

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2026 Interim

August 4, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The third meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education was held on August 4, 2026, at 11:00 AM ET/10:00 AM CT 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: Senator Stephen West, Co-Chair; Representatives James Tipton, Co-Chair; Scott Lewis, Co-Chair; Senators Danny Carroll, Stephen Meredith, Gerald A. Neal, Steve Rawlings, Aaron Reed, Lindsey Tichenor, Gex Williams, Mike Wilson, and Max Wise; and Representatives Shane Baker, Emily Callaway, Josh Calloway, Adrielle Camuel, Jennifer Decker, Steven Doan, Ken Fleming, Vanessa Grossl, David Hale, Kevin Jackson, Candy Massaroni, Bobby McCool, J.T. Payne, Jason Petrie, Sarah Stalker, and Timmy Truett.

Guests: Ella Zilberman, President, KY FIRST Student Board of Directors, Outreach Lead, FTC 11225 DELTA Robotics; RJ Bidleman, Vice President, KY FIRST Student Board of Directors, Programming Lead and Team Captain, FRC 3814 PiBotics; Ben Malito, Member, KY FIRST Student Board of Directors, Programming Lead and Driver, FRC 2783 Engineers of Tomorrow; Rob Clayton, Superintendent, Warren County Public Schools (WCPS); Dr. Sarah Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, WCPS; Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE); Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, KDE; Sarah Medley, Policy Advisor, KDE; and Dr. Jennifer Stafford, Associate Commissioner, KDE.

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

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Senator Tichenor and seconded by Senator Reed, to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

KY FIRST Robotics

Ella Zilberman, President, KY FIRST Student Board of Directors, Outreach Lead, FTC 11225 DELTA Robotics; RJ Bidleman, Vice President, KY FIRST Student Board of

Directors, Programming Lead and Team Captain, FRC 3814; and Ben Malito, Member, KY FIRST Student Board of Directors, Programming Lead and Driver, FRC 2783 Engineers of Tomorrow, presented on KY First Robotics.

Responding to Senator Williams, Mr. Bidleman stated most robotics teams are school and community based.

Kindergarten Transition and the IMPACT Center for Leadership and Innovation

Rob Clayton, Superintendent, WCPS, and Dr. Sarah Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, WCPS presented on transitional kindergarten and the IMPACT Center for Leadership & Innovation.

Responding to Representative Payne, Dr. Johnson said most IMPACT Center students qualify for preschool.

Responding to Co-Chair Tipton, Dr. Johnson said students who participate in transitional kindergarten are counted in the state count for kindergarten funding.

Responding to Co-Chair West, Dr. Johnson stated she would share studies pertaining to the long-term outcomes for students who complete preschool.

Representative Jackson applauded WCPS for their effort to help English language learner students in a district where students speak over 100 languages.

Senator Wilson expressed his amazement with the progress WCPS has made over the past 14 years.

Responding to Senator Meredith, Mr. Clayton stated WCPS is waiting on more specific guidance on implementation of 2026 RS HB 1 but plans to have a scholarship granting organization.

Responding to Senator Carroll, Mr. Clayton and Dr. Johnson stated preschool eligibility is based on income and verified disability, and a need for childcare centers persists to serve all families in Warren County.

Responding to Senator Williams, Dr. Johnson stated that kindergarten readiness scores predict proficiency scores in 3rd grade, middle school, and high school.

Responding to Senator Tichenor, Dr. Johnson stated the Kentucky Center for Statistics and Infinite Campus track student data over time.

Responding to Senator Wise, Mr. Clayton informed the committee of his research in developing the IMPACT Center.

Responding to Senator Rawlings, Mr. Clayton stated the IMPACT Center uses strategic learning opportunities to empower students to learn through play.

Kentucky's Reading and Math Improvement

Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner, KDE; Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, KDE; and Sarah Medley, Policy Advisor, KDE, presented on Kentucky's reading and math score improvement.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Scores

Dr. Robbie Fletcher, Commissioner, KDE; Micki Ray Marinelli, Chief Academic Officer, KDE; and Dr. Jennifer Stafford, Associate Commissioner, KDE, presented on NAEP scores.

Responding to Representative Truett, Dr. Stafford informed the committee that last year's knowledge, skills and abilities scores will be released to districts next week.

Co-Chair West commented on KDE's success in implementing Read to Succeed and Numeracy Counts initiatives.

Responding to Representative Grossberg, Mrs. Marinelli stated she can provide information on a Marion County grant to encourage innovation.

Co-Chair Tipton commented on the "southern surge," a description of southern states' success in emulating Mississippi's literacy success.

Co-Chair Lewis commented on Kentucky's NAEP scores relative to Mississippi's NAEP scores.

Adjournment

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