

# NKCES Report – February 2026

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:**

**Superintendent Winter Retreat, February 1-3:** The Superintendent Winter Retreat in Lexington, originally scheduled earlier in the season, was rescheduled due to winter weather. We are especially appreciative of those who rearranged their schedules to attend, and to those who were unable to join us—you were truly missed. The opportunity to spend even just a couple of days together is invaluable for learning, reflection, and strengthening relationships.

Dr. Amy Razor and Dr. Robb Smith led an engaging leadership-focused session that encouraged superintendents to reflect on their personal journeys—leaning into how they got to where they are, what keeps the fire burning as a district leader, and how NKCES can continue to meet them where they are while helping them grow toward where they want to go. The conversation also centered on the lasting impressions they hope to leave on their staff, students, and communities. The time together provided meaningful space for connection, insight, and renewed purpose.

**Instructional Leadership Meeting, February 4:** Dr. Smith, Dr. Razor, and instructional leaders met for additional Munetrix training. Munetrix led the NKCES group on a deeper dive into the dashboard, exploring the data and how it can best support decision-making across districts. As they worked through the review, it became clear that there are still a few pieces to sort out to ensure the dashboard tells a complete story and that the data is formatted in a way that's clear and truly useful. It was a productive discussion that helped identify next steps to make the tool even more effective moving forward.

**RSP Standing Committee, February 5:** The meeting provided an opportunity to inform the districts about RSP's updates and needs. The committee also discussed a proposal for increasing slot costs.

We are also very pleased to announce that RSP has been named an Alternative School of Distinction.

**Monthly Finance Meeting, February 5:** Dr. Razor met with Dr. Smith and Finance Director Angie Perkinseach month to review NKCES financials and ensure the organization remains fiscally strong and aligned with its strategic priorities. During this meeting, they discussed current budgets, revenue, and expenditures, as well as grant updates, but spent considerable time on department budgets for 2026-2027.

**Franklin Covey, 4 Disciplines of Leadership Training, February 6:** We were thrilled to welcome Mr. William Blackford back to NKCES to lead another dynamic training, but this time for principals. We are excited about our partnership with Franklin Covey and the opportunities that we can collaboratively provide for the region.

**Synergy Meeting, February 9:** The Synergy meeting continues to serve as an important touchpoint for connection and alignment across teams. We kick off each meeting by reflecting on our current work and intentionally tying it back to our mission and vision, ensuring that the day-to-day efforts across departments stay grounded in our larger purpose and strategic direction.

The team also spends time reviewing the RACI chart to clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability, helping to eliminate confusion and strengthen collaboration. Each department provides report-outs, sharing updates, progress on key initiatives, challenges, and upcoming priorities. These conversations not only keep everyone informed but also create space for cross-departmental support, problem-solving, and forward planning. Overall, the Synergy meeting reinforces transparency, alignment, and a shared commitment to serving our districts well.

**Schools To Watch site visit training, February 9:** The Schools to Watch Site Visit Training provided participants with an overview of the site visit process, expectations, and evaluation protocols. Attendees reviewed key indicators, discussed observation strategies, and clarified scoring practices to ensure consistency and fidelity throughout the visit. The training helped prepare team members to conduct thorough, collaborative, and meaningful evaluations of participating schools.

**Collaboration Meeting with NKU, February 10:** A recent meeting between NKU and NKCES leadership provided a thoughtful and energizing opportunity to collaborate around shared priorities for strengthening educator preparation and support across the region. The conversation reflected a strong mutual commitment to partnership and produced a range of actionable ideas. Most importantly, Dean Ginni Fair is looking into a proposal to offer college credit for NKCES learning opportunities such as the Aspiring Leaders Institute.

**Superintendent Webcast, February 10:** Dr. Razor, along with leaders from across the state, participated in a virtual meeting to stay informed about important updates from the Education Commissioner and his staff.

**NKCES Board Meeting at Kenton County Central Office, February 11:** NKCES is grateful to Dr. Henry Webb and his team for hosting the February Board of Directors meeting at their new Central Office. The state-of-the-art facility provided an excellent setting for productive discussion and collaboration. During the meeting, the Board addressed key new business items, including approving modifications to the Grant Writer job description to better align with current funding priorities and organizational needs, and establishing a new Continuing Education Coordinator position to strengthen professional learning opportunities and support ongoing staff and partner development.

**Youth Mental Health Roundtables, February 12:** NKCES recently hosted Youth Mental Health Roundtables at the St. Elizabeth Training and Education Center, drawing an incredible turnout from across the region. Many districts had student representation whose voices added meaningful perspectives to the conversations. The discussions underscored the critical importance of prioritizing student mental health and ensuring schools have the resources, partnerships, and supports necessary to respond effectively. The strong participation reflected a shared commitment to equipping districts and communities with tools and strategies that promote student well-being and create environments where all learners can thrive.

**KASS Legislative Update, February 13:** As part of the KASS Legislative Update, Dr. Razor joined educators from across the region for a virtual call with Dr. Jim Flynn to hear about the current legislative climate in Frankfort and the potential impact of active bills on education. The conversation provided timely insight into policy developments, helping participants better understand how proposed legislation may affect

schools, educators, and students, while reinforcing the importance of staying informed and engaged in advocacy efforts that support public education.

**KDE Call with Coop Directors, February 13:** 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.

**Patriots of Education, February 16:** Dr. Razor attended a virtual call with George Ann Rice, who leads Patriots to Education, a nonprofit organization that connects military veterans, service members, and their spouses with career opportunities in public education to help address school staffing shortages. They provide guidance, resources, and partnerships that support participants in transitioning into roles such as teaching, administration, and other school-based positions while continuing their service to communities. Dr. Razor has sent out a survey to districts that may be interested in this partnership.

**Leadership meeting with Zach Wells, February 17:** Dr. Razor and her leadership team met with Mr. Zach Wells to plan the year's videography efforts, focusing on how best to capture key events and highlight major moments across the organization. The conversation was both productive and enjoyable, with Mr. Wells bringing a wealth of knowledge and creative ideas to ensure meaningful storytelling and strong visual representation of NKCES's work throughout the year.

**Schools To Watch (STW), February 17-18:** Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith co-direct the Schools to Watch program for Kentucky. School visits for redesignation were held in Fayette County this week with a variety of statewide team members. This opportunity provides strong learning and leadership opportunities for the STW participants as they gain insight to many different learning environments and best practices.

**Munetrix Training, February 19:** The Munetrix training was a follow-up session focused on recent tweaks and enhancements to the system to better capture and display financial and operational data. The meeting highlighted how these updates improve clarity, usability, and reporting accuracy, allowing leaders to more effectively interpret trends, communicate insights, and support data-driven decision-making.

**Aspiring Leaders Meeting, February 20:** Dr. Razor regularly attends the Aspiring Leaders Cadre as it 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!

**PL Consortium, February 20:** Dr. Razor attended the February Professional Learning Consortium meeting led by Dr. Smith. Education leaders from across the districts we serve brought a wealth of knowledge and perspective, making the conversation especially powerful in driving forward progress. The discussion focused on strengthening coordination, sharing resources, and identifying ways to better support educators through meaningful, high-quality professional learning experiences.

**RSP Standing Committee Meeting, February 23:** The meeting provided an opportunity to inform the advisory board about RSP's updates and needs. The committee met to review and collaborate on RSP slot cost information. A recommendation from the Standing Committee will be shared with the board in March. Pending board approval, this would adjust the slot cost to the information in the document.

**Schools to Watch, February 24-27:** Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith co-direct the Schools to Watch program for Kentucky. School visits for redesignation were held in Logan County this week with a variety of state-wide team members. This opportunity provides strong learning and leadership opportunities for the STW participants as they gain insight to many different learning environments and best practices.

**Procurement Update:**

Mr. Mike Wilson has been collecting and analyzing the Newspaper Reports sent in from member Districts. Using the collected data from these reports, we can ensure correct terms were applied and rebate checks were sent in. Mike is also looking to identify trends that can lead to an increased usage of the bid list.

Mr. Wilson provided direct procurement training to the Technology Director of Fort Thomas Independent School District, focusing on applicable rules and regulatory requirements. Following the training, he conducted additional strategy discussions to support the district's procurement process for a district-wide Public Address and Bell system upgrade.

Mr. Wilson also collaborated with our GRREC Counterparts to develop a training event for GRREC staff. Working with Amanda Turner at GRREC, he helped align the training content to include procurement policies with organizational best practices that would provide relevant and practical instruction.

**Facilities:**

**Building Update:** 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. Despite the low temperatures and snow, we have experienced some pipe bursts, which Ivey Mechanical has swiftly addressed.

**Professional Learning (PL) Update:**

**January Professional Learning:** NKCES supported 161 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during February, serving 2,192 educators.

**Professional Learning (PL) Consortium:** The 25.26 NKCES PL Consortium continued in February with a collaborative meeting. Topics included NKCES [Instructional Team Reports](#) given by IDEA - Ms. Brittney Howell and Learning & Empowerment - Mrs. Emily Giles and Dr. Kim Weber, Instructional spotlight: Ms. Jennie Tipton Lasley M.Ed, EdReady powered by NROC, 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 February 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 February with a collaborative meeting. Topics included:

**a. DAC Trainings**

- i. [Videos](#) and [Slides](#)
- ii. KSA
  1. On Demand
  2. [TAM & Some Scripts](#)
  3. [Admin Code](#)
  4. [Inclusion of Special Populations](#)
  5. [Non-Disclosure](#)
  6. [Online Testing Toolbox](#)
  7. Caveon
- iii. SAT
  1. [Parent/Guardian Notification](#)
  2. Postsecondary Readiness
  3. Reporting
  4. Sophomores
  5. Anything before the March meeting?

**b. WIDA ACCESS & Alternate ACCESS**

- i. Ship materials by 2/27
- ii. Any discussions?

**c. AKSA**

- i. Week of 3/30 or 4/6 - Materials Ship
- ii. April 14 - May 22 - Test Window 2
- iii. [Make-Ups](#)
- iv. Training Reminder
- v. May 29 - Attainment Tasks (ATs) & Transition Attainment Record (TAR) scores in the SRD

**Other Items/Reminders:**

- [New Medical Non-Participation Form](#)
- [New Assessment & Accountability Bill - Proposed](#)
- PAN - Data Pull from IC on 3/23
- SDRR - Data Pull from IC 4/22

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 a legislative review during the February DoSE Meeting.** NKCES led a structured legislative review process with our regional Directors of Special Education (DoSEs) to analyze bills impacting special education, early childhood, literacy, staffing, Medicaid, and district governance. Each bill was examined through a focused framework: a clear one-sentence summary, anticipated operational impact, and strategic considerations for district leaders. We organized legislation by level of relevance to help directors prioritize planning and allocate leadership capacity effectively. This work positioned districts to anticipate staffing, funding, compliance, and instructional implications rather than react after passage. As a result, our DoSEs are better prepared to strengthen Child Find systems, align service delivery models, and reduce potential compliance risk.

**Regional Directors of Special Education (DoSEs)** have taken strategic action to address the 2017 Congress-set 1% alternate assessment threshold by beginning the process of conducting comprehensive audits of current student placements, engaging in root cause analysis of decision-making practices, and strengthening local systems for IEP team determinations. Districts are refining protocols, increasing documentation rigor, and planning on providing targeted professional learning to ensure alternate assessment participation is reserved for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This work reflects our commitment to compliance, high expectations, and ensuring all students have appropriate access to grade-level standards and future opportunities.

**Ms. Kim Snowball presented to regional Directors of Special Education on the development of an IEP-at-a-Glance tool** designed to build general education teachers' understanding of key IEP components and their direct connection to instructional planning. She is leading training efforts to support implementation, helping educators more effectively align specially designed instruction, accommodations, and goals within daily classroom practice. This work strengthens PLC conversations and supports high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) implementation by ensuring IEPs are living documents that actively inform core instruction.

**Mrs. Amanda Bell provided targeted TEACCH training** to a cohort of teachers to deepen implementation practices, strengthening structured teaching strategies for students with significant support needs. In addition, she partnered with the School-Based Mental Health team to develop and facilitate an adapted book study series designed specifically for teachers and counselors supporting our low-incidence population. This collaborative effort is building instructional consistency, increasing staff capacity to address communication, regulation, and behavioral needs, and ensuring our most vulnerable learners receive aligned academic and social-emotional support across settings.

**Ms. Annie Wheatcraft coordinated and distributed high-quality preschool instructional materials** in literacy and mathematics to preschool coordinators across the region. Her efforts ensured equitable access to standards-aligned resources and strengthened early foundational skill development across districts. In addition, she is providing ongoing support to the preschool cohort to build teacher capacity and ensure effective implementation and utilization of these materials within daily instruction.

**Ms. Tasha Taylor secured and announced the date for the Regional Reverse Career Fair**, which will take place on Tuesday, April 21st, at Gateway. She initiated planning communication with high school special education teachers across the region to ensure strong student participation and preparation. This early coordination supports meaningful transition planning and expands postsecondary and employment opportunities for students with disabilities. The Reverse Career Fair provides students the opportunity to showcase their strengths, skills, and career interests directly to employers, shifting the traditional interview model and empowering students to lead their own employment conversations.

**Learning and Empowerment Team Update:**

**School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Services (TISS):** In February, the SBMH and TISS teams continued to advance regional collaboration, professional learning, and direct support to schools and districts. We continue to take and complete school- and district-level training and support requests, ensuring responsive, customized assistance to meet local needs across Northern Kentucky. The TISS/SBMH Coalition met on February 9th. This session centered on educator wellness practices as well as continued work on individual district action plans. TISS planned and facilitated an incredible Youth Mental Health Roundtable on February 12. It was an amazing day of learning and advocacy—entirely led by students. The event elevated youth voice, highlighted the importance of mental health awareness, and created meaningful dialogue among students and educators. The leadership and engagement demonstrated by students were truly inspiring and reinforced the importance of youth-centered mental health efforts. Another highlight of the month was SBMH’s recruitment event at the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Conference. The team focused on connecting with individuals interested in pursuing a school-based mental health career in Northern Kentucky. To increase engagement and create a welcoming atmosphere, the team hosted a “water bar,” which significantly increased visitors to our booth and opened the door for meaningful conversations about career pathways and opportunities in NKY schools. Overall, it was a great month of important work, marked by strong student leadership, strategic recruitment efforts, and continued responsiveness to district needs.

**Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS):** In February, the Learning Acceleration Specialist (LAS) team brought closure to a significant strand of yearlong regional work centered on content-specific High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIR) as well as the NKCES administration HQIR cadre. Through sustained collaboration, professional learning, and district coaching, the team supported educators in deepening implementation practices and strengthening instructional coherence across content areas. District-specific HQIR work also continued throughout the month, with tailored support to ensure strong internalization routines, alignment to standards, and sustainable systems for ongoing improvement. In preparation for summer and back-to-school professional learning, the LAS team partnered closely with other NKCES teams to develop the NKCES Summer Learning Catalog. This collaborative effort reflects a coordinated approach to meeting regional needs and providing high-impact, aligned learning opportunities for educators across the service area. The LAS team also provided the next session for new teachers, which centered on identifying and addressing common problems of practice.

**Grant Consortium Update:**

**Grants available**

- [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.
- [AED 2026](#) Due March 6. Up to \$2,000 per AED
- [Rural Change makers 2026](#)
- [LITERACY GRANT FUNDERS LIST 2026](#)

**Grants Awarded**

- [KEMI 2026](#) to RSP for safety equipment and portable AED
- Read to Achieve for Beechwood, Covington (5 awards), Kenton County, and Ludlow

**Grants Pending**

- [STOP School Violence](#): We are awaiting news about this grant. 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.
- [KY Byrne Crisis Intervention Funding 2026](#) . \$170,562 for PREPaRE and CSTAG crisis intervention training
- Haile Foundation: NKCES staff are building relationships with this local funder. A proposal was submitted to them to sustain arts integration activities

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

### Grant Tips and News

- [Grant Decision Rubric](#): This tool can be useful to support grant decision-making
- [Custom Chat GPT for Grant Search](#) This tool is always available to search for relevant grant opportunities.
- [Job Description](#) is posted for next steps for Grants Consortium.

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

- We are in the beginning stages of planning for state testing
- RSP 11th graders will take the SAT on 3/18/26
- Mrs. Turner and a teacher attended the Alternative Education Program of Distinction's first Cadre meeting in Frankfort.
- The standing committee met to review slot cost information for the program.