



Newport Independent Schools

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Meeting Date: November 19, 2025

Prepared by: Autumn Slankard

I. Executive Summary

This month, I engaged in instructional walks, professional learning, and strategic planning efforts aligned to strengthening multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), advancing the implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIMs), and supporting districtwide instructional coherence. I remain intentional about maintaining a narrow and aligned focus for all academic initiatives, grounded in three goals: consistency in instruction through the use of HQIMs, coherence through clear systems that guide without being restrictive, and belonging by meaningfully engaging families in our academic vision. Much of this month's work concentrated on building consistency, and while some initiatives remain in development, structured plans for thoughtful implementation are underway. I am also looking forward to meeting with the District Literacy Team in December to create a unified literacy vision that aligns with our district priorities.

II. Key Updates & Highlights

A. Instruction & Academic Achievement

- Instructional Rounds and School Support

We completed our third and final instructional round at Newport Primary School, with a focus on direct instruction and differentiated practices. Instructional rounds pair teachers with district colleagues to observe specific instructional skills and calibrate their feedback, building shared understanding of effective teaching. The next step after the observations is to partner with building leaders to develop professional learning plans that strengthen the observed practices across the school.

At Newport Intermediate School, I used insights from the rounds to work with administrators on establishing three teacher-led committees aligned to our goals: high-quality instructional material implementation (consistency), multi-tiered systems of support (coherence), and culture (belonging). I provided guidance on each committee's purpose and scope, so their work directly contributes to the focused goals. This work will begin in December and will offer meaningful leadership opportunities for teachers as we continue growing our instructional systems. Strengthening the professional-learning planning phase of rounds will be my key area of improvement during our next instructional-round cycle, scheduled for the week of December 1.

- Assessment and Accountability

I attended SAT training at Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES), where representatives from KDE and College Board provided updated guidance for districts as we prepare for the transition to the SAT. I also participated in the regional meeting at NKCES centered around local accountability, where KDE shared early insights on potential shifts to the state accountability model. This information will guide our ongoing work to align assessment practices and revisit our Portrait of a Learner to ensure it reflects future expectations.

B. Strategic Planning & Districtwide Initiatives

-Portrait of a Learner revision

I met with representatives from KDE and UK Next Gen to review next steps in revising our district's Portrait of a Learner. This work will center on gathering authentic community input, so the final product reflects Newport's values and serves as a shared academic vision.

-Instructional Coherence & Leadership Support

The most recent instructional coaches' meeting clarified instructional expectations across buildings and began coordinating systems for stronger coherence. This work is foundational to creating districtwide structures that provide clear guidance for schools while preserving building-level autonomy.

C. Partnerships & Collaboration

-NKCES Coaching Walkthroughs

Newport Intermediate School hosted NKCES for instructional walkthroughs as part of their RIVET coaching certification. Their feedback was aligned with our district's priorities, and they provided actionable next steps. NKCES has demonstrated a strong commitment to guiding our long-term instructional work, and we are collaborating on a structured support plan.

-Regional & District Partnerships

Dr. Hemmerle and I met with Ludlow's Director of Student Support to discuss gifted and talented services and to ensure our identified students have access to appropriate advanced coursework. I also met with representatives from the Gear Up grant to better understand how their programming can support students' postsecondary readiness. Additionally, I reviewed the Footsteps2Brilliance early literacy platform with a representative from the app and EducateNKY to explore integration opportunities with our schools and Read Ready Newport, as well as family engagement efforts.

III. Strategic Priorities

- Consistency: strengthen fidelity of HQIM use and increase alignment in instructional practices across classrooms and buildings.

- Coherence: build districtwide systems for instruction and intervention that are clear, supportive, and successful across schools while maintaining building-level autonomy.
- Belonging: expand family engagement and incorporate community voice in shaping our Portrait of a Learner and literacy vision.

All initiatives and planning efforts are intentionally aligned to these three priorities, ensuring that our work remains focused, manageable, and directionally unified.

IV. Upcoming Priorities & Next Steps

- Convene the District Literacy Team in December to establish a shared literacy vision for Newport.
- Advance community-engaged development of the Portrait of a Learner through partnership with KDE and UK Next Gen.
- Strengthen the professional learning design phase during the next instructional rounds cycle.
- Support buildings in implementing NKCES recommendations.
- Prepare for SAT administration.
- Continue building districtwide systems that enhance instructional coherence and support staff development.

Meeting Date: November 19, 2025

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

I. Executive Summary

The English Language Learners (ELL) and Ignite Gifted & Talented (GT) programs continue to make progress toward their shared goals of advancing academic excellence for all students. Both programs have transitioned from planning to implementation, with ongoing assessments and identification processes underway. As we transition between GT teachers, recent collaboration with a regional partner has given us a clearer understanding of how our district is already providing required opportunities for gifted learners, including advanced coursework and cluster grouping, while also identifying areas where we can continue to strengthen services. This deeper clarity will guide our next steps in ensuring that gifted students receive appropriately challenging and engaging learning experiences. We are still actively seeking a GT teacher.

The ELL department has completed WIDA MODEL testing and is preparing for the upcoming WIDA ACCESS assessment. In contrast the GT program has completed initiation CoGAT screening and is now in the post-screener phase for student identification. Collaboration and data-driven decision-making remain central to both programs' efforts to support students' academic and language growth.

II. Key Updates & Highlights

A. English Language Learners/Multilingual Program

- **WIDA MODEL Testing:**

The WIDA MODEL benchmark testing window has been completed districtwide. The ELL department is now awaiting official score reports. Once scores are available, the department will meet to analyze results and use the data to guide instruction, update Program Services Plans (PSPs), and determine areas for targeted language development support.

- **WIDA ACCESS for ELLs:**

The WIDA ACCESS testing window, which measures annual English language proficiency, will open on January 5, 2026, and close on February 13, 2026. The ACCESS results will be used for both state reporting and instructional planning to measure student growth across all four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

- **Professional Learning:**

All multilingual teachers participated in the WIDA Annual Conference Virtual Track on October 27 and October 28th, which provided a full day of live sessions, a virtual keynote, and post-conference access to instructional resources.

- **Collaboration and Capacity Building:**

Multilingual teachers continue to implement collaboration "orders" from the Collaboration Menu, a menu-style system allowing teachers to request tailored supports, from vocabulary

instruction to co-teaching strategies. This initiative has significantly increased collaboration between the ELL department and general education teachers.

- **Family and Community Engagement:**

The district's Heritage Night for Multilingual Families, held on September 25, was a great success with high attendance. Families connected with community organizations such as Esperanza Latino Center, St. Elizabeth Health Services, Fiesta, and Brighton Center. The event was planned in collaboration with FRYSC and McKinney-Vento, promoting a strong sense of community partnership.

- **Communication:**

The ELL webpage is live and accessible under the Curriculum Department tab on the district website. It provides detailed information about ELL identification, services, family resources, and community partnerships.

B. Ignite Gifted & Talented (GT) Program

- **CogAT Screening and Identification:**

The CogAT Screener for all 4th-grade students has been completed. Post-screener assessments will take place next week for students who met the criteria on the initial screener. These results will serve as one of the three required pieces of evidence for GT identification in General Intellectual Ability.

- **Talent Pool Identification:**

The Talent Pool Committee members at Newport Primary and Newport Intermediate will meet to analyze teacher nominations, student data, and supporting evidence to identify students for placement in the district's Talent Pool. Additionally, screening for students in grades 5–12 will be conducted as needed based on new teacher or parent nominations to ensure equitable access for all advanced learners.

- **Pilot Google Classrooms for Advanced and Talent Pool Students:**

Dr. Hemmerle has created a pilot Google Classroom for each grade level, designed for both advanced students and Talent Pool students. These virtual classrooms provide access to enrichment activities in language arts, math, science, social studies, and STEM. The goal is to ensure that all advanced learners have ongoing opportunities for challenge and growth beyond the classroom curriculum. All activities are aligned with the Kentucky Academic Standards and include both grade-level and higher-level content to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Next steps are to introduce this model to instructional coaches and provide training on the steps students will need to take to access the material.

- **New STEM Resource – 3D Printer Donation:**

The Ignite GT Program recently received a 3D printer thanks to an anonymous donor through DonorsChoose. This new resource will be used to introduce students to design thinking, spatial reasoning, and real-world problem-solving through hands-on STEM projects. Students will learn how to design and prototype 3D models, applying concepts from mathematics, engineering, and technology to bring their ideas to life. The 3D printer will also support cross-curricular enrichment projects in science and art, encouraging creativity and innovation. This donation marks a major step in expanding the district's STEM and makerspace.

opportunities for Gifted & Talented students and will serve as a model for integrating 21st-century skills into advanced learning.

- **Legislative Update – House Bill 190:**

Dr. Hemmerle attended the Gifted Coordinators' Zoom session hosted by Western Kentucky University's Center for Gifted Studies on October 20, which focused on House Bill 190. This legislation requires each Kentucky school district to submit a plan for offering advanced courses for grades 4–12 by December 1. The information gathered from this session is helping shape Newport's Advanced Coursework Plan to ensure equitable access for all students.

- **Staffing Update:**

The search for a Gifted and Talented teacher is ongoing. The district is currently collaborating with Ludlow Independent Schools to explore shared-service options or joint programming opportunities to ensure continuity of support for GT students during this period, as well as advance our own expertise in the GT program and processes. In the meantime, Dr. Borges and Ms. Parr continue providing enrichment opportunities and advanced IXL assignments for middle school students demonstrating advanced learning needs.

- **Communication:**

The GT webpage is live under the Curriculum Department tab on the district website. It includes details about identification procedures, the Talent Pool process, service delivery models, and family resources.

C. Upcoming Priorities and Next Steps

- **English Language Learners**
 - Review and analyze WIDA MODEL data to inform instruction.
 - Prepare for WIDA ACCESS testing (January 5-February 13).
 - Continue implementing Collaboration Menu requests and follow-up coaching.
 - Expand outreach through multilingual family events and partnerships.
- **Gifted & Talented**
 - Administer post-screener CogAt and TerraNova assessments and review data.
 - Conduct Talent Pool Committee meetings for NPS and NIS.
 - Continue GT teacher recruitment and exploring regional partnerships.
 - Expand the Talent Pool and Advanced Learner Google Classrooms to support enrichment and advanced learning.