

# NKCES Report – September 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

voices are essential in ensuring that educators are equipped and supported so they can continue serving students effectively.

## Executive Director Update:

**Executive Committee Meeting, September 2:** The NKCES Executive Committee met to prepare for the September 10 Board Meeting, highlighting NKCES's growing national presence and ongoing regional impact. Updates included a monthly SERTAC report from Brittney Howell, the introduction of new staff member Dr. Kim Weber, and plans for a teacher feedback session on September 8 in partnership with the Lt. Governor's Office. The committee also discussed increased collaboration requests from KDE, and celebrated NKCES's upcoming Best Practice Award at the Continuous Assessment Conference for its work with sprout boxes.

**Procurement Meeting, September 3:** In a recent procurement check-in, Mr. Mike Wilson shared updates on adding several nonprofit organizations to the bid list, provided details on the current rebate, and offered ideas for growing it. He also noted that he is scheduling meetings with local districts to discuss procurement practices and how NKCES can support them through this process.

**NKCES Team Retreat, September 4 & 5:** Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith created an inspiring atmosphere at the American Sign Museum, providing the perfect backdrop for team building, reflection, and visioning. Dr. Razor guided the team through a refresher on the sustainment plan and shared insights on the current grants climate, while Dr. Smith led engaging team-building activities that highlighted individual strengths and reinforced the power of working together as a team.

**Instructional Leadership Team Meeting, September 8:** Dr. Smith led the recent internal instructional leadership meeting, which included important SERTAC updates and a focus on ensuring all groups remain in alignment. The team also revisited the strategic plan to confirm current initiatives are supporting long-term goals and discussed preparations for the upcoming professional consortium meeting. The session emphasized the importance of collaboration, alignment, and strategic reflection across leadership teams.

**Educator Mental Health Listening Session, September 8:** NKCES was honored to host Lt. Governor Jacqueline Coleman for an educator listening session focused on mental health. The session brought together incredible educators who shared their experiences and perspectives, offering valuable insights to support ongoing improvements in addressing mental health needs. Their

**Superintendent Webcast, September 9:** Dr. Razor, along with leaders from across the state, joined the virtual meeting to stay informed on important updates from the Education Commissioner and his staff.

**NKCES Board of Directors Meeting, September 10:** NKCES was thrilled to host another well-attended Board Meeting on September 10. While there were no voting items this month, there was much to celebrate and discuss. Dr. Smith, along with our Learning and Empowerment Leaders, highlighted several upcoming national presentations that NKCES will be leading, along with the honor of receiving the Best Practice Award at the Continuous Improvement Summit for our sprout box work. Ms. Brittney Howell, Regional Director of Special Education, also provided an overview of the Annual Determinations. The meeting was engaging and full of meaningful discussion.

**Education Cooperative Executive Director Monthly Meeting with KDE, September 12:** Dr. Razor, along with the other Education Cooperative Executive Directors from across the state, joins the virtual meeting with KDE to keep informed on KDE initiatives.

**Arts Budget Meeting, September 12:** Dr. Razor met with key stakeholders to review the arts grant budget in light of the recent news that the grant will prematurely end on September 30. The team carefully reviewed expenditures to ensure alignment and confirm that all spending has been completed appropriately.

**Synergy Team Meeting, September 15:** Each month, Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith meet with the leadership team to hear department reports and review the RACI chart, ensuring major initiatives are progressing on time with the right team members engaged. The team also revisits the NKCES mission and vision, keeping them at the center of every decision and action.

**RSP Advisory Meeting, September 16:** At the RSP Advisory Meeting on September 16, Principal Turner provided district updates and facilitated discussion around current district needs. A highlight of the meeting was the unveiling of the new RSP logo. The refreshed branding emphasizes RSP as the *right stop* for students—a place of opportunity and growth.

**Virtual Executive Committee Meeting, September 18:** Dr. Razor hosted the Executive Committee virtually due to the quick turnaround between meetings. The time together was valuable and provided an opportunity to share important updates and next steps. She informed the committee that the current arts grant will come to an early close on September 30 and noted that NKCES has submitted four new grant applications, with decisions expected on the same date. The committee also reviewed the requested changes for the ElevateNKY dashboard. Everyone is excited about the work that has led to a strong collective tool for our region.

**National Schools To Watch Townhall, September 19:** Dr. Smith and Dr. Razor, as co-directors, attended the National Schools to Watch Town Hall. During the virtual session, they shared Kentucky highlights and engaged in a national dialogue centered on strengthening middle school learning. Their contributions emphasized collaboration and the exchange of ideas to support student success nationwide.

**PL Consortium Meeting, September 19:** At the PL Consortium Meeting on September 19, Mr. Nolan Marx shared updates on resources and trainings designed to support district work. The meeting also spotlighted upcoming NKCES professional learning opportunities and provided dedicated time for districts to collaborate, exchange ideas, and strengthen each other's learning.

**Continuous Improvement Summit, September 22-23:** At the Continuous Improvement Summit on September 22–23, the NKCES Team was recognized with an award, highlighting their commitment to

supporting teachers. The team also led a well-attended session and connected with partner districts throughout the summit. It was a valuable time of growth and collaboration, strengthening relationships and shared learning across the state.

### **Facilities:**

**Building Update:** The landscaping in front of the building is now complete! Due to the recent rain, the hill could not be smoothed and seeded as planned. This work will be completed later this week or early next week, depending on the weather.

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

**September Professional Learning:** NKCES supported 117 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during September, serving 1,922 educators.

**Professional Learning (PL) Consortium:** The 25.26 NKCES PL Consortium continued in September with a collaborative meeting. Topics included NKCES [Instructional Team Reports](#) given by IDEA - Brittney Howell and Learning & Empowerment - Mrs. Emily Giles and Dr. Kim Weber, Instructional spotlight: Mr. Nolan Marx - Franklin Covey, [District Request Form](#), and planning for the monthly district share-outs. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**Title I & Title II Meeting:** The 25.26 NKCES Title I/Title II Consortium continued in September with a collaborative meeting. Topics included [Declaration of Participation](#) (deadline - Nov. 17), [Comparability Report](#) (Nov. 3), and Family Friendly District. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting:** The 25.26 NKCES DAC Consortium continued in September with a collaborative meeting. Topics included K Screen/Brigance Updates, Assessment & Accountability Data, Alternate Assessment, WIDA ACCESS & Alternate ACCESS, College Admissions Exam Update, and [Scott Trimble Workshop - October 27th and 28th](#). 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.

[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:**

**Hosting and Partnerships:** This month, NKCES was proud to host and partner with KDE's Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) for the Beginning of Year (BOY) meeting. This collaboration provided our region's leaders with updates on state priorities, compliance, and best practices to guide the start of the school year. The partnership reflects our shared commitment to ensuring every district is well-prepared and supported as they serve students with diverse needs.

**Directors of Special Education (DoSE) Meeting:** In September, we held our second regional DoSE meeting of the school year, which included a special Book Fair for Directors. Each DoSE selected two professional

books for their own growth and one additional title to give to another leader in their district. This initiative highlights our commitment to fostering continuous professional learning, spreading knowledge, and building a culture of shared resources across districts.

**Mrs. Kimberly Snowball** launched our Eriksens Early Math Collaborative (EEMC) Cadre 3 with enthusiastic preschool teacher feedback, underscoring the value of engaging, math-focused professional learning. In parallel, Regional Instructional Coaches are deepening their practice by connecting with both new and veteran teachers through Jim Knight's work, *Better Conversations*, as well as Robert Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching book* study. NKCES continues to support districts in strengthening collaboration structures between General Education and Special Education teachers, leveraging Anne Beninghof's *IEP Goals at a Glance* structures. Together, these efforts are fostering stronger instructional practices and more effective, inclusive learning environments across the region.

In addition to several classroom observations and coaching sessions already this month, **Mrs. Amanda Bell** had the opportunity to meet with teachers and collaborate with our Unified Champion Schools partners. Together, they are organizing the regional Bocce Ball tournament that will bring together several of our regional high school MSD classrooms in November. This event is not just about competition, it's about fostering inclusion, building community, and giving our students a chance to shine in a new way.

**Assistive Technology Support – September 2025** During September, Mrs. Barb Wietlisbach provided assistive technology (AT) consultation to multiple school districts, supporting both staff and students with their AT needs. She also planned and will lead the first Assistive Technology Professional Learning Network (AT PLN) meeting of the school year, scheduled for September 25, 2025. In addition, she assisted a district staff member in connecting with the Kentucky Department of Education to address a question regarding the purchase of AT equipment through the school-based Medicaid program.

**District and Regional Support from Emily Borchers** consisted of providing district-level coaching, collaborating with educators in a PLC to refine instructional practices and align supports to district goals. She participated in statewide professional learning through the OSEEL Beginning of Year Training and the Weatherly Review, ensuring NKCES remains connected to best practices in special education. A key highlight was leading the first session of the Regional IEP Training series, which strengthened educator capacity to write and implement high-quality, compliant IEPs. Emily also advanced family and community engagement by supporting the first Parent Council meeting as part of the RIAC action plan—reinforcing NKCES's commitment to strong school-family partnerships that benefit all learners.

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

**Northern Kentucky Institute for Arts Education (NKIAE):** In September, Joe Bertucci provided information and support to the thirty schools in the Arts In Mind program. Mr. Bertucci also shared strategies and resources at the Instructional Coach PLN and led regional PLN meetings for both visual and performing arts teachers and teachers integrating the arts with other subjects. Mr. Bertucci finalized thirty-two new videos supporting K-12 arts instruction, sharing them on YouTube and our website, and he contributed resources to the upcoming Sproutbox.

**Northern Kentucky Institute for Strategic Prevention (NKISP):** Planning for the 2025 NKY Youth Summit continued with leadership transitioning to NKCES staff Rachel Ball and Brian Brentlinger. The Summit is scheduled for October 28, 2025, and counselors were invited to register ten students each. Quarter Progress Report (QPR) 3 was submitted, revised, and resubmitted. QPR 4 will follow after approval. Red

Ribbon Week materials have arrived and will be disseminated across the region. September 30, 2025 serves as the ending date of the Strategic Prevention Grant.

**School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Services (TISS):** In September, NKCES advanced regional collaboration and innovation through key initiatives. Highlights include the SBMH/TISS Coalition's continued work with districts on sustaining social-emotional learning and mental health initiatives in districts; elevated regional visibility at the Kentucky School Counselors Conference, where the SBMH team showcased district work and hosted a popular "water bar" at the NKCES booth. Additionally, notification of the TISS Annual Award for the 2025–2026 school year was received—underscoring the impact of these collective efforts.

**Learning Acceleration:** In September, the Learning and Acceleration Specialists (LAS) kicked off both the Numeracy Counts CEO and LETRS Phase IV CEO programs, serving nearly 90 educators from across the region to actively engage in these professional learning opportunities while working towards a rank change. In addition, the Learning Acceleration team submitted a proposal for a new Mental Health CEO program, *Strong Schools*, to the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB). This innovative initiative is designed to support P–12 teachers and counselors by equipping them with tools and strategies to strengthen student mental health and well-being while earning a rank change. The LAS team also worked to kick off the HQIR Administrators cadre, which supported work across 6 districts, along with the kick-off of the Instructional Coaches PLN, which supported work in 5 districts. September also featured the launch of 2025-2026 Sproutboxes, which highlighted innovative instructional practices in the areas of Arts, Prevention, Artificial Intelligence, and Ownership of Learning. These boxes were a tremendous success, reaching 175 educators across 21 districts and sparking meaningful conversations, and equipping educators with instructional tools and resources.

### Grant Consortium Update:

#### **Grants available**

- [11-20 CTE Innovation and Support Grant](#)
- [Chocolate History](#)
- [Fruits and Vegetables Round 2](#)
- [STOP School Violence](#)
- [Community and Schools Youth Drug Use Prevention Program](#)
- [Youth Organizing](#)
- [Building Bright Futures](#)
- [Strategies to Support Youth Exposed to Violence](#)
- [Mentoring for Children Affected by Opioid or Other Substance Abuse](#)
- [Read to Achieve](#)

#### **Grants Pending**

- [3-17 Strategic Prevention Framework](#) (all NKCES)
- [4-14 Rural Communities Opioid Response Program -- Pathways](#) (Bracken and Mason Counties)
- [5-5 Drug Free Communities](#) (Erlanger-Elsmere)
- [2 Arts in Mind 2.0 Logic Model.pdf](#) (all NKCES)
- [Interact for Health Safe and Supportive Spaces](#) (Bracken, Grant, and Pendleton Counties and Williamstown)
- [9-8 Rural Changemaker](#) (Bracken County)

Award announcements are expected later this month.

### **Multi-District Grants in Implementation**

- NK Institute for Strategic Prevention ended as of August 31. Materials for Red Ribbon Week are available and will be distributed to schools over the next month.
- NK Institute for Arts Education received a notification that the final year (that begins October 1) will not be awarded.
- Trauma Informed School Services and School Based Mental Health Services Emily Giles shared information about these grants, including the schedule for schools to send invoices to NKCES for relevant reimbursement. Both will receive continuation funding.

### **Grant Tips and News**

- Custom Chat GPT for Grant Search Mr. Clint Litzinger has designed this search tool for grants available for schools in Kentucky (and we included Ohio to capture Greater Cincinnati funding). We are looking for feedback to refine it so it can clearly serve your schools' needs. Please reach out to Vicki or Clint at NKCES with ideas or suggestions.
- Affiliated Nonprofit survey. Please complete this very brief survey to let the Grants Consortium know if your district has a 501 (c)(3) partner for grants.
- Opioid Abatement Advisory Symposium Oct. 12-14 Louisville October. Mrs. Dansberry will attend this meeting to see how schools can benefit from this funding. Please join if possible!
- Newsletters will be coming out focused on grant searching.

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

- RSP and NKU are continuing the partnership for NKU students to be embedded into our classrooms for hands-on learning and experiences. They had their first class with us on 9/12/25. They will also be hosting a fall festival for our students in late October.
- RSP's Advisory Board had its first meeting on September 16, where members were able to share in our excitement for our new logo and branding.
- RSP applied for the Alternative Education Program of Distinction, and we were notified on 9/15 that we were selected for the next step in the process, which is a site visit that will occur on October 23rd from 8:00 am to 10:30 am. We are looking forward to showcasing our program to the committee.
- RSP's Standing Committee will meet on October 8th for its first meeting of the school year.