

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 7th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

December 9, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The seventh meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on December 9, 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 Danny Carroll, David P. Givens, Jimmy Higdon, Stephen Meredith, Steve Rawlings, Aaron Reed, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, and Mike Wilson; and Representatives Shane Baker, Kim Banta, Tina Bojanowski, Steve Bratcher, Emily Callaway, Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Daniel Grossberg, Vanessa Grossl, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Bobby McCool, J.T. Payne, Marianne Proctor, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, Aaron Thompson, Timmy Truett, and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Representative Chris Lewis; Kelli Gowan, Executive Director, KY FIRST Robotics; Student Representatives, Whitefield Academy; Scott Koloms, Founder and CEO, Canopy KY; Adam Watson, Education Director, Canopy KY; Kelly Foster, Ed.D, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Todd Allen, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, KDE; Travis Powell, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE); and Michael Frazier, Executive Director, Kentucky Student Rights Coalition.

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

Approval of Minutes

The November 4, 2025, meeting minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Robotics Education

Representative Chris Lewis; Kelli Gowan, Executive Director, KY FIRST Robotics; and Student Representatives, Whitefield Academy, testified on the future of robotics within the manufacturing sector.

Canopy KY

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

Scott Koloms, Founder and CEO, Canopy KY, and Adam Watson, Education Director, Canopy KY, presented their program snapshot for FY 2026, along with a request for funding to assist Kentucky businesses to grow.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Mr. Watson stated that the 5th grade program is facilitated through Junior Achievement. When entering the biztown program, one of the businesses they can participate in is Canopy. The high school initiative is an eight-classroom unit that layers onto an existing business curriculum, which allows teachers to find which courses best fit the material.

Comprehensive Support and Improvement

Kelly Foster, Ed.D, Associate Commissioner, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, KDE, and Todd Allen, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, KDE, testified on School Improvement Efforts.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Dr. Foster stated if a Comprehensive and Support and Improvement (CSI) school does not show progress after two years or exits after three years, the Office of Continuous Improvement and Support can provide more rigorous intervention. KDE has been working with Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) for 18 months providing additional support based on their implementation of High Quality Instructional Resources (HQIR) through monthly trainings.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Dr. Foster stated KDE is working closely with JCPS Superintendent Dr. Yearwood and participated in a discussion with JCPS principals that highlighted the issues and challenges they are facing and the supports needed.

Responding to Representative Massaroni, Dr. Foster stated that schools with graduation rates below 80 percent are low and would be identified as CSI.

Responding to Senator Higdon, Dr. Foster stated she wished the bottom five percent of schools were not low performing schools. She stated her office builds leadership capacity and systems in schools so that when state support leaves, those schools can move forward.

Responding to Representative Jackson, Dr. Foster stated it takes someone with intensive training on how to build teams and work well with the community to help improve a low performing school. Dr. Foster also stated that a principal cannot move a school forward alone. School level leadership, district level leadership, and teachers are moving parts that need to be performing at a high level with their HQIR. These moving parts need to be at a high level and monitored by building the principal along with district leadership.

Representative Bojanowski stated how districts are measured is an issue. With school

choice being popular, better performing students are enrolling into magnet schools and leaving lower performing students in other schools. Representative Bojanowski stated that saying JCPS is failing is disingenuous. The system is problematic.

Postsecondary Credit Alignment

Representative Grossl, and Travis Powell, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, CPE, testified on supporting transfer students and student success.

Responding to Representative Clines, Representative Grossl stated that a couple of research institutions are not in support. By making these changes legislatively, it allows the General Assembly to request reports and data on transfer pathways to see if transfer students are getting a degree. Students should not be graduating with 150 credit hours for a 120-credit hour degree program. Graduates need to be in the work force.

Responding to Representative Riley, Representative Grossl stated KCTCS has been very helpful with the transfer pathway.

Responding to Senator Givens, Dr. Powell stated if a credit was awarded, it would be assumed that those learning outcomes occurred. Dr. Powell stated the issue is if the transfer student is really getting those learning outcomes. If the learning outcomes are aligned, then the transfer student should be able to take higher-level classes.

Responding to Senator Givens, Dr. Powell stated that general education transfers are available. The issue is those courses and learning outcomes in majors outside general education programs like nursing, biology, and psychology that are program specific.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Representative Grossl stated that CPE wants to reward institutions that are supporting statewide transfer pathways. Florida has already had success.

Responding to Senator Wilson, Dr. Powell stated they can get more pathways and assist students by showing what credits and which classes they do not need to take.

Chair West commented on how we should never sacrifice quality instruction.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in K-12 Settings

Senator Tichenor and Michael Frazier, Executive Director, Kentucky Student Rights Coalition, testified on 2026 RS BR 1149 to eliminate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) within K-12 settings.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Senator Tichenor discussed discriminatory

concepts. Dr. Foster acknowledged teachers are focusing on the wrong things, which could correlate to DEI.

Responding to Representative Camuel, Senator Tichenor stated education is one of the foundations for building economic opportunities, and provided information on JCPS' Diversity Equity and Poverty Department.

Responding to Representative Camuel, Senator Tichenor emphasized JCPS' refusal to follow federal guidelines.

Responding to Senator Rawlings, Senator Tichenor discussed the consequences of moving away from education fundamentals and the use of remedial classes.

Responding to Representative Willner, Senator Tichenor discussed the ineffectiveness of discipline in schools. Mr. Frazier commented on the DEI definition used within the KEEP Act.

Responding to Representative Stalker, Senator Tichenor discussed how DEI has impacted how teachers teach.

Responding to Representative Calloway, Senator Tichenor discussed how funding can weave into DEI.

Responding to Representative Decker, Senator Tichenor highlighted the exclusions within 2026 RS BR 1149.

Responding to Chair West, Senator Tichenor stated finding how much JCPS has spent on DEI programs and initiatives has been difficult.

Responding to Chair West, Senator Tichenor stated certain DEI preferences could be a violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

No action was taken on this item at this time.

739 KAR 001:080 *Proposed* - Issuance of bonds.

704 KAR 003:440 *Proposed* - Primary school program guidelines.

Adjournment

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

PM.