

NKCES Report – January 2026

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

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:

NKCES Team Meeting, January 5: NKCES held its first team meeting of the new year, focusing on reflection and goal-setting, both individually and collectively. The meeting began with a pulse check that provided an opportunity to celebrate accomplishments, share key updates, and strengthen collaboration across the team. Time was also dedicated to developing department commitments, including identifying shared priorities and setting goals to support continued progress. The meeting concluded with reflections from the Executive Director, offering perspective, appreciation, and clear direction as the organization moves forward.

Executive Board Meeting, January 6: Dr. Amy Razor met with the Executive Committee to review and discuss the January Board agenda, focusing on key topics, priorities, and supporting materials to ensure alignment and readiness for the upcoming Board meeting. The discussion allowed members to clarify objectives, address questions, and confirm next steps in support of informed decision-making. While there were no new business items on the agenda, meaningful dialogue took place as the legislative session began in Frankfort, and budget planning for the upcoming fiscal year is well underway.

Instructional Team Meeting, January 7: Dr. Razor attended Dr. Robb Smith's monthly Instructional Team meeting, where the team shared report-outs on budget expenditures, instructional offerings, and future planning efforts. The discussion focused on ensuring continued growth and innovation in order to exceed the expectations of the districts we serve.

Munetrix Virtual Training, January 7: Dr. Razor and several members of the leadership team participated in a virtual training session for Munetrix, a web-based information platform designed to provide clear, accessible insight into financial data for public school systems. The training focused on navigating the platform, understanding available reports, and exploring how the data can support informed decision-making, financial transparency, and strategic planning. The session also allowed participants to ask questions and discuss practical applications relevant to NKCES and the districts it serves.

Intellispark Meeting, January 8: At Intellispark's request, Dr. Razor and the Learning and Empowerment Assistant Directors joined a virtual meeting to learn more about Intellispark's work and explore potential future collaboration. The discussion centered on understanding Intellispark's services, areas of expertise, and alignment with NKCES priorities, with an emphasis on identifying opportunities for partnership moving forward.

KDE Call with Coop Directors, January 9: Dr. Razor, along with the other Education Cooperative Executive Directors from across the state, participated in a virtual meeting with KDE to stay informed

about KDE initiatives. The Commissioner continues to express his sincere appreciation for the support and partnership with cooperatives.

School-Based Mental Health Grant, budget meeting, January 9: Dr. Razor participated in a budget planning meeting held to review the School-Based Mental Health Grant and discuss strategies for maximizing the remaining funds prior to the grant's conclusion in 2026. The discussion focused on current expenditures, projected needs, and opportunities to strengthen and sustain services for students and schools during the remaining grant period. Emphasis was placed on thoughtful planning to ensure the grant continues to have a meaningful impact and supports long-term mental health initiatives.

NKCES Synergy Meeting, January 12: Each month, Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith meet with the leadership team to hear department reports and review the Responsible Accountable Consulted Informed (RACI) chart, ensuring that major initiatives are progressing on time and that the right team members are engaged. The team also revisits the NKCES mission and vision, keeping them at the center of every decision and action.

Dan Ginn Meeting, January 13: At the board's request, Dr. Razor met with Mr. Ginn to discuss the possibilities of serving the region. In his new role as Director, Educational Partnerships, Mr. Ginn is seeking input to develop connections and services for NKY.

NKCES Board Meeting, January 14: Dr. Razor, alongside Board President Dr. Matt Baker, led the January NKCES Board of Directors meeting, which highlighted innovative learning opportunities and continued support for our member districts. One of the meeting's main spotlights was the online training modules developed by the NKCES team. These modules have already been very well received, and there are plans to expand both the topics and the length of the training so consultants can take a deeper dive and provide more meaningful learning experiences.

Dr. Kim Weber also shared exciting news about a grant-funded regional conference opportunity. NKCES will cover registration and hotel costs for two educational leaders from each member district to attend the NatCon Conference in Denver, Colorado. This is one more way NKCES is working to give back and create learning opportunities that have a lasting impact.

Looking ahead, the February Board meeting will be held at Kenton County Public Schools' new Central Office. We are very appreciative of their generosity and look forward to seeing the new space!

Aspiring Leaders, January 15: The Aspiring Leaders Cadre is an important part of our work at NKCES. Dr. Smith leads this training and provides high-quality sessions to grow our future leaders. It is exciting to see the potential in the room!

KASS Legislative Call, January 16: Dr. Razor attended a KASS legislative call designed to provide timely updates on education-related legislation and the current policy climate in Frankfort. The call included an overview of key bills under consideration, emerging legislative priorities, and potential impacts on school districts. This update supported continued awareness and informed advocacy as the legislative session moves forward.

RSP Advisory Meeting, January 20: The meeting provided an opportunity to inform the advisory board about RSP's updates and needs. We are also very pleased to announce that RSP has been named an Alternative School of Distinction.

Sprout Box Stuffing, January 22: Each month, the Sprout Box team partners with NKCES staff to prepare boxes for delivery. The team does an exceptional job selecting intentional items and organizing materials to ensure a smooth, efficient packing process. This collaborative time not only supports the program's success but also provides a fun and engaging opportunity for team members to come together, stay active, and connect with one another.

Franklin Covey Training, January 23: We had a packed room for this complimentary training, and it received high ratings in the evaluation. We are excited about our partnership with Franklin Covey and the opportunities that we can collaboratively provide for the region.

Procurement Update:

NKCES received its semi-annual administrative rebate check from Purchase Pros. The amount received was \$84,115.21, which was an increase of 71.5% from the previous year. Part of this increase was from large furniture and Chromebook purchases.

Purchase Pros sent an email to Finance Directors requesting that each district complete the "Munis Newspaper" report. This report is used to verify correct billing and terms. The report will ensure that vendors send the correct administrative fees. Reach out to Mr. Mike Wilson if you have any questions about this process.

Mr. Wilson attended the [AASA "Demystifying Cooperative Purchasing" Webinar](#). This presentation was tailored for new Superintendents to discuss challenges and share resources in Cooperative procurement.

Facilities:

Building Update: The landscape has been updated to provide a welcoming environment for guests. A sign has been erected in the side yard for NKCES/RSP. Other facility needs include replacing the window units in classrooms and training rooms. The process to replace these units has begun, and the Serve Room was recently updated. We continue to look for ways to make our facilities inviting and well-maintained. We will be replacing the entryway to the Synergy Room in the next couple of months. The door stability is failing, and the new entry aesthetic will match that of our other meeting spaces. Through the low temperatures and snow, we have experienced some pipe bursts that have been swiftly addressed by Ivey Mechanical.

Professional Learning (PL) Update:

January Professional Learning: NKCES supported 132 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during January, serving 1,925 educators.

Professional Learning (PL) Consortium: The January NKCES PL Consortium meeting included dynamic professional learning led by Mr. William Blackford from Leader In Me, who shared impactful content on The 4 Essential Roles of Leadership. He provided opportunities for collaboration and equipping districts with practical strategies they can carry forward into their own leadership work.

Title I & Title II Meeting: The 25.26 NKCES Title I/Title II Consortium continued in January with a primary focus on private, non-public, and homeschool declaration. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting: The 25.26 NKCES DAC Consortium continued in January with a collaborative meeting. Topics included:

SAT

- [\(SAT Resources/Training Notes\)](#)
- Accommodations & EL Supports due 1/12
- [Technical Readiness Webinar](#) - 1/15 from 10-11:15,
- [Parent Notification Template Letter](#)
- DAC/BAC Support
 - kentuckysat@collegeboard.org
 - (866) 609-2430
 - [Kentucky-specific webpage](#))
- Testing Sophomores - Contact Information - Mark Yoho - myoho@collegeboard.org)

WIDA ACCESS & Alternate ACCESS

- 1/5-2/13 - testing window, ship materials by 2/27
- Secure materials - testing tickets, booklets, scratch paper
- Check-in and check-out process
- Seating charts - individual group
- Order additional materials by 2/6
- Transfers - check with the previous district first
- Accommodations - IEP & 504 only
- SDRR for non-participation only

DAC Trainings - 9 am - 12 pm:

- [Feb. 3 In-Person Registration: KDE, 300 Sower Blvd. Frankfort \(Capacity 85\)](#) – No virtual option for this location
- [Feb. 11 In-Person Registration: Kentucky Educational Development Corporation \(KDEC\)](#) in Ashland (Capacity 85) or [Feb. 11 Virtual Registration: KDEC](#)
- [Feb. 16 In-Person Registration: Southeast/South Central Education Cooperative, 55 Waco Drive \(SESC\)](#) in London (Capacity 40) or [Feb. 16 Virtual Registration: SESC](#)
- [Feb. 18 In-Person Registration: Green River Regional Educational Cooperative \(GRREC\)](#) in Bowling Green (Capacity 65) or [Feb. 18 Virtual Registration: GRREC](#) .

Other items:

- Dropout Lists in SDRR - Tickets by 1/22 @ 5 pm
- [New Medical Non-Participation Form](#)
- K Screen Data - [KDE Secure Web Application](#) > Student Data Detail > Other Documents)

Discussion Topics (Assessment & Accountability Data from Nov., and [New Assessment & Accountability Bill - Proposed](#)). 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:

Ms. Brittney Howell, NKCES Director of Special Education, facilitated the January DoSE meeting: which centered on strategic staffing decision-making. Directors participated in a hands-on staffing workshop designed to provide practical tools for using objective data when evaluating staffing needs and allocations. The session also created space for meaningful dialogue around the recent 707 KAR caseload and class size updates, allowing DoSEs to clarify expectations, share concerns, and discuss implications for their districts.

IDEA and Mrs. Emily Giles, Assistant Director of Learning and Empowerment, collaborated with Beechwood students at Perspectives on an innovative project focused on building communication devices for students who use AAC. The devices were customized to include socially relevant middle and high school slang, making communication more authentic and engaging for students. Watching neurotypical students partner with our neurodivergent students was a powerful and joyful experience, highlighting meaningful inclusion in action. Both groups grew through collaboration, empathy, and creativity, making this project a beautiful example of how shared learning experiences can deepen understanding and connection across students.

Perspectives Highlight: Since opening in late October, Perspectives has hosted 26 special education classes, serving an average of eight students per visit alongside their teachers, paraeducators, related service providers, peer tutors, employment specialists, and administrators. Students have engaged in authentic, hands-on learning that builds independent living, social, job readiness, and transition skills through cooking, cleaning, recreation, task-based learning, creative arts, and the use of alternative communication with current, socially relevant language. From creating student-designed recipes to developing an art gallery and media projects, Perspectives has become a vibrant space for inclusive, meaningful learning. We are just getting started and are working toward weekly use for Community-Based Instruction (CBI), along with developing guidance documents and resources to support districts in expanding their own CBI experiences.

Ms. Annie Wheatcraft continued her impactful work with KATC in Boone and Kenton Counties, supporting Longbranch Elementary, Goodridge Elementary, and Taylor Mill Elementary. Her collaboration with these schools has strengthened early childhood instructional practices and supports for students with diverse learning needs. In addition, the draft Preschool SDI Toolkit has been shared with DoSEs and Preschool Directors across the region and is currently in the process of review and refinement. This toolkit represents an important step toward increasing consistency, clarity, and quality of specially designed instruction in preschool settings.

Mrs. Kim Snowball, Special Education Consultant (specializing in math) provided math consultation and professional learning across multiple districts, supporting educators and paraprofessionals in grades Pre-K through high school. Her work included delivering math module training, facilitating PLCs focused on conceptual understanding and math progressions, and leading special education and paraprofessional workshops on effective math strategies. She contributed to the development of new NKCES online math modules, supported preschool instruction through EEMC sessions, and collaborated on math task and IEP goal development aligned to the Standards for Mathematical Practice, including the creation of an IEP Goals at a Glance lesson-planning tool with SDI.

Learning and Empowerment Team Update:

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

In January, the SBMH and TISS teams continued advancing regional collaboration and professional learning efforts. The Strategic Prevention Group met on January 22, 2026, to discuss next steps for organizational oversight of the group's work. NorthKey will assume the lead role for both the Strategic Prevention Group and the Youth Summit, with NKCES continuing as a strong collaborative partner and serving as the education connector. The TISS and SBMH teams offered a professional learning opportunity to all districts by covering registration and hotel costs for two participants per district to attend the National Council for Mental Wellbeing Conference (NatCon), further supporting capacity-building across the region. Due to inclement weather, the TISS/SBMH Coalition meeting was postponed and rescheduled for February 9, 2026. Additionally, SBMH continued recruitment planning for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Conference in February, while TISS focused on securing presenters and participants for the Youth Mental Health Roundtables scheduled for February 12.

Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS): In January, the Learning Acceleration Specialist (LAS) team continued advancing key regional initiatives through professional learning, cross-district collaboration, and targeted instructional support. A major milestone this month was the development of a universal Continuing Education Option (CEO) plan to be submitted for ESPB approval next month. The LAS team also presented and served as a room host at the P3 Edcamp, engaging educators in meaningful dialogue and shared learning around high-impact instructional practices. Instructional Coaches within the PLN spotlighted their work on formative assessment trackers, highlighting tools and routines that strengthen real-time instructional decision-making and student progress monitoring. January also marked Session 3 of the regional Social Studies series, with a unique focus on the Science of Reading applied across multiple texts—supporting educators in building literacy-rich content instruction. Ongoing district-level work remained a priority, including continued support for HQIR implementation, as well as the development of policies and frameworks to guide effective and responsible AI usage in instructional settings. In addition, the LAS team—alongside other NKCES teams—began brainstorming summer professional learning offerings to meet evolving district needs and extend learning opportunities across the region.

Grant Consortium Update:

Grants available

- **[KEMI 2026](#)** Up to \$2,500 for school safety items. No due date; will be given till money runs out.
- **[Migrant Ed 2026](#)** Due March 17. \$280,000 X 2 years, potential renewals for another 2 years.
- **[Environmental Education 2026](#)** Due March 3. \$200,000 to \$250,000 over 1 or 2 years. 25% match. Must subgrant 25% of funds in amounts of \$5,000 or less.
- **[Mathematics Achievement Fund mini grant 2026](#)** Due February 1. \$40,000.
- **[Middle School Math Coach 2026](#)** Due January 30. \$62,000 X 2 years
- Funding opportunity for youth: <https://contributionproject.org/cincinnati>. \$400 to youth.

Grants Pending

- **[School-Based Mental Health](#)**: This proposal was not awarded.
- **[STOP School Violence](#)**: We are awaiting news about this grant. It was predicted for Dec. 31. Our proposal was to provide training in PREPARE and CSTAG, promote violence prevention curriculums in schools, review crisis intervention planning, and promote technology use for school safety.
- **[Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission](#)**: Award announcements predicted for April. Our proposal is to provide arts-infused prevention planning and activities.
- **[KEMI 26](#)**: \$2,500 received for RSP safety items: padding, emergency kits for each classroom, and a portable automatic external defibrillator for out-of-doors or off-campus activities.

Multi-District Grants in Implementation: Trauma-Informed School Services; School-Based Mental Health Services

Regional School Programs (RSP) Update:

- RSP returned to school for students on January 6th. Staff returned on the 5th.
- The RSP Advisory Board met on January 20th to review current updates and to share the draft 25-26 school calendar.
- RSP received notification on January 22nd, that, after the extensive site visit in October, RSP has been named an Alternative Education Program of Distinction by KDE. The program will be honored during the February 4th Kentucky Board of Education meeting.