

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

September 1, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on September 1, 2026, at 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT 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 Danny Carroll, Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, Gerald A. Neal, Steve Rawlings, Aaron Reed, Reginald L. Thomas, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, Mike Wilson, and Max Wise; and Representatives Shane Baker, Tina Bojanowski, Steve Bratcher, George Brown Jr., Emily Callaway, Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Beverly Chester-Burton, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Daniel Grossberg, Vanessa Grossl, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Bobby McCool, J.T. Payne, Jason Petrie, Marianne Proctor, Felicia Rouborn, Steve Riley, Sarah Stalker, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Alison Bell, Regional Vice President, Central Region, Western Governors University (WGU); Amy Rucker, Senior Program Manager, WGU; Sarah Cummins, Program Mentor, WGU; Dr. Kim Zeidler-Watters, Executive Director, Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform; Dr. Lee Todd, President Emeritus, University of Kentucky (U.K.); Senator Phillip Wheeler; Anikaa Sharma, Student, Pikeville High School; David Couch, Associate Commissioner, KY K-12 EdTech Leader & Chief Information Officer, Office of Education Technology, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Dr. Marty Park, KY K-12 Chief Digital Officer and KY K-12 Deputy Chief Information Officer, Office of Education Technology, KDE; Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning, KDE; Kristi Russell, Executive Director, School Facilities Construction Commission (SFCC); Dr. Harry Burchett, Superintendent, Harrison County School District; Dr. Ryan Clark, Superintendent, Bardstown Independent School District; Thom Cochran, Superintendent, Johnson County School District; Lisa McCane, Superintendent, Augusta Independent School District; Todd Allen, General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner, KDE; and Lauren Moore, Division Director, Division of School and Community Nutrition, KDE.

LRC Staff: Yvette Perry, Lauren Busch, Joshua Collins, Emily Wiley, and Jay Harris.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Representative Massaroni and seconded by Representative Bratcher, to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2026, meeting. The motion passed by voice vote.

Western Governors University Student Teaching Program

Alison Bell, Regional Vice President, Central Region, WGU; Amy Rucker, Senior Program Manager, WGU; and Sarah Cummins, Program Mentor, WGU, presented how WGU positively impacts career pathways in Kentucky, including teacher preparation.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Ms. Rucker stated that students have in-person clinical studies and student teaching. Ms. Cummins added that mentors are there to assist students as they work within the classroom.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Ms. Cummins stated there are challenges with participating in clinicals and working full-time jobs. Ms. Rucker followed up, saying clinical hours are a challenge they are looking at in every state.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Ms. Bell described what competency-based education looks like.

Science Education

Dr. Kim Zeidler-Watters, Executive Director, Partnership Institute for Math and Science Education Reform and Dr. Lee Todd, President Emeritus, U.K., presented on improving science education in Kentucky through establishing and funding the Kentucky Center for Science Education.

Responding to Senator Thomas, Dr. Zeidler-Watters talked about informational texts that are introduced in classrooms outside of English class and the need for more. Dr. Todd discussed the importance of science in supporting math learning and allowing students to invent new products.

Co-Chair Tipton stated his support for funding science education in Kentucky.

Senator Williams stated that cognitive thinking and critical analysis need to be emphasized.

Solid Waste Management in Kentucky Public Schools

Senator Phillip Wheeler and Anikaa Sharma, Student, Pikeville High School, discussed a proposal to increase recycling and decrease solid waste within Kentucky schools.

Technology and Artificial Intelligence in Kentucky Schools

David Couch, Associate Commissioner, KY K-12 EdTech Leader & Chief Information Officer Office of Education Technology, KDE; Dr. Marty Park, KY K-12 Chief Digital Officer and KY K-12 Deputy Chief Information Officer, Office of Education Technology, KDE; and Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning, KDE, presented on technology and the use of artificial intelligence within Kentucky schools.

School Facilities

Kristi Russell, Executive Director, SFCC and Krystal Smith, Executive Administrative Secretary, SFCC, presented on school funding projects and challenges that have occurred pre- and post-pandemic.

Responding to Chair West, Ms. Russell stated there are many factors as to why the offers of financial assistance are dropping, and stated time constraints are a major factor impacting material costs due to inflation.

Responding to Senator Williams, Ms. Russell stated she can provide data to track state funding.

Responding to Representative Stalker, Ms. Russell stated buying material in bulk would help save on fluctuating costs, including tariffs.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Ms. Russell stated the design-build process is a good concept to discuss.

Dr. Harry Burchett, Superintendent, Harrison County School District; Dr. Ryan Clark, Superintendent, Bardstown Independent School District; Thom Cochran, Superintendent, Johnson County School District; and Lisa McCane, Superintendent, Augusta Independent School District, presented on school construction projects supported by appropriations in 2024 RS HB 6.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Mr. Cochran discussed limitations districts have in responding to increases in costs and the need for supplemental funding, such as in Johnson County. Dr. Burchett discussed growth districts, aged-out facilities, and converting older school buildings into modern school buildings.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Burchett and Mr. Cochran clarified the timeline of previous legislative actions and how funding kept projects moving forward during the pandemic.

Responding to Chair West, Dr. Burchett stated his anticipated project estimates for Harrison County, stating estimates change due to bid packages being costly and the bidding contractors not offering long-term bids due to fluctuating costs.

Ms. McCane presented Augusta Independent's current project timeline for a multipurpose educational gymnasium facility available for community use.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

Todd Allen, General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner, KDE and Lauren Moore, Division Director, Division of School and Community Nutrition, KDE, were present to answer questions pertaining to the referred administrative regulations.

Responding to Representative Callaway, Ms. Moore stated the reasoning for establishing the Child Nutrition Information and Payment System deadline on the 30th day of each month.

Responding to Representative Callaway, Mr. Allen offered support for an amendment to 702 KAR 003:220 to ensure notices are provided to parents and guardians rather than students when handling fee waivers.

702 KAR 003:220 Proposed

Guidelines for waiver of school fees.

Actions: Motion was made and seconded to defer 702 KAR 003:220. The motion passed by voice vote. KDE agreed.

702 KAR 006:110 Proposed

Claim reimbursement for school and community nutrition programs.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned.