



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

Dec. 10, 2024

Present (18 members present): Lisa Abrampah, Mary Beth Bolen, Borden Graham, Ani Cockerham-O'Donnell, Isabella Edghill, Aniji Fox, Manas Garla, Preston Graham, Samarah Higgins, Honette Irakiza, Peter Jefferson, Sophia Langford, Gabriella MacAdams, Daniel Ratley, Luisia Sanchez-Almenarez, Abigail Sears, Koha Ta and Austin Eric Vitto.

Absent (6 members absent): Allan Kalambayi, Tanvi Rakesh, Sophia Staples, Carley Watts, Aliete Yanes Medina and India Young.

Summary:

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenter: Thomas Woods Tucker, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: Tucker announced the partnership between the KDE and the U.S. Army Cadet Command to start a pilot program for a statewide junior ROTC program, with Col. Tim McDonald as the state director for Army Instruction.

Tucker highlighted Kristen Hibbert's recognition as the 2024 Kentucky Special Education Teacher of the Year and shared her career journey and achievements.

Tucker announced that more than 50 Kentucky schools were certified as family-friendly by the Prichard Committee, with Gov. Andy Beshear signing a proclamation for Family Engagement in Education Week.

Tucker shared that the U.S. Department of Labor recognized the Kentucky Department of Education for its commitment to apprenticeship programs, with the Office of Career and Technical Education receiving an Apprenticeship Ambassador Certificate of Recognition.

Tucker announced that the Office of Teaching and Learning won a competitive grant called the Kentucky Comprehensive Literacy Grant, which will provide funding for instructional resources and professional learning to improve literacy rates.

He mentioned the formation of a committee by Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman to address mental health issues, particularly at the middle school level, and encouraged students to provide input.

Tucker informed the participants that nominations for the 2026 Kentucky Teacher of the Year are now being accepted and encouraged students to nominate their favorite teachers.

Feedback: None

Summary:

Agenda Item: Roll Call and Approval of Minutes

Presenter: Joe Ragusa, Public Information Supervisor and Kentucky Teacher Editor, KDE

Summary of discussion: Ragusa called the roll. The summary notes from the [October 29, 2024, Commissioner's Student Advisory Council meeting](#) were approved, with Peter Jefferson, Henry Clay High School (Fayette County), leading the motion and seconding process. Preston Graham, Woodford County High School, made the motion and Gabriella MacAdams, Williamstown Independent High School, seconded the motion.

Agenda Item: Mindful Minute Activity

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

Summary of Discussion: Sircy led a mindful minute session, discussing different types of stress, the stress cycle and techniques for stress deactivation, including progressive muscle relaxation.

Summary:

Agenda Item: Kentucky United We Learn Council,

Presenter: Karen Dodd, KDE Chief Performance Officer

Summary of discussion: Dodd led a discussion on what a vibrant learning experience looks like, with students sharing their perspectives on hands-on education, community involvement and the importance of real-world applications.

Sophia Langford, J. Graham Brown School (Jefferson County), said, “When I think of a vibrant learning experience, I think along the same vein of something that ties into the real world.” Sometimes, Langford said, what is lacking is “the opportunity to go out and work with real people and actually make a physical difference in the community through your learning.”

“It's important to learn the foundation and the core concept, but it's also important to know why you're learning it and get to actually physically do something with it,” said Langford.

Khoa Ta, Owensboro High School, seconded some of the previous comments, adding he wants to see students applying the skills they are learning in the real world. Ta mentioned that students could use their skills doing community service. He said he thinks a vibrant form of learning or experience should be “hands on education,” whether it is a project in school or community service.

Summary:

Agenda Item: Educator Recruitment Discussion

Presenter: Veda Stewart, Division Director, KDE, and Elly Gilbert, Division Assistant Director, KDE

Summary of discussion: Stewart and Gilbert discussed the Go TeachKY initiative, highlighting the benefits of the teaching profession, and sought feedback from students on how to effectively communicate the positive aspects of teaching to their generation.

Announcements and Member Sharing:

Presenter: Peter Johnson, CSAC chair, Henry Clay High School (Fayette County) and Daniel Ratley, CSAC vice chair, Grayson County High School

Jefferson and Ratley informed the council about the Youth Tobacco Control and Youth Empowerment event in early February, encouraging representatives from the Student Advisory Council to attend and apply for travel scholarships.

Next Meeting Date: Ratley announced the next virtual meeting date for the CSAC is scheduled for Feb. 25 from 9-11 a.m. ET.