

NKCES Report – April 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:

Finance Meeting, April 2: Dr. Amy Razor continues to meet monthly with Dr. Robb Smith and Finance Director Angie Perkins to review NKCES financials and ensure everything stays on track and aligned with our strategic priorities. During this month's meeting, they talked through current budgets, revenue, expenditures, and shared updates on grants. The primary focus was on finalizing department budgets ahead of presenting them to the board, as well as reviewing Dr. Razor's recommendation of a 4% increase to the salary schedule, which will be recommended for approval at the April 15 Board meeting.

KASS Legislative Update, April 6: As part of the KASS Legislative Update, Dr. Razor participated in a virtual discussion led by Dr. Jim Flynn focused on current legislative activity in Frankfort and its potential impact on education. The session offered updates on proposed policies and their implications for schools, educators, and students.

KDE Call with Co-op Directors, April 10: Dr. Razor joined executive directors from education cooperatives across the state in a virtual meeting with the Kentucky Department of Education to receive updates on current initiatives. During the meeting, the Commissioner expressed continued appreciation for the strong partnership and support provided by the cooperatives.

NKCES Team Meeting, April 13: Our Team meeting was co-led by Dr. Smith and Dr. Razor. The March team meeting provided an opportunity to recognize and thank district leaders and partners for their ongoing collaboration and contributions to education in Northern Kentucky. The session opened with a brief reflective activity to promote focus and creativity.

The team reviewed key commitments introduced earlier in the year, noting strong progress as implementation approaches. Staff also shared updates on spring and summer goals and collaborated on refining upcoming professional learning opportunities. Overall, the meeting reinforced alignment across the organization and a continued commitment to effectively supporting member districts.

Executive Committee Meeting, April 13: Dr. Razor met with the Executive Committee to review upcoming board agenda items in preparation for the next board meeting. The committee had thoughtful discussions around several key topics, including a proposed 4% increase to the salary schedule. This adjustment is intended to keep NKCES salaries competitive while remaining in

line with surrounding districts.

The committee also spent time reviewing draft budgets in more detail, helping ensure everything is well-prepared ahead of board consideration. These conversations play an important role in supporting informed decisions and keeping our work aligned with organizational priorities. Overall, it was a

productive meeting that reflects the team’s continued focus on thoughtful planning and strong stewardship of resources.

YSA Advisory Meeting, April, 14: Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith, along with other YSA committee members, met with NKU President Cady Short Thompson to discuss the future of the YSA program following the passage of legislation that would take SEEK funding away from students who participate. This legislation will strain districts with participating students, as they will have to bear an additional financial burden.

Board of Directors Meeting, April 15: The April Board of Directors meeting covered several key items, including the second reading of the NKCES budgets and the 2026–2027 salary schedule, which includes a 4% increase for all staff.

In addition to these business items, members of the NKCES leadership team provided updates on district engagement, the Universal CEO Program, and a SERTAC data dashboard highlighting needs assessment survey results.

State leaders also shared their report-outs, giving board members the opportunity to ask questions and stay informed.

KASS Legislative Update, April 17: 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.

Synergy Meeting, April 20: 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.

Instructional Leadership Meeting, April 20: 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.

Sustainment Plan Meeting, April 22: Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith, along with Mrs. Angie Perkins, met with Mr. Jared Perkins, Grant and Development Specialist, to walk through the work that has been done to support NKCES’s long-term financial stability. The conversation focused on a sustainment plan that looks beyond current funding and identifies ways to diversify revenue, strengthen grant strategies, and ensure programs can continue even as funding sources shift.

This work is especially important in helping NKCES stay proactive rather than reactive—positioning the organization to maintain services, support districts consistently, and plan confidently for the future.

Administrative Professionals Day, April 22: NKCES took time to celebrate the true backbone of the organization—our administrative staff. Throughout the week, the team came together to show appreciation with handwritten notes of gratitude and small, thoughtful gifts. The celebration also included an off-site lunch, giving everyone a chance to relax, enjoy great food, and spend time together outside of the usual workday. It was a meaningful way to recognize the important role our administrative team plays in keeping everything running smoothly.

National Council on Mental Wellness Conference (NatCon), April 27-30: NKCES had the opportunity to host several member districts at the NatCon conference, creating a valuable space for both learning and connection. Throughout the event, participants engaged in sessions that highlighted innovative practices, leadership strategies, and ways to better support students and communities. Just as important as the learning were the relationships that were strengthened and built among districts. Being able to share experiences, challenges, and ideas in a collaborative setting made the experience especially meaningful. The time together not only sparked new thinking but also reinforced a sense of partnership and shared purpose across districts.

Procurement Update:

Mr. Mike Wilson has been developing a training document and presentation designed specifically for newly hired superintendents. This resource will provide a clear overview of procurement rules, regulations, and compliance expectations to support effective decision-making while remaining compliant with KRS Model 45A regulations. It will also highlight available benefits, tools, and best practices to help maximize resources and ensure responsible stewardship of district funds.

Mr. Wilson has been coordinating with his counterpart at GRREC to conduct self-audits of purchases made through the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) Bids. This process helps verify compliance with procurement agreements and identifies any discrepancies that may require attention. The goal is to maintain transparency, protect district resources, and ensure we are capturing the full financial benefits available. The administrative fee NKCES is scheduled to receive for this reporting cycle is \$17,309.

Facilities:

Building Update: We are currently addressing several facility improvements to maintain the quality and appearance of our spaces. The Synergy Room door has been 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 has been replaced with high quality material that has the scorpion logo to bring school spirit into the space.

Professional Learning (PL) Update:

April Professional Learning: NKCES supported 159 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during April, serving 3,477 educators.

Professional Learning (PL) Consortium: The 25.26 NKCES PL Consortium continued in April with a collaborative meeting. Topics included NKCES [Instructional Team Reports](#) given by IDEA, Ms. Brittney Howell and Learning & Empowerment by Mrs. Emily Giles and Dr. Kim Weber. Our meeting hosted an instructional spotlight from Ms. Melissa Hauke of Amplify, and our partner organization with Ms. Kelsey Rozanski of Kentucky Center for Mathematics (KCM). 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 April with a primary focus on Continuous Improvement and Support of School and Program Improvement. Ms. Erin

Sudduth of KDE attended virtually, providing general updates and answering questions with our group. The meeting ended with a member-led PLC discussion.

District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting: The 25.26 NKCES DAC Consortium continued in April with a collaborative meeting. Topics included SAT Takeaways & Questions, 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, two School ISPROUT data reviews with leadership teams over the course of April. These sessions provided a meaningful opportunity to guide teams through deep reflection on their systems and practices, using data to identify strengths, surface areas for growth, and build alignment around next steps. The process fostered thoughtful dialogue and reinforced a shared commitment to continuous improvement and inclusive outcomes for students.

The NKCES IDEA Team finalized our regional Alternate Assessment Record Reviews in April, completing a comprehensive effort across participating districts. This work is critical in ensuring appropriate participation, strengthening documentation practices, and supporting data-based decision-making for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The findings are informing a regional root cause analysis, which NKCES will submit to KDE in May, and will amplify the targeted assistance we provide to districts by allowing us to tailor supports based on identified needs and trends..

Ms. Brittney Howell, Regional Director of Special Education, facilitated both the April DoSE meeting and the regional School Psychologist PLN, where participants engaged in a targeted session on the use of AI to support practice and decision-making. Across both meetings, teams conducted a deep dive into Alternate Assessment data using the AA Data Dashboard and reviewed regional trends from the Special Education Needs Assessment. These collaborative discussions strengthened data-informed decision-making and supported alignment of priorities across districts and disciplines.

Mrs. Annie Wheatcraft led a comprehensive district-wide Corrective Action Plan training that was exceptionally well received by staff. The session facilitated rich, meaningful dialogue around strengthening behavior intervention plan development, deepening authentic parent input, and improving the clarity and alignment of supplementary aids and services within IEPs. Participants engaged in thoughtful problem-solving and reflection, connecting compliance requirements to high-quality instructional and behavioral supports. The training created a strong foundation for continued growth, with a clear focus on improving outcomes and ensuring meaningful access for students.

Ms. Tasha Taylor led the planning and execution of the Reverse Career Fair, creating a powerful opportunity for students to showcase their strengths and skills directly to employers. The event brought together more than 40 employers, 55 students from 12 schools, 20 school staff members supporting students, 7 community partners hosting resource tables, and 15 NKCES staff. This collaborative effort

highlighted the importance of student-centered transition experiences, strengthened community partnerships, and expanded pathways for postsecondary success.

Dr. Amanda Bell provided an update on services delivered through Perspectives: Skills for Life, highlighting the continued growth and impact of the regional Community-Based Instruction (CBI) partnership. In Quarter 3, the program served 250 students across multiple districts, offering hands-on experiences in authentic environments designed to build independence, vocational skills, and social integration. Students engaged in meaningful activities such as apartment management, culinary tasks, workplace skill development, and community-based social learning. The update emphasized the strength of collaboration between Perspectives staff and district teams, with ongoing feedback driving continuous improvement and differentiation to meet diverse student needs. This work continues to play a critical role in preparing students for successful postsecondary transitions and increasing independence in real-world settings.

Ms. Emily Borchers attended the national LRP Special Education School Law Conference, strengthening our region's capacity to stay current on evolving case law and legal requirements in special education. Her participation ensures NKCES remains informed on national trends, compliance expectations, and best practices, allowing us to proactively support districts with accurate guidance and reduce risk while improving outcomes for students.

Learning and Empowerment Team Update:

School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Services (TISS): In April, efforts remained focused on advancing regional priorities through strategic funding, team development, and meaningful engagement opportunities. A significant milestone this month was the completion and submission of the federal Drug-Free Communities (DFC) grant. This work reflects an ongoing commitment to securing resources that strengthen prevention efforts and support the well-being of communities across the region. Grant writing and exploration of additional funding opportunities will continue to be a priority moving forward. Time was intentionally dedicated to staff support and development, including individual meetings with each team member and the completion of all evaluations (2025-2026 cycle). These conversations provided valuable opportunities to reflect on progress, align goals, and ensure continued growth and effectiveness across the team. April also included the opportunity to host regional educators at the National Council on Mental Wellness Conference (NatCon). This experience offered a powerful space for learning, networking, and collaboration. It was an honor to engage alongside educators and mental health professionals, strengthening connections and bringing back insights to further enhance regional work.

Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS): In April, the Learning Acceleration Specialist (LAS) team continued to build momentum in advancing regional priorities while strengthening statewide impact. A key milestone this month was the official approval of the Universal Continuous Education Option (CEO) rank change by the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), marking a significant step forward in expanding access to high-quality professional learning across Kentucky while earning a rank change. Additionally, April concluded NKCES's work with RIVET, which was successfully implemented as an approved Curriculum-Based Professional Learning (CBPL) experience for all Kentucky Comprehensive Literacy (KYCL) grant awardees, reinforcing the organization's commitment to evidence-based literacy practices. The LAS team also remained deeply engaged in supporting college and career readiness initiatives. Team members supported the Reverse Career Fair and helped to prepare students through mock interviews leading up to the event, helping to build confidence and real-world readiness. New Teachers cadre also concluded with a reflection and connection meeting. Through these efforts, the LAS

team continues to align its work with district needs, promote innovative practices, and strengthen systems that support both educators and students across the region.

Grant Consortium Update:

At the April Grants Consortium meeting, Amanda New from Carroll County reported they will receive 9 Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units. Stephanie Watson of Southgate reported they will receive 3 AED units. Ashley McClure of Covington noted that they are receiving 2 Continuation grants for Community Learning Centers. The Career Exploration grant was submitted by Carroll County.

Grants available

- [Innovative Approaches to Literacy](#) This grant, for up to \$750,000 per year for five years, is open to Carroll, Covington, Dayton, Fleming, Greenup, Lewis, and Newport based on required poverty designations. A meeting of interested districts followed the usual Grants Consortium meeting. Due June 9.
- [Migrant Ed 2026 NORTHERN ONLY](#) This grant was reopened to only the Northern region of the Kentucky Migrant Education Program since no one applied last time they offered it. NKCES staff are preparing an application. Due May 12, \$280,000.

Grants Pending

- [STOP School Violence](#). We are still awaiting notification on this grant to provide training in PREPaRE and CSTAG and other resources for crisis intervention. No date given.
- [Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission](#). Potential announcement in April for this funding for arts integration with substance misuse prevention. (NOTE: We were notified the day after this meeting that NKCES will not receive this funding.)
- [KY Byrne Crisis Intervention Funding 2026](#) . Potential award date is in late September for PREPARE and CSTAG implementation.
- [DFC NEW 2026](#) Submitted April 14. To support sustaining local prevention groups and substance misuse work in schools. Award date likely to be September 30.
- 2025 Arts grant: We received notification that this grant submission, denied last year, has been reopened for consideration! More information to come as it becomes available to us.

Multi-District Grants in Implementation

Trauma-Informed School Services and School-Based Mental Health Services are in process, with Trauma-Informed School Services ending this year and School-Based Mental Health ending in 2027. Ms. Emily Giles reported that schools can expect their usual funding from School Based Mental Health this next year.

Grant Tips and News

Jared Perkins started a transitional period working for nine days in late April and early May. The time was focused on onboarding, meeting NKCES staff, learning the current NKCES grant finding process, reviewing upcoming, current, and past NKCES grants, and beginning introductions with local foundations. This transition time will allow Jared to be fully functioning in the new role at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Regional School Programs (RSP) Update:

- RSP Pathways students will attend their second Community Based Instruction (CBI) trip on May 8.
- RSP will host a field day on May 26.
- RSP's awards and promotion ceremony will be on May 27.
- Our last day of school for students will be May 28, with a noon dismissal.