

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the First Meeting of the 2025 Interim

June 3, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The first meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on June 3, 2025, at 11:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Stephen West, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Scott Lewis, Co-Chair; Senator Stephen West, Co-Chair; Senators Danny Carroll, Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, Gerald A. Neal, Aaron Reed, Reginald L. Thomas, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Tina Bojanowski, Steve Bratcher, George Brown Jr., Emily Callaway, Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Vanessa Grossl, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Bobby McCool, J.T. Payne, Marianne Proctor, Steve Riley, Sarah Stalker, Aaron Thompson, and Timmy Truett.

Guests: Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education; Dr. Jennifer Stafford, Director, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education; Brian Creasman, Ed.D., Superintendent, Fleming County School District; Dr. Jesse Bacon, Superintendent, Bullitt County School District; Kelly Foster, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement Support, Kentucky Department of Education; Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, Kentucky Department of Education; Gretta Hylton, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education; Meredith Brewer, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness, Kentucky Department of Education; Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Career and Technical Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Bart Flener, Chief Executive Officer, Green River Regional Education Cooperative; Cassie Zenner, Chief Learning Officer, Green River Regional Education Cooperative; Beth Davisson, Senior Vice President, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Foundation; Dr. Bob Lawson, Superintendent, Henderson County School District; Rhonda Caldwell, Ed.D., Executive Director, and Dr. Kathy Fields, Ed.D., Kentucky Association of School Administrators; Tara Thomas, Government Affairs Manager, AASA, The School Superintendents Association;

Todd G. Allen, General Counsel, Kentucky Department of Education; and Matthew Courtney, Policy Advisor, Kentucky Department of Education.

LRC Staff: Yvette Perry, Lauren Busch, Joshua Collins, Emily Wiley, Peter Wright, and Angela Rhodes.

Kentucky's New Assessment and Accountability Model Update

Dr. Fletcher, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), shared priorities for the new assessment and accountability system focused on vibrant learning experiences, encouraging innovation, especially around assessment, and creating a bold new future for Kentucky's schools through collaboration with their local communities. The Kentucky United We Learn Council aims to reach its 2026 goal of a reimagined assessment and accountability system.

Dr. Bacon, Superintendent, Bullitt County School District, discussed Bullitt County's community-based accountability framework, built around six community-identified pillars of expectations: student learning, safety and well-being, fiscal and operational care, community collaboration and engagement, engaged and well-rounded students, and life readiness.

Mr. Creasman, Ed.D., Superintendent, Fleming County School District, discussed the aspirations and common expectations of the accountability model.

In response to Representative Bojanowski regarding how students' math and reading test scores explain their performance on other assessments, Dr. Fletcher stated there is a lot of correlation data that districts have collected individually to speak to how assessments can indicate performance in other subjects.

In response to Representative Callaway, Dr. Stafford stated Kentucky received one of the Competitive Grants for State Assessments from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) in 2022, which is a four-year grant that funds the Kentucky United We Learn Council.

In response to Senator Meredith regarding student inequities in rural communities, Dr. Fletcher stated districts are collaborating with local and neighboring communities to give students needed opportunities. Dr. Fletcher also stated science is being pulled out of the state accountability formula, but is still being reported independently.

Representative Decker commented that she appreciates all the work being done regarding skills, testing, and community involvement.

In response to Representative Stalker, Dr. Bacon stated more awareness has been created in poverty areas. Poverty areas will become a part of the expectation conversations.

Federal Education Policy and Its Impact on States

Tara Thomas, Government Affairs Manager, AASA, The School Superintendents Association, discussed key actions under the USDE, whose three priorities are literacy, school choice, and returning education to the states.

Ms. Thomas discussed reduced and eliminated elements of the USDE. The USDE has downsized, but is not eliminated, partly through actions relating to education funding in fiscal years 2025 and 2026. The budget reconciliation bill, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in the United States House of Representatives on May 22, 2025. Ms. Thomas then highlighted topics of federal interest, including assessment and accountability, student privacy, United States Supreme Court cases, and workforce development and career technical education.

In response to Representative Camuel, Ms. Thomas stated the \$20 billion over four years (\$5 billion each year) is a limitation on how much can be spent under the budget reconciliation bill. Ms. Thomas stated there are not many rules regarding reporting requirements and transparency at this time.

Educational Leadership Training Opportunities in Kentucky

Senator West stated a survey from the Southern Regional Education Board was taken of teachers to identify why they were leaving the profession. The leading issue was leadership within the school building. An Office of Education Accountability study in Kentucky showed the same results. Senator West stated that it is the wish of the Senate that there be a more organized approach to providing leadership training.

Kentucky Department of Education

Kelly Foster, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement Support, KDE; Gretta Hylton, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, KDE; Meredith Brewer, Ph.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness, KDE; and Beth Hargis, Ed.D, Associate Commissioner, Office of Career and Technical Education, KDE, shared information regarding leadership opportunities and standards KDE offers to schools and districts across the state. KDE also provides leadership opportunities specifically for educators in special education, literacy, and math.

Green River Regional Educational Cooperative

Bart Flener, Executive Director, and Cassie Zenner, Chief Learning Officer, Green River Regional Educational Cooperative, discussed how their leadership coaching academy provides evidence-based professional learning and coaching experiences to individuals serving in district and school leadership roles, including those who aspire to become highly effective educational leaders. Participants work collaboratively to expand knowledge, skills, and strategies around the topics of organizational systems, communication strategies, and managing self.

Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

Beth Davisson, Senior Vice President, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and Dr. Bob Lawson, Superintendent, Henderson County School District, discussed the Leadership Institute for School Principals program, which is an executive-level leadership program that focuses on developing and mastering key leadership dynamics for 45 principals annually. The program has shown principals achieving at higher levels, along with increased math and reading scores and higher teacher retention.

Kentucky Association of School Administrators

Rhonda Caldwell, Ed.D., Executive Director, Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA), and Dr. Kathy Fields, Ed.D., KASA, discussed how KASA is Kentucky's largest and most diverse organization of public-school leaders, with over 3,200 members from every school district in the state. This extensive membership enables KASA's advocacy efforts to be deeply informed through a comprehensive understanding of educational practices and policies across the entire P-12 spectrum.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

704 KAR 3:315 – Certification of Nonpublic Schools. (Proposed) Todd G. Allen and Matthew Courtney were present to address questions regarding the regulation.

In response to Representative Bojanowski, Mr. Allen stated this is a new administrative regulation to put in place a formal process that the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) will use to designate the Kentucky Nonpublic Schools Commission as the entity responsible for selecting accrediting bodies and then presenting to the KBE those nonpublic schools to be approved by the state board.

No action was needed on this item.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.