

Summary of August 2026 KY K-12 Education Technology Leaders' Virtual Meeting

In case you missed it or want a refresher, the following is what we talked about during the August 18, 2026, EdTech leaders' virtual meeting. A copy of the video and audio can be found at: <https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/technology/2026/08/edtech-webcast-august-18-2026/>.

Public viewing of the archived webcasts and written summaries are also available on the KDE Media Portal at: <https://mediaportal.education.ky.gov/technology/district-technology-leadership-webcast/>. Numbers in **RED** indicate the timestamp for that portion of the discussion so it can be easily located on the full digital recording.

This was a joint meeting with our OET staff and all the districts joining via Microsoft Teams and/or YouTube. We will continue to make these available from our KDE media portal so that you can watch the archived discussion and share with the appropriate people in your district. Poll questions were posed throughout the meeting and district EdTech leaders were asked to respond as it assists us in planning and getting a feel for how to best move forward. Your voice and your feedback are important and extremely helpful to us. Please remember that in addition to these webcasts being available on the KDE Media Portal, each month's webcast is accompanied by these written summaries. We encourage you to share the link and all or any portion of these summary notes with staff throughout your district who may find the information beneficial to them in their position.

(2:14) KETS Funding SY 2026-2027 and School Facility Construction Commission (SFCC)

Update: David provided an update on the approval process for the KETS budget and operations, highlighting the Kentucky Board of Education's approval for disbursement of the \$15.4M and the crucial role of the SFCC, led by Kristi Russell, in distributing KETS funds to districts and managing escrow processes.

- **Approval Process Overview:** David explained that the Kentucky Board of Education approved the KETS Operational Plan on August 6th that allows disbursement of our \$15.4M budgetary allotment, and the next step is approval by the SFCC on September 2 before financial offers of assistance may be processed and sent to school districts.
- **Commission's Role and History:** The SFCC, traditionally responsible for construction funds, also distributes KETS technology funds using established mechanisms, requiring districts to set up interest-bearing accounts and match funds equally.
- **Escrow and Fund Management:** Districts can escrow KETS funds for up to three years, preventing rushed spending and allowing for better planning; no district has ever failed to use the funds within this period in the program's 35-year history.
- **Recognition of Key Individuals:** David acknowledged Kristi Russell's leadership of the SFCC and Mike Leadingham's historical contributions to the KETS program, emphasizing the strong partnership and effective fund management that supports Kentucky's KETS program.
- **Current Year Funding:** A \$25 per ADA KETS offer of assistance will be distributed this school year, with the SFCC managing the process and ensuring proper use and defense of KETS funds.

(7:37) KY K-12 Student Technology Academic Standards Update: The regulation and standards document that is incorporated by reference were approved by the Local Superintendents' Advisory Council (LSAC) on 28 July and by the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) during their meeting on 6 August. During the presentation to the KBE, we also took the opportunity to discuss the topic of screen use and AI. With approval, the regulation and standards document will continue through the regulatory process before final legislative approval.

(8:41) KY K-12 Connected User Experience System (CUES) & Rapid Identity Implementation

Update: Chuck and David discussed the near-completion deadlines of the Rapid Identity rollout, the challenges of standardizing data and processes across districts, and the ongoing need for support, training, and future enhancements involving Infinite Campus, Tyler Munis, and Identity Automation.

- **Implementation Status:** Chuck reported that only three districts remain to go live with Rapid Identity, with most districts in 'hyper care' support mode for the first two weeks of school and emphasized the importance of staying connected with enablement leads and technical teams. The initial deadline of August 31 is really just the beginning.
- **Challenges and Standardization:** David and Chuck highlighted the complexity of the project, noting that while Infinite Campus data is well-standardized, Munis implementations vary by district, requiring increased standardization and process alignment for successful identity management.
- **Future Enhancements:** Planned improvements include developing new APIs with Tyler Munis and Infinite Campus to enhance data exchange, visibility, and attribute management, with a focus on unified communication and business practice uniformity.
- **Lessons Learned and People Focus:** Both speakers stressed that the main challenges are people- and process-related rather than purely technical, and that ongoing training, communication, and adaptation are essential for long-term success. There are a lot of moving parts and upcoming deadlines. This is one of the most challenging initiatives that we've taken on in the past 35 years of the KETS program, and it is hard work for all involved. Count the wins no matter how small! Winston Churchill once said, *"If you're going through hell, keep going"*.
- **Cybersecurity Focus:** Chuck announced a cybersecurity 'level up' strand at the upcoming KAST fall event, aiming to shift focus from just single identity to secure identity for students and staff, with differentiated security levels as needed.

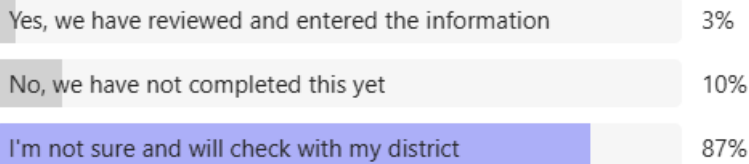
(23:44) FCC E-Rate NPRM and District Feedback Process: Mike Leadingham, Jody Rose, and David discussed the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on E-Rate, the public comment period, and the critical need for Kentucky districts and vendor partners to provide feedback to protect essential funding.

- **E-rate Program Info:** Since the birth of the federal e-rate program in 1996, KY K-12 has regularly been a top 5 recipient in the amount of funds received per student. In 2026 it will bring in \$62M (\$45M to districts and \$9M to KDE and \$8M local match) for KY K-12 education technology. The FCC recently announced that they are considering making major changes to the E-rate program. This could have major negative financial consequences to every school, district office, and KDE office.
- **NPRM Comment Timeline:** Mike explained that the initial public comment period is open now through October 13th, with a reply comment period through November 12th. KDE will submit a response on behalf of KETS while encouraging districts to submit their own feedback as well. David encouraged this practice so that the FCC hears directly from the individual districts on the importance of this program. ALL the details are available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/14/2026-16590/fcc-to-review-e-rate-program-to-ens...>
- **Communication and Guidance:** Jody confirmed that KDE has distributed or is distributing guidance to districts, including a Google form for collecting district input to inform the collective, statewide response that will remain open and available for a few more weeks.
- **Potential Impact:** David emphasized that any reduction or loss of E-Rate funding would have a devastating annual impact on Kentucky schools, affecting networking components, technology refresh cycles, and overall district operations.
- **Encouragement for Broad Participation:** All stakeholders, including districts and vendor partners, were urged to submit comments to the FCC to ensure the importance of E-Rate funding is clearly communicated at both state and national levels.

(29:54) KY K-12 Data Systems Update: Dede provided updates on the proactive post-secondary admissions program (HB307), school report card data entry, technology readiness data, and ongoing efforts to minimize social security numbers in district systems, with reminders about upcoming deadlines and available training.

- **Post-Secondary Admissions Program (HB307):** Districts are now able to enter directory definition information for the proactive post-secondary admissions program as required with the passage of HB307 into Infinite Campus, with guidance and notifications provided to relevant KSIS staff.

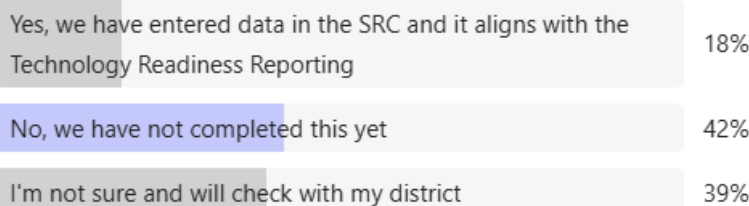
Have your directory definitions been entered into the Infinite Campus FERPA Directory Definition tool, which opened for district entries on July 8?



30 responses

- **School Report Card and Technology Readiness:** The School Report Card is now open, and districts are entering and/or reviewing school safety data, educational opportunity data, and overview data to ensure accuracy before public release. Districts must ensure technology readiness data aligns with district numbers and complete all required entries by the end of September, as this data is used for civil rights reporting.

Have you entered and/or reviewed the Access to Technology data for the 2025-2026 School Report Card?



38 responses

- **Social Security Number Minimization:** Districts are encouraged to reduce the number of social security numbers stored using the new tool, especially for former students, and to participate in upcoming FERPA and data security training sessions offered by the US Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center or PTAC.

(32:39) KY K-12 Network Components RFP Update: Mike updated the group on the status of the RFP process for new E-rate eligible networking contracts, confirming that proposal submission has closed and the evaluation phase is beginning, with new contracts expected to be in place ahead of the next E-rate filing window.

- **RFP Timeline and Next Steps:** The proposal submission period for new network contracts closed on August 14, and the evaluation process will take two to three weeks, followed by contract awards within one to two months, ensuring readiness for the next E-rate filing window.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** The process involves collaboration between OET, district input, KETS field staff, the Office of Finance and Operations, and the Finance Administration Cabinet, with an emphasis on staying on schedule. Mike shared his appreciation for all the team members who have worked on this effort.

(35:21) Cybersecurity Health Check and Phishing Incident Response: David and Bob discussed the importance of the annual cybersecurity health check, recent phishing incidents at KDE, and the agency's approach to staff training and incident response, including the upcoming 'Don't Ever Hesitate to Hesitate' training.

- **Health Check Deadline:** Districts are reminded to complete the legislatively required cybersecurity health check by the end of August, using it as an opportunity to brief local BOE leadership on risks and progress.
- **Recent Phishing Incident:** In this instance, an email came to a KDE staff member from another Kentucky state agency. The “phish” was embedded within what looked like a voicemail—a new, more sophisticated approach. The link was opened and it set off close to 2000 emails being sent out from the initial “phish”; this was quickly contained by the KETS Service Desk and the Security Team.
- **Training and Awareness:** The upcoming all-staff training, titled '**Don't Ever Hesitate to Hesitate**,' will focus on encouraging staff to pause and verify suspicious emails, with the message that no one should feel pressured to click without confirming legitimacy.
- **Vendor Partner Security:** Bob urged vendor partners to enhance their own cybersecurity training, as attackers increasingly target vendors with the intent to access district data.

(44:38) Reminder: The 2026 KY K-12 Technology Activity Report (TAR) and Digital Readiness Report are due by September 15, 2026. If you have any questions about these, please contact your field staff for details and assistance.

(44:54) Screen Use Guidelines and Legislative Engagement: David and Marty led an in-depth discussion on the development of screen use guidelines for Kentucky schools, the need for balanced perspectives in response to external criticism, and the importance of local decision-making, with input sought from districts to refine the guidance.

- **Background and Motivation:** It has always been a core tenet of the KETS program to have a good educational plan and to apply the technology to enhance and further that educational plan using technology as an amplifier rather than a pacifier. Other mentions during this conversation were the important role of our digital learning coaches and our digital citizenship and digital driver license programs. The screen use guidelines were prompted by the new academic standards for technology along with increased public and legislative scrutiny on screen use restrictions, including external advocacy for strict screen time limits and potential future funding reductions.
- **National and State Perspectives:** David shared insights from other states, including Delaware, North Carolina, and Utah, on tracking and managing screen use, and highlighted Kentucky's leadership in balancing technology integration with educational goals.
- **Local Control and Data-Driven Decisions:** The guidance and feedback during the conversation emphasizes that decisions about technology use should remain at the district and classroom level, supported by tools like GoGuardian for tracking actual usage and ensuring alignment with educational plans.
- **Healthy Digital Diet/Cloud-Based Management Concepts:** Districts are encouraged to self-regulate and avoid excessive screen use, with the concept of a 'healthy digital diet' promoted as a best practice, rather than imposing blanket restrictions or legislative mandates. Also important is to note the significant savings over the years as the national leader in cloud-based management that crosses instructional, administrative, and financial management systems.
- **Feedback and Next Steps:**
 - Districts are asked to review the published screen use guide and provide feedback, which will inform presentations to the legislature and public, as well as ongoing updates to the guidance. It can be accessed at: **kets.news/screens**.
 - David encouraged everyone, regardless of your role, to have these discussions at the school and district level. It is something that can and will impact instruction if it is not addressed in a balanced perspective.
 - Marty Park will be part of a panel filming an upcoming episode of Kentucky Tonight that centers around the screen use topic. An air date will be shared when available.
 - David, Marty, and Micki Marinelli will be presenting to the Interim Joint Committee on Education on this topic on 1 Sept; we also anticipate questions around the technology standards and Artificial Intelligence (AI).