

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

September 16, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on September 16, 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: Senator Stephen West, Co-Chair; Representatives Scott Lewis, Co-Chair; James Tipton, Co-Chair; Senators David P. Givens, Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, Steve Rawlings, Reginald L. Thomas, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, and Max Wise; and Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Tina Bojanowski, George Brown Jr., Emily Callaway, Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Mike Clines, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, J.T. Payne, Marianne Proctor, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, Aaron Thompson, Timmy Truett, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Laura Arnold, Director of Workforce Development, Nelson County Schools; Mary Taylor, Industry Training and Development Specialist, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Julia Wynn, Director of State Government Affairs, Code.org; Dr. Sheri McGuffin, Manager of Development and Innovation, AdvanceKentucky; Monique Rice, Program Director of Computer Science Initiatives, AdvanceKentucky; Alicia Sells, Chief Executive Officer, We Lead CS; Dr. Sean Jackson, K-12 Computer Science Lead, Office of Education Technology, KDE; and Dr. Demetrus Liggins, Superintendent, Fayette County Public Schools (FCPS).

LRC Staff: Yvette Perry, Joshua Collins, Emily Wiley, Peter Wright, and Jay Harris.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Representative Massaroni, seconded by Representative Proctor, to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2025, meeting. The minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

2025 RS SB 253

Senator Higdon; Laura Arnold, Director of Workforce Development, Nelson County Schools; and Mary Taylor, Industry Training and Development Specialist, KDE, testified on 2025 RS SB 253 regarding teacher apprenticeships for K-12 teachers within Nelson County schools.

In response to Representative Payne, Ms. Taylor said cost is the biggest barrier for the apprenticeship program. Ms. Arnold explained the program's interview process for high school students pursuing an apprenticeship.

Co-Chair Tipton shared some of the positives of the apprenticeship program.

Responding to Representative Camuel, Ms. Arnold stated guaranteed job placement, tenure, and participation in the retirement system, are considerations when looking at the program's future.

Computer Science and AI Literacy

Julia Wynn, Director of State Government Affairs, Code.org; Dr. Sheri McGuffin, Manager of Development and Innovation, AdvanceKentucky; Monique Rice, Program Director of Computer Science Initiatives, AdvanceKentucky; Alicia Sells, Chief Executive Officer, We Lead CS; and Dr. Sean Jackson, K-12 Computer Science Lead, Office of Education Technology, KDE, testified on computer science education in Kentucky.

Responding to Senator Thomas, Mr. Jackson stated the teacher side of AI is just as important as the student side, and that discussions with teachers on AI need to take place.

Senator Givens commented on the importance of teaching algorithms during early childhood.

Fayette County School District Budget Update

Dr. Demetrus Liggins, Superintendent, FCPS, presented on the current budget.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Liggins testified some information is under investigation. He stated there was an increase in special education students that led to unplanned costs, a deficit of funding in food service, and preschool transportation, along with having the most tenured and experienced staff over the last couple of years which led to high staffing costs.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Liggins stated the data excludes pre-kindergarten staff. He stated the fastest growing populations are students who do not speak English as their first language and special education students, all of which require more resources.

Responding to Representative Massaroni, Dr. Liggins stated the budget working group members were selected by recommendations from the chamber of commerce, teacher organizations, and principals.

Responding to Representative Massaroni, Dr. Liggins stated the working group was told there was a \$42 million anticipated contingency fund. The group recommended the \$16

million gap be taken from the contingency fund.

Responding to Senator Thomas, Dr. Liggins stated student achievement is the most important thing and keeping the focus on kids. He emphasized the need to have systems in place to ensure student achievement and teacher success.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Liggins stated the claim of him flying first class for trips was not true. He stated the goal for professional learning opportunities is to bring back to the district what is necessary to help impact students. Regarding the Australia trip, Dr. Liggins stated there was a school shooting the day before the trip requiring a last-minute schedule change. He stated he would welcome the Auditor of Public Accounts to look at how FCPS can be more efficient and be better stewards of tax dollars.

Senator Tichenor stated the need for the FCPS board to be transparent.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Dr. Liggins stated FCPS does not anticipate the need to borrow money due to revenue decreases.

In response to Representative Camuel, Dr. Liggins stated he was not provided accurate information on the budget and the deficit. He stated the budget department includes a variety of positions, and anyone within the department could have informed him about the budget situation. Dr. Liggins stated he did combine the budget department and finance department, however, the merger occurred before he knew about the current situation.

Representative Camuel shared her concerns regarding FCPS' cash flow, and the broken trust of the public. Dr. Liggins agreed with Representative Camuel's remarks and stated building trust is his responsibility.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Liggins stated he was not opposed to having more members on the FCPS board to allow for better representation of constituents within the community.

Responding to Representative Willner, Dr. Liggins stated board members do receive a monthly financial report. During the last meeting, board members were asked what financial information they would like to receive.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Liggins stated in his experience he receives everyone's best behavior because of his position, he is looking into possible trust issues occurring at the leadership level in the FCPS.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Liggins stated he prides himself on being open and wants the information being provided by him to be accurate.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:15 PM.