

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the 2026 Interim

July 6, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The second meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on July 6, 2026, at 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT in Room 154 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Steve 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, and Mike Wilson; and Representatives Shane Baker, Tina Bojanowski, Steve Bratcher, George Brown Jr., Emily Callaway, Mike Clines, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Daniel Grossberg, Vanessa Grossl, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, J.T. Payne, Jason Petrie, Marianne Proctor, Felicia Rabourn, and Steve Riley.

Guests: Dr. Julia Link Roberts, Executive Director, Center for Gifted Studies (CGS), Western Kentucky University (WKU); Delaney Stephens, Meaningful Diplomas Director, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence; Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL), Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Sarah Medley, Policy Advisor, KDE; Amanda Brown, parent; Dr. Jared Horvath, Chief Operating Officer, LME Global; Emily Cherkin, The Screen Time Consultant, LLC; Dr. Brian Creasman, Superintendent, Fleming County Schools; Whitney Shannon-Wilson, Principal, Fleming County Schools; Aaron Timmons, Executive Director, Advance Kentucky; Chad Collins, General Council, Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA); Julian Tackett, Commissioner, KHSAA; and Todd Allen, General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner, KDE.

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Senator Williams, seconded by Senator Tichenor, to approve the December 9, 2025, minutes. The motion passed by voice vote.

A motion was made by Representative Jackson, seconded by Senator Williams to approve the June 2, 2026, minutes. The motion passed by voice vote.

Advanced Coursework in Kentucky Schools

Dr. Julia Link Roberts, Executive Director, CGS, WKU, and Delaney Stephens, Meaningful Diplomas Director, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, testified on advanced coursework in Kentucky schools.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Mr. Stephens provided reasons for 39 school districts having no advanced coursework enrollment, such as districts not providing Algebra I in middle school. Dr. Roberts said district plans for addressing advanced coursework should be posted on district websites, but compliance is not uniform, making some information unknown.

Responding to Senator Williams, Dr. Roberts stated most advanced coursework is delivered through credit hours, but there are other methods. Mr. Delaney said the state is moving in the right direction with additional investments, like 2026 RS HB 257, creating vibrant learning connections from classroom learning to real-life skills. WKU is looking forward to the findings of a comprehensive study of middle school mathematics.

Aaron Timmons, Executive Director, Advance Kentucky, testified on Algebra I within middle schools and Advance Kentucky's goal to provide tools and support for teachers and school districts.

Responding to Representative Payne, Mr. Timmons said teacher certification is a barrier to having quality teachers ready to teach Algebra I.

Responding to Representative Grossberg, Dr. Roberts agreed there are many challenges to providing Algebra I to all middle schools, including philosophical pushback. Mr. Timmons stated some schools are hesitant because Algebra I content goes beyond 8th grade math standards. Students are tested on the grade 8 standards, leading administrators to fear students would not be assessed accurately.

Mr. Delaney informed the committee that within a few months CGS should have additional data to respond to member questions.

Responding to Representative Massaroni, Dr. Roberts said the Education Professional Standards Board is assessing certification requirements and changes will be made to potentially address teacher eligibility to teach Algebra I in middle school.

Responding to Senator Neal, Mr. Delaney stated the scaffolding process to help students build an early foundation is critical for student access to academic opportunities.

Responding to Representative Callaway, Mr. Timmons stated financial literature skills could be embedded within Algebra I along with project learning, real-world applications, and vibrant learning experiences. Mr. Delaney discussed the new financial literacy requirement for Kentucky high school graduates, including individual learning plans to connect with advanced coursework activities.

Dysgraphia and Dyslexia

Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, OTL, KDE; Sarah Medley, Policy Advisor, KDE; and Amanda Brown, parent, presented on issues and efforts surrounding students with dyslexia and dysgraphia.

Responding to Ms. Brown's experience with her son, Senator Thomas discussed his similar experience with a family member.

Responding to Representative Proctor, Ms. Marinelli stated KDE is expanding their support for teacher professional learning, including coursework on dyslexia. Ms. Brown said that dyslexia is classified as a "specific learning disability" in many states, which causes issues. When she brought testing results to her son's individualized education plan meeting, the committee would not consider it.

Responding to Chair West, Ms. Brown stated she has taught kindergarten for 14 years and was a curriculum coordinator for 7 years, and never received information on dyslexia.

Screen Time in Schools

Dr. Jared Horvath, Chief Operating Officer, LME Global; Emily Cherkin, The Screen Time Consultant, LLC; Dr. Brian Creasman, Superintendent, Fleming County Schools; and Whitley Shannon-Wilson, Principal, Fleming County Schools, presented on the effects of technology use within classrooms.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Horvath said the reading comprehension segment of the former SAT test consisted of inferential questions about a 750-word passage. With the SAT digital test, students read a single sentence, answer one fact-based question about the sentence, and then move on to the next sentence. Rather than

assessing reading, this is assessing the student's ability to skim for key points within a sentence.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Horvath stated a positive aspect of reading from a book versus a screen is improved spatial recognition.

Responding to Representative Baker, Dr. Horvath said digital learning will never be to the same as analog learning. The only time to utilize digital learning is for metacognition, where you know so much that you can drive your own learning, which is not developed until college. Removing all tech from schools is not a realistic goal, but setting limits within primary and secondary schools can help regulate digital usage.

Responding to Senator Rawlings, Dr. Horvath stated the introduction of educational technology use was driven by Microsoft introducing inexpensive laptops to schools. Vested interests have been promoting technology in academia as a good investment, while data is showing a different story. It is up to citizens to say digital tools are not working.

Responding to Representative Grossl, Dr. Horvath said technology was a stop-gap measure during the pandemic. The issue now is to identify it as a tool used to increase efficiency. By students using technology, they are creating things, but they are not learning when, where, or why something happened. Training teachers on technology and best use has been going on for 20 years. A satisfactory answer has yet to be found.

Responding to Representative Jackson, Dr. Horvath suggested online tests return lower results than paper tests, which can be statistically hidden. Some assume that if the tests are online, learning should be online. Students should learn using analog, then as the student gets closer to testing, train for the digital assessment platform.

Responding to Representative Jackson, Dr. Horvath said virtual schools tend to work for 5 to 10% of online students. The other 90 to 95% of students would do better in a classroom.

Responding to Representative Bojanowski, Ms. Cherkin recommended to take end-of-year tests on paper. For adaptive purposes, there might already be certain learning disabilities that receive a paper test. Dr. Horvath stated every state has universally moved to digital. Delaware is introducing legislation to allow parents to opt kids out of tech during school, but it includes only "non-essential tech use" due to testing being digital. Ms. Cherkin added some families may not be able opt out of testing because of graduation requirements.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Creasman said 2016 was when testing became fully digital. Ms. Cherkin stated there are multiple aspects of modern classrooms that would need to change to move away from technology.

Consideration of Referred Administrative Regulations

Chad Collins, General Counsel, KHSAA; Julian Tackett, Commissioner, KHSAA; Todd Allen, General Counsel and Deputy Commissioner, KDE; Melody Cooper, Policy Advisor, KDE; and Andrea Bartholomew, Director of Early Learning Unit, KDE, were present to answer questions pertaining to the referred administrative regulation.

Responding to Representative Jackson, Mr. Tackett stated the legislature gives the KDE and the Kentucky Board of Education overarching authority to designate an agent to manage athletics.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Mr. Collins said there is an annual meeting with the membership to consider proposals to change bylaws. The KHSAA board looked at the transfer rule and eligibility criteria. The board found there was a need to give additional opportunities for a waiver of ineligibility for students who participated in less than 25% of varsity contests after entering grade 9.

Responding to Chair West, Mr. Allen stated 704 KAR 003:410 focuses on preschool education programs for 4-year-old children. This administrative regulation had reached its 7-year expiration date, and the agency determined upon review that changes were needed to modernize the administrative regulation. It was last updated in the early 1990s.

Responding to Representative Decker, Ms. Cooper stated it was not the KDE's intention to diminish the role of parents. The state-funded preschool program relies heavily on parental involvement, required family visits, and parental voice during the evaluation. Another administrative regulation on preschool requirements details parental involvement. Ms. Bartholomew indicated the All STARS quality program rates each state funded preschool program site and the program requires at least 3 family engagements throughout the school year. The rating program also requires parental input on surveys and feedback forms to build connections with parents throughout the entire preschool program.

702 KAR 005:130 *Proposed* - Non-school bus passenger vehicles.

702 KAR 007:065 *Proposed* - Designation of agent to manage middle and high school interscholastic athletics.

704 KAR 003:305 *Proposed* - Minimum requirements for high school graduation.

704 KAR 003:410 *Proposed* - Preschool education program for four (4) year old children.

Actions: Motion was made and seconded to defer 704: KAR 00:3:410. The motion passed by voice vote. KDE agreed.

781 KAR 001:001 *Proposed* - Definitions.

781 KAR 001:010 *Proposed* - Office of Vocational Rehabilitation appeal procedures.

781 KAR 001:020 *Proposed* - General provisions for operation of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

781 KAR 001:030 *Proposed* - Order of selection.

781 KAR 001:040 *Proposed* - Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Adjournment

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