

Op-Ed: Putting Students Before Screens

Submitted by Sen. Lindsey Tichenor

There is no question that technology has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives. It has changed the way we communicate, conduct business, and access information. Education has been no exception. Over the last decade, and especially following COVID, schools across Kentucky have increasingly shifted toward digital instruction, one-to-one devices, online learning platforms, online testing, and the newest ed-tech tool of instructional generative AI.

Technology has opened doors in many ways, but it has also raised an important question: Have we allowed technology to become a substitute for learning rather than simply a tool to support it?

That question was at the center of Monday's meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education, where lawmakers heard testimony from researchers, educators, and Kentucky school leaders about the growing role of screen time in our classrooms. Among those testifying were neuroscientist Dr. Jared Horvath, author of *The Digital Delusion*, and Emily Cherkin, nationally recognized as The Screen Time Consultant. Together with Kentucky educators, they challenged lawmakers to consider whether technology is enhancing learning or replacing the proven instructional practices that help students succeed.

One message came through loud and clear: children learn best through human interaction. Reading with physical books, writing by hand, engaging in classroom discussion, collaborating with classmates,



photo by David Hargis, Photographer, Public Information Office, Legislative Research Commission

and learning directly from teachers remain some of the most effective ways to build lasting knowledge and critical thinking skills. Experts who testified pointed to growing concerns that an overreliance on digital instruction may come at the expense of comprehension, attention, and retention of learning, while emphasizing that technology education and technology-based instruction are not the same thing. Now, with decades of increased technology use in classrooms, our presenters testified to decades of available data that reveal inefficiencies in students' results.

Perhaps even more compelling was what we heard from Kentucky educators themselves.

Leaders from Fleming County Schools shared that many of their own students, teachers and families have been asking for less screen time and more authentic learning opportunities. They want meaningful classroom discussions, hands-on experiences, fewer technology-driven assessments, and lessons that connect to the real world. Their district has begun responding by placing reasonable limits on instructional screen time, returning physical textbooks to classrooms, and emphasizing face-to-face learning. They also

shared that after implementing a cell phone-free school day, students were once again talking with one another during lunch instead of staring silently at their phones. As both a legislator and a parent, I find those stories encouraging.

For years, we've measured educational success by how quickly we could place another device into a student's hands. Maybe it's time we start measuring success by something more meaningful: whether students are reading proficiently, thinking critically, communicating effectively, and developing the skills they need to succeed in life.

That philosophy guided my efforts to restore cursive instruction in Kentucky schools. Some questioned whether cursive still mattered in a digital age. I believe it does. Writing by hand strengthens literacy, reinforces learning, and helps students engage more deeply with what they read and write. These foundational skills remain just as valuable today as they were for previous generations. That same belief also inspired Senate Bill 318. The legislation wasn't intended to eliminate technology from Kentucky classrooms. It was meant to begin a much-needed conversation about ensuring technology strengthens learning without replacing the proven foundations of education: books, handwriting, direct teacher instruction, and hands-on learning. I intend to continue that conversation during the next legislative session. None of this means we should abandon technology. Far from it.

Kentucky students should graduate prepared

for careers in engineering, manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture, computer science, and countless other fields where digital skills are essential. They should understand artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and responsible digital citizenship. But there is an important distinction between teaching students about technology and expecting technology to do the teaching for us. Technology should be a powerful classroom tool, but it should never become the classroom itself

Our teachers deserve the flexibility to use the methods that best serve their students, not feel pressured to rely on a screen simply because it's available. Parents deserve confidence that classroom decisions are driven by what helps children learn, not by what is newest or most convenient. And students deserve classrooms where curiosity, conversation, creativity, and critical thinking remain at the heart of every lesson.

Kentucky has always been willing to lead difficult conversations about education. As we continue that work, we should be guided by a simple principle: every decision we make should strengthen learning, not simply modernize it.

The future of great education will always depend on excellent teachers, engaged students, supportive parents, and classrooms built around human connection. If we keep those priorities first, we will prepare Kentucky's children not only for tomorrow's careers, but for lives of lifelong learning, informed citizenship, and meaningful success.

Team KY Launches 2026 “Promote Your School” Scholarship Contest

The 2026 “Promote Your School” Scholarship Contest is open to rising juniors at Kentucky public and private high schools. Essay submissions are due August 1, 2026. The winner will receive a \$500 scholarship and a photo shoot at their school, sponsored by KHEAA. The winning student and their school will be featured in the 2027–2028 edition of *Getting In*, Kentucky’s premier college guide.

Contest Guidelines
To be considered for the scholarship, students must submit an essay addressing one of these subjects:

- Describe a memorable experience at your school where people came together to achieve a goal or overcome a challenge; or

- Discuss how education makes a community stronger.

The essay must have no more than 200 words and cannot mention the student’s name, school, mascot, county, community, race, gender, religion or other identifying marker. Judges will consider the use of artificial intelligence to generate an essay as immediate

disqualification. Consider adding specific, personal examples in your submission.

The essay topic must be clearly indicated at the top of the page. The student’s name, address and high school must be listed at the bottom of the essay. The student must be a high school junior during the 2026–2027 school year. For contest details, visit kheaa.com/website/contest/rules.

Photos from the winning school will be used in KHEAA publications and on KHEAA websites.

To enter, email your essay to publications@kheaa.com or mail it to KHEAA Publications, P.O. Box 798, Frankfort, KY 40602. KHEAA cannot accept entries submitted through online file-sharing sites.

The winner will be chosen through a blind review process by a committee of KHEAA employees, and will receive the scholarship upon entering college as a freshman. Students from high schools that have been featured in the past five years are not eligible to enter this year’s contest.

submitted

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Kindergarten Registration at Augusta Independent School

Families who missed the registration period this spring still have time to sign up for kindergarten for the 2026-2027 school year at Augusta Independent School. In order to register, your child must be 5 years old by August 1, 2026.

The following items need to be completed to register:

1. Complete the on-

line registration form at <https://forms.gle/epVybDU9fEdctaTH9>

2. Sign up for a Kindergarten Orientation meeting on either August 14 or August 21 using this link: <https://calendar.app.google/s9xMcFPfYfYAZKhm6>

3. Pick up the Registration Packet from the office to receive all of the required documents

or print from the district website.

Please visit www.augusta.kyschools.us to download the registration packet and access the links above directly.

If you have any questions, call Augusta Independent School at 606-756-2105 or email Ms. Naomie at naomie.krebs@augusta.kyschools.us.

submitted

Augusta Board of Education

Augusta Independent Board of Education met June 11, 2026 at 6 p.m. Board Members Present: Matthew McCane, Chasity Saunders, Bob Snapp, and Mike Taylor. Board Member Absent: Laura Bach.

The Board Meeting was called to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance & Mission Statement.

Items Reviewed by the Board with No Action Taken were:
•Multipurpose Educational Gymnasium Facility Progress Update;
•Principal’s Report; •Superintendent’s Report;
•Personnel; •Attendance;
•Enrollment; •Citizens;
•Board Members.

Items Approved by the Board were:
•Approved Agenda;
•Approved Monthly Budget Report; •Approved Portrait of a Panther Work-Ready Certificate; •Approved 2026-2027 Insurance

Package Renewal; •Approved Second Reading Amendments to 03.1231 Certified and 03.2231 Classified Personal Leave Board Policies; •Approved First Reading of the 2026 KSBA Board Policy Updates; •Approve Momentum Construction Pay Application; •Approved Monthly Facilities Report; •Approved Business and Consent Items: Previous Meeting Minutes, 2026-2027 Pledge of Collateral, Capital Funds Request, 2026-2027 Fidelity Bond of Treasurer, FY27 FRYSC Funding Contract, 2026-2027 Substitute Teachers, 2026-2027 District Participation in the Emergency Non-Certified School Personnel Program, 2025-2026 Amended Extra Duty & Substitute Salary Schedules, Fundraisers, Trip Request, Surplus Items, Bills, and Treasurer's Report; •Approved Adjournalment.

Household/Hazardous Waste Collection Event

Bracken County Conservation District and Solid Waste Management are partnering to help you properly dispose of unwanted items.

Residents of Bracken County can drop off select items on **Saturday, August 22nd from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.** at the Bracken County Extension Office.

All residents who plan to drop off items MUST complete a registration form PRIOR to attending the event and bring it with them to the event. Registration forms will be at area businesses starting mid-July. Forms will also be printed in *The Bracken County News* two weeks prior to the event.



Call the Conservation District before August 22nd with questions: 606-735-3256

Saturday, August 22, 2026

Bracken County Extension Office • 9 a.m.- 1 p.m.

We Will ONLY Accept

Only certain items will be collected and some restrictions apply. Please see following list.

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|--|---|----------------------------|
| • Aerosol Cans | • Ammonia | • Antifreeze (NO mixtures) |
| • Arts & Craft Supplies | • Batteries (all types) | • Bleaches |
| • Brake fluid | • Cleaning chemicals | • Creosote |
| • Drain Cleaners | • Engine & radiator cleaners & flushes | • Insect spray |
| • Corrosives/Flammables (fuel, kerosene, etc.) | | |
| • E-Scraps (computers, monitors, keyboards, printers, cell phones... ANYTHING with a power cord!) | | |
| • Herbicides & Pesticides(2 gallon/ 2lbs. only) | | • Sealants |
| • Ink Cartridges/toner | • Light Bulbs (all types) | • Mercury |
| • Metal Polish | • Moth Balls | |
| • Muriatic acid | • Oil (used motor, hydraulic, transmission, and brake fluids) | |
| • Paint (10 can limit) & thinner/cleaner | | |
| • Paper (documents to be shredded) | • Propane Tanks (20 lbs. only) | |
| • Rodent killers | • Rust preventatives | |
| • Solvents | • Televisions (limit of 2 per vehicle) | |
| • Wood preservatives & strippers | • Pool chemicals | |

We will **NOT** be accepting appliances, fertilizer, medications, or tires.



Bracken County Conservation District