

SUMMARY OF AUGUST 8-9, 2023 JOINT EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE MEETING

The **Joint Education Interim Committee** met on August 8th and 9th at the Wyoming State Capitol for their second [meeting](#) of the interim. The first day of the meeting was packed as many individuals sought to testify on the two big topics of the day – education savings accounts and parental rights. The Committee had a very busy agenda and made time for the hours of public testimony throughout the day. The Committee began by reviewing the implementation of last year’s [legislation on charter schools](#) (SF174). The [WDE discussed](#) the new Charter School Authorizing Board and the status of the three state authorized charters. They mentioned the possibility of needing further legislative change in the future. Next up was education savings accounts. A [bill](#) drafted by Speaker Sommers was considered. This bill provided a \$3,000 ESA each year for qualifying students in pre-K or K-12. It created a \$40M account from the General Fund to provide for these payments. To qualify, a child’s family must be at or below 250% of the federal poverty level (about \$75,000 for a family of four). The bill provided a broad list of qualifying expenses. K-12 students receiving the ESA would be required to receive instruction in reading, writing, math, civics, history, literature, and science and would be required to take the statewide assessments. The program would be administered by WDE and would be split 50:50 between pre-K and K-12. The bill called for audits of 20% of ECAs. LSO produced a [Legal Memo](#) addressing the constitutional concerns related to the proposed legislation. The Committee agreed to consider the legislation at their meeting in November. The Committee then considered [draft legislation](#) (substantially similar to SF117 from last session) that would prohibit classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity and required school districts to establish procedures for notice of parental rights and establishing a process for parent complaints of alleged violations or parental rights. LSO produced a [Legal Memo](#) addressing the constitutional concerns with this legislation. The Committee decided to forward the portion regarding parental rights for consideration at the November meeting but did not forward the portion limiting classroom discussion. The discussion of the [Teacher Recruitment and Retention Taskforce](#) was moved to the second day due to the voluminous testimony on the first day. Next, the Committee received an update on [K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention](#) from the WDE. The Committee then heard a presentation on [Early Childhood Education](#) from the Governor’s Office and received a set of [policy recommendations](#). The Committee had a brief discussion of the path forward for School Finance Recalibration and decided to seek recommendations from their consultant regarding data elements that would be helpful to gather for the next recalibration. A further discussion is anticipated for the next meeting. The Committee ended its meeting with consideration of a number of topics related to community colleges.