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Screen time in the classroom topic of legislative committee

By Jordan Hensley - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislation on screen time in the classroom could be in the works for the 2027 legislative session.

Lawmakers heard from critics of one-to-one digital technology usage in the classroom during the Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting on July 6.

Teacher turned neuroscientist Dr. Jared Horvath told the committee that research from more than 90 countries shows digital technology use in the classroom results in lower test scores.

In Kentucky, this is also true, he said. Kentucky began the transition to one-to-one in 2016. The year before Kentucky went digital, math and reading scores were the highest they had ever been for fourth graders, Horvath said.

“Since 2016, you adopted tech. Math has gone down four points to the lowest levels we’ve seen since 2006, and reading dropped 10 points, lower than it has ever been in Kentucky history,” he said.

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced students to be fully digital for some of the last decade, Horvath said the pandemic is not the main source of the problem.

“I took COVID out of the data. It doesn’t matter,” he said. “What we’re seeing is not unique to your state ... I could do this for all 50 states.”



Sen. Steve Rawlings, R-Burlington, asks about one-to-one digital technology use in K-12 schools in the U.S. during the Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting on July 6.

Horvath said learning using digital methods is always “shallower, weaker and less durable” than learning done with analog methods, and that “digital literacy is not determined by the amount of tech you use, it’s determined by the amount of knowledge you have.”

Sen. Steve Rawlings, R-Burlington, asked Horvath where the push for more technology in the classroom came from.

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“Was it big tech?” he asked. “A mom sent me a 2017 article that said that the National Education Association’s top priorities were a digital curriculum over an in-person ... Was it evidence-based?”

Horvath said the decision to introduce the individual use of tablets and laptops into classrooms was “never” evidence-based. He said mass introduction occurred when a leading computer company invented a laptop that didn’t sell well. The company decided to recoup costs by selling it cheaply to schools, he said.

Rep. Shane Baker, R-Somerset, asked Horvath about what age screen time use is appropriate and

how much screen time is acceptable.

Horvath said removing all tech from schools is not a realistic goal, however, primary schools “could get away with never touching tech.” Technology use in the classroom for older students should be “very, very regulated,” he added.

Advocate Emily Cherkin also spoke to the committee about the dangers of technology use in the classroom.

“In my professional opinion, one of the most harmful things we have done to our children in American schools is to give them internet-

connected devices built by for-profit technology companies and call it educational, and then to act surprised when test scores plummet, mental health declines and skill-building and cognition erode,” she said.

Cherkin urged lawmakers to consider scaling back digital technology use and access in schools, and require schools obtain full and informed consent from parents before children engage with technology use in the classroom. She also suggested allowing parents to opt-out of any ed-tech offerings and to provide those students with an equal

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Lawmakers receive update on implementation of recent legislation

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Lawmakers heard July 1 from Kentucky’s commissioner of education about efforts to implement recent legislation on accountability standards in the commonwealth.

House Bill 257 calls for the state’s education accountability standards to focus on student growth. It would also reduce state testing, prioritize attendance and allow districts to adopt locally defined quality indicators. Lawmakers passed the legislation during the 2026 Regular Session.

Legislation implementation was discussed during Wednesday’s meeting of the Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee. Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher said it’s extremely important for local districts to align indicators with Kentucky academic standards.

“We want students to have the opportunity to apply real-world skills, real world content,” he said. “...We have so many students that are getting opportunities for internships, for apprenticeships. How can we make that a bigger part of the accountability model if that’s something that your local community is asking for?”

Skills such as communication, collaboration and problem-solving will be considered, Fletcher said.

“Again, I believe that reading, mathematics, our test scores are import-



Sen. Matthew Deneen, R-Elizabethtown, speaks during the July 1 Education Assessment and Accountability Review Subcommittee meeting about implementation of House Bill 257.

has to show how it addresses Kentucky standards. And you know already we have graduation requirements in financial literacy and in other parts thereto. So, districts can, and every district I’ve seen a local accountability, will have assessments in math reading, science and social studies.”

ant. But our students are much more than a test score, and they need to have the opportunity to demonstrate learning in other ways,” he said.

Among the changes to the state assessment system, officials are removing portions related to on-demand writing and editing, and districts must adopt a writing policy.

With the accountability system, officials are removing school climate and safety indicators and adding indicators related to individual student growth in reading, mathematics and chronic absenteeism.

Co-Chair Sen. Matthew Deneen, R-Elizabethtown, asked Fletcher about local accountability, including such topics as civics, history and financial literacy. He also asked how this would be handled on a district-by-district basis.

“On a local accountability measure, that’s up to the school district,” Fletcher said. “Now, every single school district has to have standards. It

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Legislators receive medical cannabis update, express concerns

By Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislators on the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture expressed concerns about affordability and opportunities for Kentucky farmers during a presentation on July 2 on medical cannabis in the commonwealth.

Committee Co-Chair Rep. Myron Dossett, R-Pembroke, said he's uncertain if Kentucky farmers are benefitting from the program as they should. He said farming and farmers are vitally important in Kentucky, and that's why the issue was part of Thursday's meeting.

"I want to make sure that our Kentucky farmers were fairly treated through the process of putting the regulations and the licensures together because I cannot think of anyone I have more faith and trust in than our Kentucky farmers of doing something like this," he said.

Medical cannabis patient Ricky Wayne Hunt of Hopkinsville testified that he was diagnosed with cancer of the spinal cord when he was 10 years old. He said he continues to have tremendous pain, and he reached out to Dossett about the price of medical cannabis in Kentucky.

"What I kind of had was sticker shock when I first went to the dispensaries here," Hunt said, explaining the price was cheaper in a different state.

Hunt said he wonders where the disparity comes from and if it will change over time.

Staff members from the state's Office of Medical Cannabis and the Kentucky Cannabis Industry Alliance also testified during the meeting.

Sam Flynn, special adviser to the governor and chief deputy general counsel of the Office of Medical Cannabis, answered Dossett's questions concerning prices of medical cannabis. Dossett said Hunt is paying for medical cannabis out-of-pocket.

"Five of our seven surrounding states had a medical cannabis program before we did," Flynn said. "Several of them had an adult use program before we did. And so, the price, their markets are



Rep. Ryan Bivens, R-Hodgenville, speaks July 2 during the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture meeting.

more mature. They produce more cannabis and therefore the price is going to be significantly lower in those states versus a state where you're just getting up and operational."

Flynn said Kentucky is in a great place now for medical cannabis and is continuing to open cultivation facilities and processing facilities, which will move things along at a much faster pace.

"I think what you'll see is that price is going to come down and ultimately level off at a stable price that people can certainly afford. We've seen that there's significant demand in the commonwealth," he said.

According to the Office of Medical Cannabis, there were 584 applications for 16 available cultivator licenses. To obtain a medical cannabis license, interested parties must complete an application that is reviewed and goes through a lottery process. Then, selected applicants undergo an inspection prior to approval.

Flynn and Rachel Roberts, executive director of the Kentucky Cannabis Industry Alliance, explained how medical cannabis production in Kentucky is subject to specialized statutory and regulatory requirements. They include enclosed

and locked facilities, testing standards, inventory tracking and security requirements.

"Because of how much volume is in the Michigan market, it's not tested the way our Kentucky patients' products are tested," Roberts said. "It's not grown by our growers here...everything here is grown in Kentucky. It's tested in Kentucky. It meets the standards that you as the lawmakers put in place. And that's the kind of medicine I want our Kentucky patients using."

Flynn agreed with Roberts.

"Just a little bit about cannabis cultivation in Kentucky – all cannabis cultivation in Kentucky has to be done indoors. So, this is again about the intent that this is a safe, secure, medical grade product," he said.

Sen. Matthew Deneen, R-Elizabethtown, said he has spoken with constituents who have expressed concerns about privacy issues when they seek medical cannabis cards.

Flynn said his office provides patient information only to law enforcement agencies to determine if there are qualifying felony offenses.

Rep. Ryan Bivens, R-Hodgenville, said he is a believer in return on investment.

"We have got patients that are dealing with higher prices," he said. "...Maybe we just need to can this and open it back up so they can go to other states and buy this because I think we're wasting a whole lot of money."

Dossett said he wants Kentuckians to be able to access medical cannabis more affordably.

"I feel that the governor's decision to roll back this so far as allowing these patients who desperately need this help to be able to go out of state, you're leaning to guide them toward the streets and purchasing something illegal because of the costs. So, we do want to be very cautious about that," he said.

Judiciary committee hears testimony from lawmakers on geoengineering

By Jenni Glendenning - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Three legislators presented testimony to the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary on July 2, asking lawmakers to consider creating penalties for geoengineering activities in Kentucky.

Rep. John Hodgson, R-Fisherville; Sen. Steve Rawlings, R-Burlington; and Rep. Jim Gooch Jr., R-Providence; all spoke in favor of the proposal, which lawmakers have discussed in past sessions of the Kentucky General Assembly.

Hodgson and Rawlings introduced a measure in the 2026 legislative session intended to outlaw intentional weather manipulation and atmospheric pollution. However, the legislation stalled in committee.

Hodgson defined geoengineering Thursday as “attempts by government or even non-governmental actors to modify the global climate or temperature, like playing God with the weather.”

He explained there are multiple ways this can be accomplished, including through stratospheric aerosol injection, marine cloud brightening and cirrus cloud thinning.

Other states have passed geoengineering bans, including Tennessee, Florida and Louisiana, and 34 states are working on, or have filed legislation on, the issue.

Hodgson said proposed penalties include a class D felony and a \$500,000 fine, noting that intentional release of pollutants in the upper atmosphere is illegal.

“A class D felony is necessary because a fine of any size would not be a deterrent for the federal government or for wealthy NGOs who are interested in carrying out these activities,” he said.

Hodgson argued that personal criminal liability for participants would make convictions more likely.

Sen. Danny Carroll, R-Paducah, asked if there have been simulations to determine any impact geoengineering may have on the atmosphere.

Hodgson said not to his knowledge. “It’s difficult to simulate an atmospheric stack that’s 50,000 feet tall.”

Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, R-Taylor Mill, asked for further clarification, noting that she is trying to understand why a corporation would intentionally engage in geoengineering.

Hodgson referenced cloud seeding in his testimony and said eight or nine western states license and permit the activity.

Cloud seeding is where silver iodide is injected into cloud seed to form ice



Rep. John Hodgson, R-Fisherville, discusses proposed penalties for geoengineering during the July 2 meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary.

crystals and make rain or snow over farmlands or ski areas, which some claim can increase the output of a rain cloud by about 15 percent, he said.

Hodgson said it’s an uncertain science and that accusations that some may be trying to manipulate storms alarms the public. He said he doesn’t know if it’s happening in Kentucky, but if so, “we want them to quit.”

Committee Co-Chair Rep. Daniel Elliott, R-Danville, asked if this bill was modeled from any other state, and Rawlings said lawmakers looked at efforts in Rhode Island and New Hampshire. He said the issue crosses partisan boundaries.

Hodgson clarified that geoengineering does not include contrails or vapor trails from ordinary jet aircraft, crop dusting, ground source pollution or airport fog control. These items “would not be included in this bill,” he said.

Hodgson said the main purpose of the bill is to express state sovereignty and to convince the U.S. Congress to act on the issue.

Lawmakers cannot take up legislation until the Kentucky General Assembly convenes in a regular or special session. The next regular session is scheduled to begin in January.



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educational experience.

Artificial intelligence use in the classroom is another concern, Cherkin said, especially generative AI. She told lawmakers generative AI is “dangerous” for children and asked lawmakers to consider a recent call for a five-year pause on generative AI use in pre-K through 12th grade.

Here in Kentucky, Fleming County Schools is already looking at ways to reduce digital technology usage in the classroom. Superintendent Dr. Brian Creasman told the committee the students have started to ask for less technology-driven learning.

He said the district’s school board is in the process of approving a new screen time policy that would limit screen time use to 45 minutes per day for grades K-5, 60 minutes per day for grades 6-8 and 90 minutes per day for grades 9-12.

“We really want learning to take place in our classrooms that’s more meaningful to students and more relevant, but that also prepares students for the real world,” he said.

Committee co-chair Sen. Stephen West, R-Paris, said Monday’s discussion only “scratches the surface” of the topic of screen time in schools. He

believes it is a topic lawmakers will continue to study throughout the interim.

“I can already tell from our presentations that there may be some legislation forthcoming,” he said.

The Kentucky General Assembly cannot take action on legislation until the 2027 legislative session begins on Jan. 5.

The next Interim Joint Committee on Education meeting is scheduled for 11 a.m. on Aug. 4. For more information, visit legislature.ky.gov.

Implementation of recent legislation, from page 2

Fletcher said districts may also use resources of their choosing to go above and beyond.

Co-Chair Rep. Timmy Truett, R-McKee, asked if some of these initiatives have already been used in some districts.

“I like the fact that this local accountability gives the districts flexibility, but correct me if I’m wrong,” he said. “Is this something that has been going on for a long time in some of these districts?”

Fletcher said nearly 160 districts out of 171 have completed the Portrait of a Learner community-informed competency markers. They can include things such as collaboration, communication and problem-solving.

Considering varying aspects of student develop-

ment is part of the improvements, Fletcher said.

“As far as accountability, 92% of the people we’ve surveyed in our very first survey asked that we move from change – instead of comparing cohorts of students, to look at individual student growth,” he said.

Fletcher said many stakeholders have offered valuable information and feedback during the changes, including legislators.

“We’ve had several representatives who have been a part of our Kentucky United We Learn meetings, and I’m so thankful for that. But they help shape these ideas as we move forward. We also did nine town halls to get information to arrive where we are today,” he said.

Truett asked for clarification on implementation.

“So, this new accountability system is for this upcoming school year?” he said.

Fletcher said that is the case.

“The testing system that we just completed will be on the old system. ... For example, the school safety and climate will still be a part of what’s reported in the fall. As we move forward, the next one will have chronic absenteeism and then we’ll also be looking at growth,” he said.

The next steps for Kentucky’s accountability system are the first reading of regulations in July and August, the second reading of regulations in September and October and a public comment period in November and December, Fletcher said.

Committee Meetings

Minutes for Statutory Committees that met recently may be found at the following sites:

Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Banking and Insurance:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/B&I/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Education:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Education/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCF&C/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Health Services:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCHS/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Judiciary/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc_Gov/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR_&_E/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on State Government:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/St_Gov/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Transportation:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes_all.html

Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:

https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes_all.html



2026 Interim

**LEGISLATIVE
RECORD**

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