DAC Consortium, a reference document was developed to provide districts with an overview of which assessments other districts in the region plan to administer, at which grade levels, and in which testing windows. For example, one district is planning to offer an optional ACT after the SAT is administered to students who would like to continue on that track of the college entrance exam. This resource will be utilized to help guide decision-making as the district moves forward with assessment planning.

### **C. KyCL25 Grant**

KDE has advised that the federal government has awarded Kentucky year 2 funds for the grant. Those funds will be available on October 1 and must be spent by September 30, 2026. The KyCL25 grant states that we must have an ongoing professional-learning partner to be compliant with the grant guidelines. I have obtained a quote from a professional learning partner (TNTP) that has been vetted using the Rivet Professional Learning Partner Guide and am going through the negotiation process regarding the cost of the services. My goal is to have a contract signed with a reasonable financial commitment by October 1. I would like for this year's professional learning to be highly focused on building the capacity of our leadership teams to support quality reading and writing instruction. NKCES is going through the process of becoming Rivet certified so that they will be able to be our professional learning partner next year and we will be able to use more funds from the grant for other needs.

### **D. Gifted and Talented, English Language Learner programming**

Dr. Melissa Hemmerle has been working diligently to further our GT and ELL programs. She has asked to inform the board by creating her own report. Please see her report beginning on page 5.

### III. Strategic Priorities

#### - The Opportunity Makers

In preparing for the year ahead, I have focused on *The Opportunity Makers* by The New Teacher Project. The report explains that schools can change students' trajectories by catching up students who are behind grade-level at a rate of 1.3 years of growth each year. The schools and data studied found three commonalities in trajectory-changing schools, regardless of demographic and socioeconomic factors: belonging, consistency, and coherence.

Our schools are already strong in creating a sense of belonging for students, and the next step will be extending that same commitment to families in the academic space. To strengthen consistency, our goal is to ensure HQIRs are implemented with fidelity, though additional training and support will be necessary. Finally, building coherence will be critical in ensuring that academic, social, and behavioral efforts are not siloed, but instead integrated into clear, unified goals that support the whole child. These three priorities will guide my leadership and collaboration with staff throughout the year.

### IV. Upcoming Priorities & Next Steps

#### -Excellence for Everybody

House Bill 190 states that no later than December 1, 2025, each local board of education shall adopt a district plan establishing clear policies on the promotion of advanced coursework or accelerated learning in language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science by grade level for students in grades 4 – 12. HB 190 provides an opportunity to align existing board policies and current practices into a unified system that addresses the full spectrum of student needs. This approach ensures that the district does not focus solely on students who require remediation but also provides intentional pathways for those performing at grade level and those excelling who need access to advanced coursework. A coherent framework of this kind would create clarity, coherence, and direction in ensuring that every child is both supported and appropriately challenged.

#### -Systems Analysis

As our buildings are in different steps in the processes of implementation of HQIRs, managing MTSS systems, and creating a climate for learning, continuous data analysis will be vital to measure success. The purpose of the data analyzation will be to analyze system success. At each building, it's also important that we build leadership opportunities for our teachers to have voice in the forward direction of our schools. Creating voluntary task teams that meet during some faculty meetings focused on HQIR implementation, MTSS systems, and Culture & Climate is a suggestion from NKCES that I will be encouraging administrative teams to follow. I also plan

to create a reading and math coalition that will include various stakeholders. However, I will be more mindful on using Kotter's Change Model when creating these teams.

Meeting Date: September 24, 2025

Prepared by: Dr. Melissa Hemmerle, District ELL & Gifted/Talented Coordinator

## I. Executive Summary

This month, significant progress has been made in both the Ignite Gifted & Talented (GT) Program and the English Language Learners (ELL) Program. In Gifted and Talented, identification processes have expanded, nominations have increased, and programming opportunities are growing, including leadership-focused enrichment events. In the ELL Program, services have been strengthened through the completion of Program Services Plans, newcomer support, professional learning, and expanded family engagement efforts. Both programs are focused on equity, ensuring that students across the district have access to enrichment, targeted instruction, and the supports necessary for academic growth and success.

## II. Gifted and Talented – Ignite GT Program

### A. Enrollments & Identifications

Newport is currently serving **27 identified students**, including **9 students in the Talent Pool**. Our goal is to identify all students across the district who demonstrate gifted and talented potential.

### B. Nominations

- **80 nominations** received so far for the Talent Pool.
- Guardians have been notified, and teachers are gathering evidence.
- Nominations are open to teachers, parents, peers, and the community.

### C. Screening

- 4th graders will complete the **CogAT screener** in October.

### D. Instructional Services

- **K–2:** Monthly project-based learning sessions.
- **Grades 3–6:** Differentiated enrichment projects emphasizing leadership and critical thinking.
- **Grades 7–12:** Advanced enrichment, peer mentoring, and independent research projects.

### E. Leadership Events and Opportunities

- **Magnify Giving Leadership Conference** – October 22.
- **Anthony Muñoz Foundation Conference** – October 29.

### F. Collaboration

- Partnership with **21st Century Programs** to offer the **Young Women Lead (YWL) Club** at the high school. YWL is an **evidence-based leadership program** that empowers students to apply their skills and share messages of empowerment with peers.
- Collaboration with the High School team to nominate students for the Governor’s Scholar Program.

## G. Communication

Dr. Hemmerle is working on a **GT information link** on the district website to provide resources for guardians, teachers, and community members.

## III. English Language Learner (ELL) Program

### A. Enrollment & Growth

- Serving **175 English Language Learners** across the district.
- **47 students** are in **Progress Monitoring** after meeting exit criteria, but requiring four years of follow-up.
- **20 newcomers** enrolled at the high school from Guatemala, Venezuela, Mexico, Haiti, and Peru. They receive one period of ESL Strategies and direct English instruction at the end of the day.
- 4 languages and 2 dialects are spoken among our English Learner Students: Spanish, Arabic, French Creole, Panjabi, Mam, and Quiche.

### B. Program Services Plan (PSPs)

- Completed for all EL students.
- Teacher and principal signatures in progress.
- Parent/guardian signatures will be gathered during **Heritage Night** on September 25.

### C. Instructional Models

Combination of **pull-out, push-in, and newcomer supports** depending on student proficiency.

### D. Professional Learning

EL teachers attend **monthly NKCES EL PLNs** and participate in ongoing professional development.

### E. Assessment

- All EL students will take the **WIDA MODEL** twice yearly as an additional data point.
- Students will continue to take the **WIDA ACCESS test** each January.

### F. Collaboration

- The ELL Department is partnering with **FRYSC, NSTEP, 21st Century**, and the Hispanic community to strengthen family engagement and support district events.
- The ELL program was proudly represented in the Homecoming Parade, welcoming families and celebrating the rich diversity of our district.

## G. Communication

Dr. Hemmerle is working on an **ELL information link** on the district website to provide resources for guardians, teachers, and community members.

## H. Family Engagement

**Heritage Night** will provide a key opportunity for families to connect with schools, celebrate culture, and engage in student success. Two more events are scheduled.

## III. Upcoming Priorities & Next Steps

### A. Gifted and Talented

- Continue identifying students for the Talent Pool and GT Program.
- Prepare for CogAT screening in October.
- Showcase student work and expand family communication efforts.

### B. English Language Learners

- Collect signatures for PSPs and finalize documentation.
- Administer the fall WIDA MODEL assessment.
- Continue building staff capacity through professional learning.
- Expand family engagement opportunities in collaboration with district and community partners.