

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT FEBRUARY 2022 MEETING



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Commissioner's Student Advisory Council (CSAC)
SUMMARY

PRESENT: Solyana Mesfin, Trevin Bevins, Anastasia Panaretos, Sam Smith, Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, Rohin Dutt, Spandana Pavuluri, Emma Whitehouse, Arnav Dhargmagadda, Charleigh Browning, Loren Little, Jacob Lyons, Logan Justice, Dyllan Tipton, Dejah Armstrong, Vinessa Fressola, Delaney Daugherty, Ella Luking, Arivumani Srivastava, Ollie Fegenbush, JuLeah Edie, Alexandra Perry, Sophia Retone, Joy Ntakarutimana, Gavin Breunig, Bentley White, Jack Johnson, and Roxanne Lockard

ABSENT: Drake Calhoon and Gracie Smith

Agenda Item: Welcome, Updates from the Commissioner, Roll Call and Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; and Toni Konz-Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Glass began the meeting by outlining the agenda. He explained that the legislative session is in full swing and said KDE is paying attention to the budget bills. Glass said he believes the house budget is good and includes increased SEEK funding for schools, as well as restoration for professional development funds, funding for construction, transportation, career and technical education, and a continuation of full-day kindergarten. He also explained that the governor released his budget shortly after, which includes historic spending proposals for Kentucky education. Glass said KDE is keeping track of a few other bills, including Senate Bill 25, that added more temporary remote instruction days for schools, which differ from NTI.

Feedback:

Dyllan Tipton, a senior at Spencer County High School, said the changes to Senate Bill 1, regarding school-based decision making (SBDM), could become a problem for larger districts. He said if superintendents oversee each principal, it puts even more pressure on superintendents.

Glass said that during his previous position as superintendent, he oversaw principals, but had a division that would help screen new hires, assist with interviews and narrow down candidates before he made the final hiring decision.

Glass also provided updates on the work that has been done since the 2021 Kentucky Education Summit. He said he has been trying to spread the word about the United We Learn report. He explained that three major ideas emerged from the summit, including engagement, innovation, and changing the student experience.

Agenda Item: New College and Career Advising Platform

Presenter: David Horseman, Associate Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education; and Michael Campbell, Project Manager, Kentucky Center for Statistics

Summary of Discussion:

Horseman said that KDE is partnering with the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE) and KYSTATS to design a platform that will provide students with guidance for education and career choices, secondary/postsecondary/adult education program resources, affordability resources, employer engagement opportunities, and career exploration tools.

Horseman and Campbell asked the students to be the focus group and complete a survey to help them further develop the platform.

Feedback:

Spandana Pavuluri, a junior at duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County), said she really likes the idea of the platform, but wanted to know how it will be distributed among students in the state and what KDE will do to make sure students are aware of it.

Horseman said they have not designed the rollout yet, but in the past, counselors have been given program information during the summer special sessions and it also has been distributed through the commissioner. He said they are open to suggestions on how to distribute it.

Gavin Breunig, a junior at Elizabethtown High School (Elizabethtown Independent), asked if the platform is personalized or if it is just general information.

Campbell said they completed a phase called discovery, where they inventoried various websites for ideas and asked the students if creating an account or personalizing the platform would inhibit participation. Breunig said there could be a middle ground by allowing students to sign up in order to save previous information, while also making it available without creating an account.

Anastasia Panaretos, a junior at South Oldham High School (Oldham County), asked, “What is the timeframe for launching this platform?”

Horseman said the department has been advertising for a programmer for about two months, but they haven’t had luck finding anyone. The original goal was to roll it out by the fall, but Horseman said he can provide some resources now while the program is still in development. Campbell said he hopes it will be finished by September of this year but it’s contingent on securing a programmer.

Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, a junior at Ballard High School (Jefferson County), said she loves the idea of the program, but wants to know how KDE will make the program more accessible to younger students.

Horseman said they developed career studies standards which are available on KDE's website and include materials for students as young as grades 1-2. He said they want to make everything connected, even by including teachers in the program.

Delaney Daugherty, a junior at Butler County High School, asked if there will be scholarship opportunities included on the platform.

Campbell said there are existing functions regarding scholarships currently on the websites that they have been inventorying, but they have not finalized the function because they would like student feedback.

Vinessa Fressola, a senior at Russell County High School, asked if the scholarship opportunities will be solely focused on Kentucky colleges and universities or if they are available for other states.

Horseman said the program isn't focused on scholarships and is focused on opportunities within Kentucky.

Agenda Item: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Updates

Presenter: Thomas Woods-Tucker, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education; and Damien Sweeney, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Woods-Tucker and Sweeney opened the floor to students to discuss how KDE can improve the social-emotional well-being of educators and students.

Many students expressed thanks to educators for the work they do every day, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students also said they can sense when teachers, counselors and other school personnel feel drained and know that they aren't getting the breaks they need due to staffing shortages.

Woods-Tucker and Sweeney said they would take the students suggestions from the meeting to figure out how to best support educators during this time.

Feedback:

Logan Justice, a senior at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School (Fayette County), said it's important to support teachers during this polarizing time, appreciate the work they do and respect the profession more.

"It has been really hard for teachers to keep up with everything. Most of them work after the school day is over," added Dyllan Tipton, a senior at Spencer County High School. "A lot of people don't realize how much work they have put in. We should recognize that much more than we do."

Bentley White, a sophomore at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, said teachers know what changes need to be made and deserve the opportunity to voice those thoughts.

Agenda Item: Teacher Recruitment and Retention: What can KDE do to help?

Presenter: Bryon Darnall, Ed.D., Associate Commissioner, Office of Educator Licensure and Effectiveness, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Darnall talked with students about the struggles the teaching profession has faced during the past few years. He explained that his biggest challenge is being asked how to solve the teacher shortage. He said he doesn't have a satisfactory answer, but knows students feel the effects of the shortage every day.

Darnall asked the students how many of them had thought about pursuing a career in teaching.

Trevin Bevins, a senior at Shelby Valley High School (Pike County), said he comes from a family of teachers.

"Honestly, teachers don't get the respect they deserve, and they don't get paid enough for what they do. Without teachers there are no other professions," Bevins said.

Dejah Armstrong, a senior at Central High School (Jefferson County), plans to pursue a career as an English professor but said the teaching profession lacks diversity.

Darnall said KDE wants to support and champion anyone who is interested in pursuing education, especially teaching, because the teacher shortage continues to be of high concern. He said there is nothing better than being able to connect with students in the classroom.

"I know you all are building opportunities for yourselves; you're creating resumes. But you are all here because something matters more to you than just going to school," said Darnall. "I just challenge you to harness that into something that is going to get us past the current state of affairs in this world."

Darnall implored students to leave teachers and other school employees notes, thanking them for what they do.

"In terms of making an impact within your buildings, go to a teacher tomorrow and just leave a note on their desk and say, 'You know what? Thanks for what you're doing.' It's something easy you can do to make a difference in your school. Get your friends to join and see the ripple effect," he said.

Feedback:

While many of the students said better pay and more respect would make the teaching profession more attractive, Jack Johnson, a junior at Marshall County High School, said it is also important to reaffirm that teaching is not always going to be about material satisfaction, but how you can make an impact.

Students said the opportunity to have their higher education paid for would make a teaching career much more appealing, because many teachers struggle with student debt.

Agenda Item: Activity: What are the limits of students' rights in schools?

Presenter: Willie Edward Taylor Carver Jr., 2022 Kentucky Teacher of the Year

Summary of Discussion:

Carver, the 2022 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, facilitated an activity to educate students on their rights in school, including free speech. He presented various scenarios and case studies that show how the U.S. Supreme Court has shaped the rights of students.

Because of recent discussions at advisory meetings on the legislative session, he said he wants students to understand their rights from a judicial perspective.

"I think it's important for students to be aware of their rights in school," he said.

He explained in detail the following cases and the rights that were held for students by the Supreme Court: *Brown v. BOE*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, *West Virginia BOE v. Barnette*, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, *Manahoy School District v. BL*, *Killion v. Franklin*, *BOE v. Pico*, *Stanley v. Georgia*, and *BOE v. Mergens*.

These cases resulted in additional rights for students within schools including free speech in and out of school. Additionally, students may not be deprived of access to existing books because of a school's desire to restrict them for social or political reasons. If a school provides a forum to any non-curricular group, the school must provide the forum to other groups regardless of their viewpoint.

He also told students about a book titled "We the Students," which discusses where students' rights begin and end.

Feedback:

Glass thanked Carver for the presentation and for explaining the rights of students in more detail.

Agenda Item: Update on the Selection Process of Ex-Officio Student Member to the Kentucky Board of Education

Presenter: Toni Konz Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education; and Meredith Brewer, Pd.D., Director of Education Policy, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Brewer discussed the upcoming selection process for the KBE's next non-voting student member.

Solyana Mesfin, a senior at Eastern High School (Jefferson County), was selected in 2020 to be the board's first student member. Her term expires in the spring of this year.

The recently approved regulation, which is on track to become effective March 1 this year, requires that students be selected from each congressional district in numerical order. Since Mesfin is from Kentucky's 3rd Congressional District, the next student member will be a rising junior selected from the 4th Congressional District. Students also must be enrolled in a public high school.

Once applications are submitted by the April 1 deadline, seven members of the Commissioner's Student Advisory Council will review applications for the position and select three applicants to recommend to KBE.

The application process will be publicly advertised to Kentucky public school teachers and superintendents for further dissemination to students.

The elected student will serve a one-year term, beginning July 1 of this year.

Feedback:

Mesfin said the past year of being on the board has been a great experience and allowed her to learn many perspectives while also representing the voice of students in the state.

Agenda Item: KDE Student Advisory Council Social Media Planning

Presenter: Jackie Thompson, Information Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Thompson explained that KDE would like to have some members of the council take over the Student Advisory Council social media accounts until the next meeting. Thompson randomly selected two students, Charleigh Browning and Jake Lyons to run the account until the February meeting. If those two students are not able to participate, other volunteers will be accepted.

Feedback:

Logan Justice and Vinessa Fressola volunteered to take over after the next meeting.

Adjournment