

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT THE **MAY 2026**  
MEETING



**CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUMMARY**

**NOV 13, 2025**

**ATTENDANCE:** Sen. Jimmy Higdon, Gerald Brinson, Alisher Burikhanov, Beth Engle, Kendra Goodpaster, Lauren Graves, Beth Hargis, Mike Hesketh, Leah Jefferson, Dexter Knight, Lori Looney, Mike Madding, John Phillips, Mike Stone, Tom Thompson, Amy Tracy, Troy Watts, Kayla Williams, Michelle Wilson

**ABSENT:** Bobby McCool, Max Wise, Hope Harp, Kyle Kelly, Harmony Little, Brian Welch, Michael Yoder

**Agenda Item:** Welcome and Introductions

**Presenter:** Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

**Summary of Discussion:**

Hargis called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. ET and welcomed the committee.

**Agenda Item: Roll Call**

Hargis called the roll and confirmed members who were in attendance. A quorum was declared present.

**Agenda Items:** Approval of Minutes from May 7, 2025, Meeting

**Presenter:** Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE)

**Summary of Discussion:**

Gerald Brinson made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Alisher Burikhanov. Minutes were approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item: Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) Staffing Updates**

**Presenter:** Beth Engle, Division Director, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

### **Summary of Discussion:**

Engle shared the Office of Career and Technical Education staffing updates with the committee.

Nathan Little was named the OCTE communications specialist and Tabitha Berger was named the new computer science and media arts program consultant. Sheila Dishman joined the OCTE as budget specialist.

The office is still seeking to fill the SkillsUSA state advisor position, with hopes of announcing the new hire soon and a potential start date of Dec. 16.

## **Agenda Item: Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness Updates**

**Presenter:** Tom Thompson, Division Director, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

### **Summary of Discussion:**

Thompson discussed the division's focus on integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into Career and Technical Education standards, including the development of AI-specific pathways, ethical use standards, and the launch of an AI Fellowship program in partnership with the University of Louisville.

**AI Pathway Development:** The Warren County Impact Center for Leadership and Innovation was granted a local pathway for the 2026-2027 school year, dedicated solely to AI within computer science. The division is considering a statewide AI pathway and adding AI-related standards to existing career pathways.

**Ethical and General AI Standards:** Efforts are underway to incorporate ethical use of AI, general AI use and AI in the workplace into academic and employability standards, ensuring these are relevant across all pathways and tailored to specific program areas.

**AI Fellowship Program Launch:** A partnership with the University of Louisville will launch the AI Fellowship program, starting in January and culminating at the Kentucky Association of Career and Technical Education (KACTE) summer conference. Selected educators will pilot various AI-assisted classroom tools, share experiences, and contribute to an AI toolbox resource for CTE teachers. The division aims to support teachers in adapting to rapid technological changes by providing resources and professional development focused on AI integration, including monthly meetings and a capstone project.

Thompson announced a historic \$11 million donation from the Bill Gatton Foundation to the Kentucky FFA Foundation. The FFA Leadership Training Center will be renamed the Carol Martin Gatton Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center. Additional funding of \$5.233 million

is requested to complete the activity center construction, and \$2.55 million is sought for a comprehensive pool renovation due to accessibility and age-related issues. The foundation will support more scholarships for FFA members and chapters, increase prize money for state winners, and a foundation-led bus tour to the Washington Leadership Conference for up to 100 students, as well as scholarships for students.

### **Agenda Item: Legislative Update**

**Presenter:** Lauren Graves, Ph.D., Policy Advisor, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

#### **Summary of Discussion:**

Graves provided updates on regulatory changes to occupation-based CTE certification, legislative priorities for the 2026 session, and efforts to address barriers in recruitment and retainment for electricity, plumbing and HVAC instructors.

**Certification Regulation Amendments:** Amendments to 16 KAR 2020 were approved to clarify requirements and processes for occupation-based CTE certification, specifically removing the associate's degree requirement for Kentucky master license holders in electricity, plumbing and HVAC, allowing them to enter at rank three and advance to rank two upon earning a degree.

**New Teacher Institute Requirements:** Certified individuals must still meet assessment requirements and participate in the New Teacher Institute, which covers professional learning, classroom management, lesson planning, curriculum assessment, academic integration and instruction for students with special needs.

**Legislative Priorities for 2026:** Priorities include revising budget bill language to include area technology centers (ATCs) in supplemental funding, amending KRS 156.802 to grant statutory authority over the FFA Leadership Training Center, and amending KRS 156.808 to allow maternity leave for KRS 156 employees, aligning with recent changes for KRS 161 employees.

### **Agenda Topic: CTE Unlocked**

**Presenter:** Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

#### **Summary of Discussion:**

Committee members, including Gerald Brinson, Michelle Wilson and Mike Stone, discussed the evolving role of technology and artificial intelligence in CTE, the importance of business and industry partnerships, and the anticipated impact on education and workforce development over the next 25-50 years.

Participants shared individual experiences with past technologies, highlighting the rapid evolution from analog to digital and the increasing integration of technology in daily life and education, including AI-generated instructional materials and classroom tools.

Discussions centered on the potential for AI to personalize learning, support students who need additional help, and enhance technical problem-solving, with examples of AI-generated videos and simulations used in CTE programs.

Wilson described partnerships where students train local government and law enforcement personnel using advanced simulators, emphasizing the growing synergy between educational institutions and industry for workforce training.

The committee speculated on the future importance of micro-credentials and flexible career pathways, noting generational shifts in job tenure and the need for CTE to adapt to changing workforce demands and technological advancements.

### **Agenda Topic: Middle School Exploration**

**Presenter:** Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

#### **Summary of Discussion:**

Hargis and Tom Thompson outlined a new initiative to develop a consistent, student-feedback-driven middle school career exploration plan, inviting districts to pilot the program and emphasizing the need for broad stakeholder involvement.

Kentucky is collaborating with Arizona, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and Washington to develop a middle school career exploration plan, focusing on student feedback, staff training, and flexibility to accommodate district-specific needs.

The state currently mandates individual learning plans for middle school students, but implementation varies widely; the new initiative aims to standardize vibrant career exploration experiences and incorporate student input.

The plan calls for involvement from teachers, administrators, business and industry, parents, and community members, forming a team approach to support student career exploration and readiness.

Districts interested in piloting the program are encouraged to participate, with more information forthcoming; some districts have already expressed interest, and the initiative will be flexible to accommodate different advising schedules and resources.

Districts like Shelby and Spencer have independently purchased career exploration modules, utilizing supplemental CTE funds and the middle school waiver process for broad-based career exploration.

Mike Stone and Hargis discussed the need to increase business and community awareness of CTE initiatives, including plans for roadshows and partnerships to promote middle school exploration and other CTE programs.

The committee acknowledged that many business leaders are unaware of current CTE initiatives, especially middle school exploration, proposed road shows and increased outreach to foster engagement and support.

### **Agenda Item: Reflection and Adjournment**

**Presenter:** Beth Hargis, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education

### **Summary of Discussion:**

The committee recognized Mike and Kris Stone for their significant contributions over 25 years of Services to the Kentucky Association of Career and Technical Education and welcoming Dexter Knight as the new executive director and permanent council member.

The next CTE Advisory meeting will be in May 2026. A doodle poll will be sent to the committee.

### **Follow-up tasks:**

**Middle School Career Exploration Pilot:** Send out information to districts about piloting the middle school career exploration plan and invite interested districts to participate.

**Sharing Meeting Presentation:** Send the meeting presentation to attendees for future reference.

**Recruitment of CTSO Judges:** Distribute the upcoming list of CTSO judging opportunities and encourage wide sharing to recruit as many judges as possible.

The meeting adjourned at 2:14 p.m. by unanimous acclamation.