

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

November 4, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on November 4, 2025, at 11:00 AM in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Scott Lewis, 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; Representative James Tipton, Co-Chair; Senators Danny Carroll, David P. Givens, Jimmy Higdon, Steve Rawlings, Aaron Reed, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, and Mike Wilson; and Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Tina Bojanowski, Steve Bratcher, George Brown Jr., Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Daniel Grossberg, Vanessa Grossl, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Marianne Proctor, Felicia Rabourn, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, Aaron Thompson, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Ann Puckett, Board Member, United Way of Southern Kentucky (UWSK); Craig Browning, Regional Chairman, UWSK; Rob Clayton, Superintendent, Warren County Public Schools, Board Member UWSK; Melody Cooper, Policy Advisor, Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL), Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Andrea Bartholomew, School Readiness Branch Manager, OSEEL, KDE; Jon Akers, Executive Director, Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS); Shannon West, State School Security Marshal; Amy Riley, President, Kentucky School Counselor Association (KSCA); Alex Carney, Chief Strategy Officer, Critical Response Group (CRG); Jim Flynn, Ed.D., Executive Director, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS); Barry Lee, Superintendent, Casey County School District, KASS; Nancy Hutchinson, Chief Executive Officer, Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC); and David Young, Chief Executive Officer, Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC).

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Representative Massaroni, seconded by Representative Banta, to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2025, meeting. The minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

United Way of Southern Kentucky

Committee meeting materials may be accessed online at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/28>

Ann Puckett, Board Member, UWSK; Craig Browning, Regional Chairman, UWSK; and Rob Clayton, Superintendent, Warren County Public Schools, Board Member, UWSK, presented on readiness tools for kindergarteners that parents can use to teach their children early development skills to improve their learning capability.

Co-Chair Tipton commented parents are the key to education outcomes and success.

Representative Jackson commented on the need to start at the home level to help teach parents how to assist their preschoolers with learning and the necessity of expanding to the entire state.

Mr. Browning discussed the procedures the program uses for parents and guardians to assist their child in early learning development before entering kindergarten. He stated the program is available for those seeking assistance in early childhood learning.

Responding to Representative Calloway, Dr. Clayton stated there is a large group of families living in chaos. Chaos can be any number of challenges such as poverty, education level, and substance abuse. By providing education tips to parents, we can find ways to improve early brain development.

Responding to Representative Stalker, Ms. Puckett stated children from birth to the age of five are eligible for these resources. If there are multiple children in the home, they can receive the benefit of the program as well.

Responding to Representative Stalker, Mr. Browning stated parent educators are trained not only in the program but in community programs, and can direct families to needed resources.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Ms. Puckett stated the curriculum is from a national parent educator program. It is a proven program. The goal is to magnify the curriculum by looking at markers and goals, and walking parents and guardians through the program step by step to achieve those early learning goals.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Mr. Browning stated if the district could be a pilot program, they would. The district wants to help people who want to help themselves.

Preschool Education

Melody Cooper, Policy Advisor, OSEEL, KDE, and Andrea Bartholomew, School Readiness Branch Manager, OSEEL, KDE, presented on Kentucky's preschool education program.

Responding to Representative Willner, Ms. Cooper stated there should not be a waitlist for

preschool services in districts. The services should be provided immediately for those students with income eligibility or a disability. Approximately 20 percent of kids who are eligible do not participate.

Responding to Representative Banta, Ms. Bartholomew stated they have not worked with the Born Learning Program.

Responding to Representative Banta, Ms. Bartholomew stated they do not have data on third grade reading levels in their system but could likely get that information.

Representative Camuel commented on the importance of investing in early childhood and the need for the General Assembly to fund preschool.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Ms. Bartholomew stated all star ratings are by school sites not districts and the average state rating is 4 out of 5 stars.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Ms. Cooper stated training is provided through the regional training centers who cover topics of early literacy, early numeracy skills, and positive behavior supports.

Responding to Senator Rawlings, Ms. Cooper stated the social and emotional domain has improved over time since KDE began studying the kindergarten readiness results.

Responding to Representative Grossl, Ms. Cooper stated the program funding is expiring at the end of the year. However, there are some preschool quality partnership grants available for districts partnering with a childcare facility within their community. The early childhood regional training centers often invite community partners to their training.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Ms. Cooper stated KDE has not gotten into the weeds of what would be necessary if a universal public preschool system were to pass in Kentucky. Workforce, facilities, transportation, and stability of the program would need to be studied. We do not have the data on what the impact would be for school districts.

School Safety Updates

Jon Akers, Executive Director, KCSS; Shannon West, State School Security Marshal; Amy Riley, President, KCSA; and Alex Carney, Chief Strategy Officer, CRG, presented on various areas of school safety.

Responding to Representative Bratcher, Mr. Akers stated Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has 73 School Resource Officers (SRO), but he does not know how many are in an administrative role. SROs should be in the buildings from 8AM to 3PM to build

relationships. JCPS uses SROs for weapons detection and then they cruise around district facilities until called.

Responding to Representative Bratcher, Mr. Akers stated JCPS has trained SROs but JCPS is using them differently than the rest of the state.

Responding to Senator Williams, Ms. Riley stated school counselors would not make a decision about inviting pastors into schools to counsel students but can encourage community engagement. He stated a school counselor's role is to support all students. It is not to indoctrinate but to keep students safe. If a school counselor is bringing in their own personal beliefs, that would be a violation of American School Counselor Association standards. A school counselor's responsibility is to help meet the needs of students in a school setting.

Responding to Senator Williams, Ms. Riley stated school counselors will follow Kentucky law. School counselors do not interfere with student and parental rights but support parental rights.

Kentucky Association of School Superintendents

Jim Flynn, Ed.D., Executive Director, KASS, and Barry Lee, Superintendent, Casey County School District, KASS, testified on the Kids First Kentucky initiative created by the KASS.

Educational Cooperatives

Nancy Hutchinson, Chief Executive Officer, KEDC, and David Young, Chief Executive Officer, CKEC, presented on what the education cooperatives provide as services to school districts.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Mr. Young stated an average sized school district pays approximately \$7,000 to \$8,000 for membership in CKEC.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Ms. Hutchinson stated KEDC employees generally come in as members of the Kentucky Teachers Retirement System (KTRS) because most are experts in their field having previously been teachers or administrators. Some new employees come from adult education, which means they may not be members of KTRS. KEDC has several employees who are members of the county and state retirement systems.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:07 PM.