

NKCES Report – May 2026

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

BEECHWOOD INDEPENDENT

Executive Director Update:

BELLEVUE INDEPENDENT

NKCES Team Meeting, May 4: Our Team meeting was co-led by Dr. Robb Smith and Dr. Amy Razor. The April team meeting provided an opportunity to focus on the mission/vision, share gratitude for a team member's contribution, and provide updates on department work for each team.

BOONE COUNTY

BRACKEN COUNTY

Boone County Meeting, May 5: Dr. Razor met with Dr. Jeff Hauswald to discuss services to the Boone County School District and next steps for our current work. The time meeting together was very productive.

CAMPBELL COUNTY

CARROLL COUNTY

COVINGTON INDEPENDENT

DAYTON INDEPENDENT

Finance Meeting, May 7: Dr. Razor continues to meet monthly with Dr. 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, budgets were reviewed and communicated to the appropriate teams. We also reviewed the possibility of adding more organizations and serving as their fiscal agent. As of today, we have three possible organizations that may need our services.

ERLANGER-ELSMERE INDEPENDENT

FLEMING COUNTY

FORT THOMAS INDEPENDENT

GRANT COUNTY

KDE Call with Co-op Directors, May 8: 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.

GREENUP COUNTY

KENTON COUNTY

LEWIS COUNTY

Executive Committee Meeting, May 8: Dr. Razor met with the Executive Committee to review upcoming board agenda items in preparation for the May board meeting. The committee had thoughtful discussions around several key topics, including the incoming president's role and the insurance proposal.

LUDLOW INDEPENDENT

MASON COUNTY

NEWPORT INDEPENDENT

New Grants and Development Specialist, May 9: Mr. Jared Perkins, Grants and Development Specialist, spent several days at NKCES to learn more about the new role and to meet with the current grant writer and other key team members. On May 9th, Dr. Razor and Dr. Smith met with him to discuss outcomes of the meetings and next steps for the position.

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

OWEN COUNTY

PENDLETON COUNTY

SOUTHGATE INDEPENDENT

Instructional Leadership Meeting, May 11: 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.

WALTON-VERONA INDEPENDENT

WILLIAMSTOWN INDEPENDENT

Apptegy CEO Magazine Highlight, May 12: The NKCES Team was contacted by the National Apptegy CEO Magazine to discuss our current work, which will be highlighted in their upcoming magazine. The conversation centered on Sproutbox and professional learning as an innovative way to meet the needs of educators and leaders.

Board of Directors Meeting, May 13: The May Board of Directors meeting covered several key items, including the election of the incoming president and recognition of the outgoing president.

Facility Tours for upcoming retreats, May 14: A few of the members from the NKCES Operations

team visited sites in Frankfort and Louisville to view the facilities for upcoming retreats. This time provided a strong foundation for our retreats and a thorough understanding of the learning and activities we will create for our teams.

Synergy Meeting, May 18: 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 May meeting focused on a reflection of the year and a review of next steps for the summer.

RSP Graduation, May 27: The Regional School Programs will host an end-of-the-year Celebration of Learning for all students and families. Graduating students were especially recognized and celebrated during this meaningful time together. This annual event provides a positive opportunity for families to connect, reflect on student accomplishments, and strengthen relationships within the school community.

Procurement Update:

Mr. Mike Wilson has continued developing a training document and presentation 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 connected with Newport Leadership in their efforts to procure a new HQIR program for their District. Mike provided documentation from applicable Ky Regulatory Statutes, KDE Policies, and written endorsements from KDE’s legal counsel to assure their District’s Board was in compliance as they proceed with their investment in the new program.

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, have been 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, while students headed off for summer break, teachers stayed behind and worked together to remove desks and classroom furniture to make way for new, modern furnishings that will be in place before students return in August. We are also currently seeking bids for split-unit HVAC systems to replace the building’s aging and inefficient boiler, helping create a more comfortable learning environment for both students and staff.

Professional Learning (PL) Update:

May Professional Learning: NKCES supported 121 professional learning opportunities focused on academics, culture and climate, leadership, and special education during May, serving 2,180

educators.

Professional Learning (PL) Consortium: The 2025.26 NKCES PL Consortium ended in April and the dates have been set for the 2026.27 school year. These meetings are set to occur in-person from 10 am -12 pm on Aug 21, Sep 25, Oct 23, Nov 20, Jan 22, Feb 26, Mar 26, Apr 23.

Title I & Title II Meeting: The 2025.26 NKCES Title I/Title II Consortium ended in April and the dates have been set for the 2026.27 school year. These meetings are set to occur in person from 8 am - 9:30 am on Aug 21, Sep 25, Oct 23, Nov 20, Jan 22, Feb 26, Mar 26, Apr 23.

District Assessment Coordinator (DAC) Meeting: The 2025.26 NKCES DAC Consortium ended in April and the dates have been set for the 2026.27 school year. These meetings are set to occur virtually from 10 am -12 pm on Aug 4, Sep 15, Oct 20, Nov 17, Jan 19, Feb 16, Mar 16, Apr 13.

Professional Learning Networks (PLNs): PLNs provide opportunities for educators to grow professionally in collaborative environments focused on collective learning. Coming soon are our 2026.27 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, centered on strengthening regional support for students with disabilities through data-informed leadership, district professional learning, and continued SERTAC/IDEA planning. Highlights included supporting districts with data dashboard interpretation, facilitating reflection around inclusive practices and iSPROUT systems work, and refining proposal and budget materials to ensure strong alignment with regional priorities. Across these efforts, focus remained on helping districts move from compliance toward coherent systems that improve access, engagement, and outcomes for students.

Dr. Amanda Bell worked on the development of an AI integration tool for the MSD Teacher Retreat at Beechwood. This work is designed to support teachers in thoughtfully using AI to plan, problem-solve, and strengthen instructional supports for students with multiple and significant disabilities. The retreat will also provide MSD teachers with a purposeful professional network where they can collaborate around the unique instructional planning needs of their classrooms. This support is especially important as teachers design meaningful access to instruction, adapt materials, plan communication and engagement supports, and respond to the complex needs of students in highly individualized learning environments.

Mrs. Annie Wheatcraft led her final preschool teacher cadre of the year, bringing together educators to reflect, plan, and strengthen supports for young learners with complex needs. The session focused on practical strategies, collaborative problem-solving, and intentional planning to help preschool teachers continue building inclusive, supportive learning environments for students. The cadre also planned out IEP compliance plans for each preschool teacher in order to guide planning for next year.

Ms. Tasha Taylor coordinated efforts within NKCES and with cross-agency partners to strengthen regional and local literacy support, with a specific focus on increasing educator

knowledge of specially designed instruction in reading. Her work is helping build momentum around region-wide efforts to improve reading outcomes for students with disabilities. Through this coordination, Ms. Taylor is supporting districts in deepening their understanding of how SDI in reading can be intentionally planned, clearly connected to student needs, and implemented in ways that increase access to meaningful literacy instruction.

Ms. Emily Borchers led work on professional learning for the Behavior Institute and continued leading regional behavior task group efforts. This work is especially important given the behavior-related needs emerging across the region. Ms. Borchers also completed Boone County's PLN integration of inclusive school practices, which is being submitted for a national presentation at CEC. This work highlights the region's continued leadership in building inclusive systems and sharing effective practices beyond Northern Kentucky. Through these efforts, Ms. Borchers is helping strengthen regional capacity around proactive behavior supports, responsive systems, inclusive practices, and practical strategies that districts can use to better support students, staff, and school teams.

Ms. Barb Wietlisbach connected with Beechwood, Campbell County, Covington, Ludlow, and Erlanger-Elsmere to plan for and execute the return of assistive technology (AT) loan items. This coordination supports responsible use of regional AT resources and helps ensure materials remain available for students and districts across the region. Ms. Wietlisbach also continued building her knowledge of Canva's accessibility checker to help ensure slide decks meet accessibility guidelines. In addition, she worked on creating an online learning module to support broader access to professional learning and assistive technology resources.

Learning and Empowerment Team Update:




School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) and Trauma-Informed School Services (TISS): In May, Mental Health Awareness Month provided an important opportunity to highlight the significance of promoting student and staff well-being across the region. Efforts throughout the month focused on sustaining momentum around school-based mental health initiatives while planning for the future of this work. The TISS/SBMH Steering Committee met to review logistical updates related to the project and begin planning for the 2026-2027 school year. The committee remains committed to supporting the long-term success and sustainability of these initiatives and will continue meeting throughout the upcoming school year with a focus on sustaining systems, partnerships, and resources beyond the grant period. As a reminder, the TISS grant is scheduled to conclude, as planned, on September 29, 2026. May also provided an opportunity to celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week across the region. Recognizing and honoring educators remains an important component of supporting positive school climates and promoting staff wellness. Appreciation efforts highlighted the dedication and impact of educators who work each day to support student success and well-being. Planning and collaboration will continue throughout the summer to support professional learning efforts across the region for the beginning of SY26-27.

Learning Acceleration Specialists (LAS): In May, the Learning Acceleration Specialist (LAS) team continued to expand opportunities for educators and districts through innovative professional learning, strategic partnerships, and regional support initiatives. This month marked the launch and delivery of the "Change Makers" themed SproutBoxes to 175 educators across the region, providing engaging resources designed to inspire creativity, leadership, and impactful instructional practices. May also celebrated the culmination of LETRS Cohort IV, as more than 50 educators delivered capstone presentations to complete their rank change program. These presentations highlighted the deep learning and instructional growth




achieved through the program and reflected a continued commitment to strengthening literacy outcomes for students across Kentucky. To further advance regional innovation, NKCES submitted a grant proposal to the Horizon Foundation to elevate and expand work on artificial intelligence in education. This effort reflects an ongoing commitment to supporting districts in navigating emerging technologies and preparing educators for future-focused learning environments. Throughout the month, Learning Acceleration Specialists partnered with districts to support Defense of Learning presentations as community partners. In addition, the LAS team dedicated significant time to planning and developing summer professional learning opportunities to ensure districts are equipped with meaningful, high-quality support aligned to identified needs and priorities for the coming school year.

Grant Consortium Update:

Grants available

- [Innovative Approaches to Literacy](#)
-  American History and Civics Education – National Activities
- [Supporting Effective Educator Development \(SEED\)](#)
-  Teacher and School Leadership 26.pdf
-  Teacher Quality Partnership.pdf

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.
-  KY Byrne Crisis Intervention Funding 2026 . Potential award date is in late September for PREPARE and CSTAG implementation.
-  DFC NEW 2026 Submitted by NKCES 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.
-  Migrant Ed 2026 NORTHERN ONLY NKCES applied and was awarded. \$290,000.
- [Innovative Approaches to Literacy](#) This grant, for up to \$750,000 per year for five years, is. Due June 9 and will be submitted by Dayton/Fleming County and Southgate/Greenup County as two applications. Award date likely September 30.

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.

Grant Tips and News

Ms. Vicki Dansberry's last day of work is expected to be June 16. Grant support going forward will be available from Jared.Perkins@nkces.org beginning July 6.

Regional School Programs (RSP) Update:

- RSP closed out our year with some fun events! We held Field Day on May 26, Awards and Promotion on May 27, and the final day for students was on May 28.
- RSP will have new furniture arriving this summer, in June!
- Students' first day will be August 12 for the 26-27 school year.