

# NKCES Report – March 2026

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

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BEECHWOOD INDEPENDENT

## Executive Director Update:

BELLEVUE INDEPENDENT

**NKCES Team Meeting, March 2:** Our March team meeting, led by Dr. Amy Razor, began with a mindful moment focused on watercolor painting and strategies to avoid overthinking—setting a reflective, focused tone for the session. Why don't we overthink the positive?

BOONE COUNTY

BRACKEN COUNTY

CAMPBELL COUNTY

CARROLL COUNTY

COVINGTON INDEPENDENT

DAYTON INDEPENDENT

ERLANGER-ELSMERE INDEPENDENT

The team revisited the commitments introduced by Dr. Robb Smith in January, with updates highlighting strong progress and momentum as we approach launch. Individual teams worked on spring/summer goals and provided updates on their progress. We also took time to review the Spring/Summer Professional Learning Catalog and engaged in collaborative discussions about our team's strengths, identifying opportunities to expand them into future training and offerings for our region.

FLEMING COUNTY

As always, this protected time proved meaningful and productive, helping ensure we remain aligned and focused on serving our member districts effectively.

FORT THOMAS INDEPENDENT

GRANT COUNTY

**Executive Committee Meeting, March 3:** Dr. Razor met with the Executive Committee to review board agenda items in preparation for the upcoming board meeting. The committee engaged in thoughtful discussion on several key topics, including a proposed increase in the Regional School program slot cost. This adjustment is intended to support necessary updates at the school. Principal Turner has done an exceptional job meeting the needs of both students and staff; however, with no increase in slot costs for several years, the adjustment is both timely and necessary.

GREENUP COUNTY

KENTON COUNTY

LEWIS COUNTY

LUDLOW INDEPENDENT

MASON COUNTY

NEWPORT INDEPENDENT

In addition, the committee reviewed draft budgets, upcoming board meeting dates, and NKCES budgets. These discussions will help ensure informed decision-making and continued alignment with organizational priorities.

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

OWEN COUNTY

**Patriots for Education, March 4:** Dr. Razor met virtually with Mrs. George Ann Rice, a founder of Patriots for Education, to connect regarding districts interested in learning more about potential partnerships. The conversation also included a brief update on the impact and success that Patriots for Education has already achieved across Kentucky. A representative from the NKY Chamber was part of the meeting.

PENDLETON COUNTY

SOUTHGATE INDEPENDENT

WALTON-VERONA INDEPENDENT

WILLIAMSTOWN INDEPENDENT

**Finance Meeting, March 5:** Dr. Razor continues to meet with Dr. Smith and Finance Director Angie Perkins each 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. This month was focused on final budgets from each department, as they will go before the board for review and approval.

**KASS Legislative Update, March 6:** 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.

**Meeting with Ryan Salzman, March 9:** Dr. Razor met with Mr. Ryan Salzman, Director of Regional Advocacy & Engagement for Kentucky Non-profits, to explore potential future partnership opportunities. The conversation provided valuable insight into the organization's work and created an opportunity to strengthen connections within the education and nonprofit community.

**Instructional Leadership Meeting, March 9:** Dr. Smith and Dr. Razor met with the Instructional Leadership team to share updates and problem-solve as needed. The unified effort and communication allow us to function as an effective organization.

**RSP Advisory Board Meeting, March 10:** The meeting provided an opportunity to inform the districts about RSP's updates and needs. The committee also discussed the proposal for increasing slot costs. The team answered any questions, and the feedback was supportive for upcoming decisions.

**Salary Comparison Dashboard, March 10:** Clint Lintzinger, Educational Technology and AI Integration Specialist, developed a salary comparison resource designed to support member districts in compensation discussions. The comparison provides a clear, side-by-side view of regional salary data, helping districts understand how their pay structures align with neighboring systems and trends. It serves as a practical decision-making tool and supports transparent conversations with stakeholders.

**Board of Directors Meeting, March 11:** The March Board of Directors meeting included several important items of business. Much of the discussion focused on the increase in the RSP slot cost, which is necessary to support larger facility projects aimed at maintaining building efficiency and safety. It will also support staffing and the proposed salary schedule to retain valuable staff members. This adjustment is also timely, as there has not been a program increase since 2021, with some areas going even longer without adjustments.

In addition, the Board approved next year's meeting dates and addressed technology surplus items.

We are always appreciative of the superintendents' time and dedication to supporting the region.

**Superintendent Webcast, March 12:** 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.

**KDE Call with Co-op Directors, March 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.

**Synergy Meeting, March 16:** The Synergy meeting remains a key opportunity for connection and alignment across teams. Each meeting begins with a reflection on current work, intentionally connecting it back to our mission and vision to ensure daily efforts remain grounded in our overall purpose and strategic direction.

The team also reviews the RACI chart to reinforce clarity around roles, responsibilities, and accountability, helping to strengthen collaboration and reduce confusion. Departments provide regular updates, sharing progress on key initiatives, current challenges, and upcoming priorities. These discussions keep everyone informed while also creating opportunities for cross-department support, problem-solving, and proactive planning.

Overall, the Synergy meeting continues to promote transparency, alignment, and a shared commitment to serving our districts effectively.

**Grant and Development Specialist Interview, March 17:** The Grants and Development Specialist interviews focused on the candidates' experience with grant writing, funding research, and relationship-building with partners and stakeholders. Discussion included approach to identifying funding opportunities, managing timelines, and ensuring compliance with grant requirements. The candidate also shared strategies for supporting organizational growth through development efforts and demonstrated alignment with the organization's mission and goals.

**Aspiring Leaders, March 19:** Dr. Razor continues to regularly attend the Aspiring Leaders Cadre, which remains an important component of our work at NKCES. Led by Dr. Smith, the training provides high-quality learning experiences focused on developing future leaders. It is always encouraging to see the strong potential within this group for future leadership positions.

**KASS Legislative Update, March 20:** As part of the KASS Legislative Update, Dr. Razor continues to join educators from across the region for a virtual call with Dr. Jim Flynn to stay informed on the current legislative climate in Frankfort and the potential impact of active bills on education. These conversations provide 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.

**PL Consortium, March 20:** Dr. Razor continues to participate in the Professional Learning Consortium, facilitated by Dr. Smith. Leaders from across our member districts bring valuable insight and diverse perspectives, contributing to meaningful and productive conversations. The group remains focused on improving coordination, sharing resources, and identifying opportunities to better support educators through high-quality, impactful professional learning experiences.

**KDE March Leadership Meeting, March 24: Dr. Razor and team worked with KDE to facilitate an on-site meeting.** The goal of the meeting is for KDE to share key highlights, resources, and tools for the district instructional leadership team.

**Finance Meeting, March 25:** Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith regularly meet with Finance Director Angie Perkins to review financial updates, monitor budgets, and ensure alignment with organizational priorities. These meetings provide an opportunity to discuss fiscal planning, address emerging needs, and support informed decision-making to maintain NKCES's financial health and sustainability.

**Legislative Meeting in Frankfort, March 26:** The NKCES Leadership Team attended the education committee meeting and met with legislators and key leadership to show support for public education.

### **Procurement Update:**

Mr. Mike Wilson coordinated with school finance contacts to ensure all newspaper spending reports were submitted. We have now received 100% of the reports, which he has been analyzing. Through this process, Mr. Wilson identified vendor reporting errors that resulted in underpaid administrative fees. He has been working with vendors to correct these discrepancies and ensure accurate rebate payments. He is also analyzing trends to identify opportunities to increase local utilization of the bid list.

Mr. Wilson also provided procurement support to the Director of Operations for Fort Thomas Independent School District regarding an upcoming large playground project. Mr. Niedert had a clear understanding of his preferred vendor and purchase. During their discussion, Mr. Wilson provided guidance on strategies to secure the most competitive pricing.

On March 18, Mr. Wilson attended a vendor fair hosted by GRREC. He took advantage of this event to engage with vendors that have done business with NKCES members or are seeking to do so. During these conversations, he identified vendors with multiple bid options available for schools and reminded them of their obligation to prioritize local bids when presenting pricing to member districts. He also reinforced reporting requirements with newer sales representatives, emphasizing the importance of accurate sales reporting and timely administrative fee payments. These efforts are expected to generate an approximate additional \$200,000 to the administrative fee that was received last month.

### **Facilities:**

**Building Update:** We are currently addressing several facility improvements to maintain the quality and appearance of our spaces. The Synergy Room door is being replaced due to structural deterioration, and the new door will align with the aesthetic of other doors throughout the building. In addition, windows within the Synergy Room, as well as those immediately outside of it, are being replaced.

Painting is also underway throughout the building. The most noticeable improvement will be at the entrance to the administrative building, where the work will both seal the brick and enhance the overall first impression for visitors.

At RSP, the gym wall padding is being replaced due to declining quality. As part of this update, we have incorporated the school logo to improve both appearance and school pride.

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

**March Professional Learning:** NKCES supported 190 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during February, serving 2,712 educators.

**Professional Learning (PL) Consortium:** The 25.26 NKCES PL Consortium continued in March 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: Mr. Daniel Johnson and Mr. Luke Wiseman of Nexus, Partner Organization: Ms. Liz Erwin and Ms. Kelly O'Dell of KASC, 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 March with a primary focus on 1% Alternate Assessment, [Title I Monitoring Checklist](#) (Fraud part on p.22), and District Consolidated Monitoring Checklist. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

**District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting:** The 25.26 NKCES DAC Consortium continued in March with a collaborative meeting. Topics included SAT Takeaways & Questions, K Screen, Access, AKSA, KSA, [New Medical Non-Participation Form](#), 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, led a coordinated regional response to Kentucky's 1% Alternate Assessment condition tied to federal Title I funding.** In partnership with KDE and OSEEL, NKCES facilitated a structured support process for districts that included targeted outreach, optional record reviews, and aligned guidance to ensure appropriate identification and participation in the Alternate Assessment. Districts were supported in conducting deep data analyses of their AA-AAAS populations, examining factors such as disability category, instructional setting, and cognitive and adaptive data, to inform decision-making and reduce over-identification. NKCES also guided Directors of Special Education through root cause analysis and the development of 30-60-90 day action plans to strengthen systems, improve IEP team decision-making, and ensure compliance with federal expectations.

**The NKCES IDEA Team, in coordination with the Learning & Empowerment (L&E) Team,** completed the ISPROUT data collection process at Sharp Middle School. Through a comprehensive series of classroom observations and aligned leadership reflections, the team gathered objective data on instructional practices, student engagement, and systems of support. This process emphasized non-evaluative, evidence-based data collection to identify patterns, highlight strengths, and surface opportunities for growth. The collaboration between IDEA and L&E ensured a cohesive approach to analyzing both instructional and systemic practices, positioning the Sharp leadership team to engage in meaningful data analysis, strengthen inclusive practices, and align next steps to support both educators and students.

**Mrs. Kim Snowball, NKCES consultant, led a regional screening of the documentary *Counted Out*,** hosted at Ignite. The event brought educators together to explore the role of mathematics in real-world contexts and its critical importance in shaping future workforce readiness and societal success. The documentary and facilitated discussion created space for reflection on how math instruction can move beyond procedural learning to meaningful application, reinforcing the need for high-quality, engaging mathematics experiences for all students. This experience highlighted NKCES's commitment to advancing instructional practices that prepare students for real-world problem solving and long-term success.

**Mrs. Annie Wheatcraft and Dr. Amanda Bell attended the national Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Conference,** where they engaged in professional learning on current best practices, research, and national

initiatives in special education. Notably, Mrs. Bell presented on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and supports for students with low-incidence disabilities, highlighting innovative strategies and practices from our region. Together, they are bringing back valuable insights and resources to share with NKCES districts, strengthening our collective capacity to support students with disabilities through aligned, high-impact instructional and systems-level practices.

**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 has initiated ongoing planning and communication with high school special education teachers across the region to ensure strong student participation and meaningful preparation. We are excited to welcome approximately 75 students to this year’s event. This early and continued coordination supports high-quality 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.

**Mrs. Emily Borchers led Indicator 13 trainings across all Boone County high schools**, building capacity and strengthening alignment of postsecondary transition practices. These sessions supported staff in developing compliant, high-quality IEPs that reflect individualized transition goals, services, and coordinated planning for life beyond high school. This work enhances system coherence across schools and ensures students are better prepared for postsecondary education, employment, and independent living.

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

**School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Services (TISS):** In March, SBMH and TISS continued to support districts through ongoing training, consultation, and responsive services across Northern Kentucky. SBMH participated in the two-day *Inspire to Hire Junior Achievement* event, highlighting “Helping Professions Matter” and exposing students to careers in education and mental health. The team also recruited at the Xavier Career Fair to strengthen the regional workforce pipeline. The TISS team continued advancing work around *Conditions for Success*, focusing not only on training but also on developing a tool to support implementation. The TISS/SBMH Guiding Coalition met to explore the impact of “telling your story” while continuing progress on district action plans. The Sproutbox Innovation Team continues to meet to explore strategies to sustain and expand Sproutboxes. The Regional Prevention Group also continues planning the Regional Youth Summit, with NorthKey serving as the lead organization. Additionally, NKCES hosted KDE for the Spring Leadership Meeting, where it was exciting to see strong collaboration across districts. Overall, it was an action-packed month, and we appreciate the opportunity to support the region.

**Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS):** In March, the Learning Acceleration Specialist (LAS) team continued to advance regional priorities while extending NKCES’s presence at the state level. Team members presented at two statewide conferences—the Kentucky Science Teachers Association (KSTA) and the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English (KCTE)—sharing expertise and elevating the work happening across our region. Additionally, the Numeracy Counts CEO II program initiated recruitment efforts at the Kentucky Council of Mathematics (KCM) conference. March also marked the conclusion of the LAS Social Studies professional learning series, culminating in a session that followed the Kentucky Academic Standards, emphasizing inquiry and vibrant learning. This final session emphasized engaging, student-centered practices that promote deeper understanding and meaningful application of content. To inform future support and innovation, members of the LAS team conducted site visits to The Hill and Bryan Station High School in Lexington. These visits provided valuable insights into effective practices

related to Career and Technical Education (CTE), vibrant learning, and local accountability systems. Learnings from these experiences will guide continued efforts to strengthen regional support, ensuring alignment with evolving district needs and priorities.

**Grant Consortium Update:**

**Grants available**

- [Rural Change makers 2026](#) Due April 14 for Bracken, Pendleton, or Grant Counties
- [Drug Free Communities NEW 2026](#) Due April 14 for substance misuse prevention coalitions.
- [Learning Innovations 26](#) Due April 13 for Boone, Kenton, or Campbell Counties
- [Children's Mental Health Initiative 26](#) Due April 20 to create coordinated community mental health services
- [Middle School Career Exploration 26](#) Due April 16 to create a Middle School career exploration plan with others across the state
- [LITERACY GRANT FUNDERS LIST 2026](#) A list of foundations that say they fund literacy education in public schools

**Grants Pending**

- [STOP School Violence](#): We are awaiting news about this grant. Our proposal was to provide training in PREPARE and Comprehensive School Assessment Guidelines (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.
- NKCES has hired Mr. Jared Perkins as the Grants and Development Specialist. He will be working with the current Grant Writer and the NKCES teams toward a successful transition over the next months.

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

- We are continuing to work on our testing schedule.
- We are planning our second CBI trip to Perspectives in May
- The standing committee met to review slot cost information for the program.