



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

SUMMARY

SEPT. 26, 2023

Present: (28 members present) Ava Benson, Reese Blakeman, Owen Borden, Cameron Breier, Owen Cody, Joud Dahleh, Justin Dunning, Raima Dutt, Nicholas Hazelett, Honette Irakiza, Peter Jefferson, Shraman Kar, Vijaykumar Karthikeyan, Seth Langford, Danica Love, Gabriella MacAdams, Anopa Musoni, R.J. Osborne, Daniel Ratley, Jocelyn Reddick, Sophia Staples, Ian Swenson, Austin Vitato, Carley Watts, Bentley White, Aliete Yanes Medina, India Young, Joshua Zyzak

Absent: (Nine members absent) Hunter Combs, Manas Garla, Trey Jackson, Constance Martin, Tanvi Rakesh, Caleb Robinson, Amy Roblero-Perez, Malley Taylor, Sarah Umbarger

Summary:

Agenda Item: Welcome (Roll Call of Members)

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., KDE Education Commissioner and Chief Learner; Toni Konz Tatman, KDE Chief Communications Officer

Summary of Discussion: Glass discussed some of KDE's priorities for the upcoming legislative session, particularly regarding Support Education Excellence in Kentucky funding. He also highlighted ongoing work related to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, as well as the efforts of the Kentucky United We Learn Council. Glass, [whose last day as commissioner is Sept. 29](#), said he enjoyed working with the council. "It's been a great honor being your commissioner. This is my home state, so the chance to come back to Kentucky and do this work has been a professional honor. I've loved every minute of it, and getting to work with students especially," Glass said.

Konz Tatman called roll.

Feedback: None.

Agenda Item: Mindful Minute Activity

Presenter: Michelle Sircy, Ed.D., KDE Program Coordinator for Comprehensive School Counseling, Office of Teaching and Learning

Summary of Discussion: Sircy, [who joined KDE on Sept. 11](#), addressed situations that may make students feel anxious or stressed, led council members in a series of stress-relieving exercises and discussed Suicide Prevention Month. She invited student input on what districts can do to further assist with suicide prevention.

Feedback: [Students mentioned the need to add support staff, as well as the need to update messaging surrounding suicide prevention](#). Seth Langford, a 10th-grade student at J. Graham Brown School (Jefferson County), said it is difficult getting counseling services through school. Justin Dunning, a 12th-grade student at Lyon County High School, also expressed difficulty getting mental health services because of staffing issues. “It’s just hard to get the time to actually talk about it, and you don’t know who to talk to, and you’ve just got to wait and wait,” said Dunning.

Agenda Item: “Sources of Strength” Training

Presenter: Judi Vanderhaar, Ph.D., Safe and Supportive Schools Branch, Division of Student Success, KDE Office of Continuous Improvement and Success

Summary of Discussion: Vanderhaar led a series of activities on [Sources of Strength](#), a strengths-based suicide prevention program that engages the power of student and peer influence to support positive mental health, promote well-being, help-seeking, healthy activities and a sense of belonging among youth within a school.

Feedback: Students participated in small-group activities and identified sources of strength and support they can pull from when facing stressors.

Agenda Item: Council Project Activity

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., KDE Education Commissioner and Chief Learner; Damien Sweeney, Ed.D., KDE Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, Office of Teaching and Learning

Summary of Discussion: Students divided into two groups and discussed how the council’s group project related to student voice may take form.

Feedback: Raima Dutt, chair of the council and a 12th-grade student at duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County), and Bentley White, vice chair of the council and a 12th-grade student at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, shared summaries of their respective groups’ discussions. Students were interested in ways to explore if there is variation in student voice around the state, as well as opportunities to survey other educational stakeholders such as teachers, school

administrators and school counselors, for their perspectives on how student voice is perceived and received in Kentucky.

Agenda Item: Member Announcements

Summary of Discussion: Konz Tatman invited members to share events or announcements of significance in their schools or districts.

Feedback: Hazelett discussed his role as the only student representative on the KDE Office of Assessment and Accountability's Standard-Setting Committee. [The group met in June and mid-September to recommend cut scores that will determine a school's overall performance rating.](#) Konz Tatman commended Hazelett's work on the committee. R.J. Osborne, an 11th-grade student at Whitley County High School, discussed his experiences so far as a [non-voting student member on the Kentucky Board of Education.](#)

Agenda Item: Opportunities for Students

Presenter: Toni Konz Tatman, KDE Chief Communications Officer

Summary of Discussion: Konz Tatman shared opportunities for Kentucky students, including the [U.S. Senate Youth Program](#) applications which are due Oct. 2. She also noted upcoming deadlines for students and communities to recognize educators and classified school staff.

Feedback: None.

The meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m. ET.

The next council meeting will be held virtually on Oct. 18, 2023, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. ET.