



**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (KDE)  
COMMISSIONER’S STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL  
SUMMARY**

**JAN. 24, 2023**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: (22 members present)** Gavin Breunig, Charleigh Browning, Hunter Combs, Joud Dahleh, Delaney Daugherty, Justin Dunning, Raima Dutt, Peter M. Jefferson, Shraman Kar, Vijaykumar Karthikeyan, Loren Little, Ella Luking, Anastasia Panaretos, Spandana Pavuluri, Alexandra Perry, Tanvi Rakesh, Chloe Ralston, Sophia Retone, Luke Taylor, Malley Taylor, Sarah Umbarger, Bentley White

**MEMBERS ABSENT: (6 members absent),** Arnav Dharmagadda, Ollie Fegenbush, Nyla Johnson, Kalli Oblander, Amy Roblero-Perez, Sarah Yu

**SUMMARY**

**Agenda Item:** Welcome

**Presenter:** Jason E. Glass, Education Commissioner; Toni Konz Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Glass opened the hybrid meeting and reviewed the agenda. Konz Tatman called roll.

**Feedback:** None

**Agenda Item:** Approve Summary from Last Meeting

**Presenter:** Toni Konz Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** The council approved the [Dec. 13, 2022, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council meeting summary](#). Motion made by Bentley White and seconded by Charleigh Browning.

**Feedback:** None

**Agenda Item:** Activity on Building Resilience

**Presenter:** Heather Bushelman, Program Coordinator for Comprehensive School Counseling, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Bushelman discussed building resilience, or the ability to “bounce back” after tough situations. She shared the story of Michael Jordan who, despite being cut from his high school basketball team, went on to become one of the greatest basketball players in history. Part of building resilience, Bushelman said, is to be proactive, acknowledge the challenging situation and then determine next steps to “bounce back” from the challenge. She outlined several techniques to work through challenges, including positive self-talk, emotional awareness, practicing gratitude and changing your mindset. Bushelman also thanked council members for their prior input regarding school counselor services.

**Feedback:** Students discussed responses to Bushelman’s guided questions. Students described challenges facing high school students, including mental health issues, challenges outside of school and how to handle difficult news regarding college admissions and scholarship decisions. Malley Taylor, an 11th-grade student at Craft Academy (Rowan County), noted that challenges can be within or beyond one’s control.

**Agenda Item:** Legislative Updates

**Presenter:** Brian Perry, Director of Government Relations, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Perry shared an overview of the 2023 General Assembly calendar and highlighted several bills related to education that were filed in the first week of the session. Glass asked Perry to discuss some of the challenges school districts are facing regarding staffing and short- and long-term supports proposed for the teaching profession. Perry discussed district-level and state-level efforts to attract and incentivize individuals to the teaching profession, supports for new teachers and retention efforts for mid-career educators. He provided resources on how to find more information about proposed legislation. Glass and Thomas Woods-Tucker, KDE deputy education commissioner, discussed perspectives related to the impact of partisanship in local school board races.

**Feedback:** One student asked a question about proposed legislation related to concealed carry in schools. Another student asked about a proposal for the hiring of classified personnel without a high school diploma or equivalent. Perry noted that this bill is another example of addressing workforce shortages. Glass said that of the bills highlighted, one that is most potentially impactful is the one that would make local school board races partisan. “I think that’s a seismic shift that has happened in other states.... It removes people working together and compromising and trying to think about what’s the best policy decision because it becomes a really political decision,” Glass said.

**Agenda Item:** Roundtable Discussion about Literacy and Innovative Library Spaces

**Presenter:** Mandy Perez, 2023 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Perez, an English language arts teacher at Crittenden County Middle School, discussed her experience since being named the 2023 Kentucky Teacher of the Year last September. She said she is interested in reimagining school library spaces and providing lab-focused resources around STEM, communications, social emotional learning (SEL) and reading incentives for Kentucky students.

**Feedback:** Students shared their perspectives on reimagined library spaces. “To see this reflected in school buildings is very radical—and I wish it wasn’t, I wish that was the norm—and could do such big things for students,” said Spandana Pavuluri, a 12th-grade student at duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County). Pavuluri added that STEM resources are very hard to access in school spaces, which may disincentive students from pursuing opportunities in STEM-related pipelines.

**Agenda Item:** Conversation with the Commissioner

**Presenter:** Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Education Commissioner and Chief Learner, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Glass invited council members to consider and weigh the factors that influence students’ steps following high school graduation. He asked three guiding questions: (1) What is your future plan? (2) What are the factors influencing that future plan? and (3) How do you weight those factors? Glass asked council members if they would be interested in putting together a guide for their peers on the topic of transitioning from high school.

**Feedback:** Students shared their responses to Glass’s guided questions. Several indicated that they plan to pursue post-secondary studies and mentioned that quality of education; cost of tuition; location; diversity; support from family; support from friends; and connection to existing communities were important factors influencing their plans. Several students indicated that they would be interested in developing and discussing factors that impact post-high school transitions, with one student noting that “peer-to-peer presentations on this topic” add more weight to the information. “We bring a lot of diversity here, especially with how our schools are structured,” said Charleigh Browning, a 12th-grade student at Marion County High School, who said sharing experiences may benefit others on the council and beyond. She noted, for example, that her school encourages seniors to visit college campuses on days juniors are scheduled to take the ACT, a model that may be easily replicated at other schools.

**Agenda Item:** “A Focus on School Safety” Project Presentation

**Presenter:** Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Presentation Team

**Summary of Discussion:** Students presented the [council’s report and list of nine recommendations on “A Focus on School Safety.”](#) Recommendations to minimize or prevent school violence incidents included promoting the Safety Tipline, Online Prevention or S.T.O.P. Tipline, improving the rate of intervention in concerning behaviors and supporting gun control legislation. The council recommended the following changes based on preparation and notification during a school violence incident: improve active shooter drills, improve training for first responders and establish a clear notification system for students and parents. The group

offered three recommendations on how to support a community affected by an act of violence at a school: provide mental health support, host town hall meetings, and repair and rebuild the school.

The presentation was the culmination of a research project that began at the council's May 31, 2022, meeting following the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas.

**Feedback:** Kentucky State Rep. James Tipton, chair of the House Education Committee, was in attendance to hear the recommendations, which he said he plans to discuss further with other lawmakers. "Hopefully we can make some improvements to what we're currently doing through this process," Tipton said.

Council member Peter Jefferson, a sophomore at Henry Clay High School (Fayette County), said he and his fellow council members wanted to make an impact on what is a growing problem in schools. "Something is happening," Jefferson said of violent incidents in schools. "How can we make sure that it doesn't happen for us and minimize the effects of it if it does?"

**Additional Presentation Materials:** [Video of Student Advisory Council presentation on "A Focus on School Safety"](#); [A Focus on School Safety report](#) and [A Focus on School Safety report \(accessible version\)](#)

**Agenda Item:** Communications Opportunities

**Presenter:** Toni Konz Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Konz Tatman announced that [applications for positions on the 2023-2024 Commissioner's Student Advisory Council](#) are available. Applications are open to student in Kentucky public high schools currently in grades 9, 10 or 11. The roundtable discussion on student media consumption would be moved to a future meeting, she said.

**Feedback:** None.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m. ET.

The next Commissioner's Student Advisory Council meeting is scheduled to take place virtually on Feb. 28, 2023, at 9 a.m. ET.