

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT FEBRUARY 2024 MEETING



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

**JAN. 23, 2024**

**Present (27 members present):** Ava Benson, Owen Borden, Owen Cody, Hunter Combs, Joud Dahleh, Justin Dunning, Raima Dutt, Manas Garla, Nicholas Hazelett, Honette Irakiza, Trey Jackson, Peter Jefferson, Shraman Kar, Vijaykumar Karthikeyan, Seth Langford, Danica Love, Gabriella MacAdams, Constance Martin, Anopa Musoni, Tanvi Rakesh, Daniel Ratley, Sophia Staples, Austin Vitato, Carley Watts, Bentley White, Aliete Yanes Medina, India Young

**Absent (nine members absent):** Reese Blakeman, Cameron Breier, R.J. Osborne, Jocelyn Reddick, Caleb Robinson, Amy Roblero-Perez, Ian Swenson, Sarah Umbarger, Joshua Zyzak

**Summary:**

**Agenda Item:** Welcome

**Presenter:** Robin Fields Kinney, Interim Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)

**Summary of Discussion:** Kinney shared updates to the ongoing search for the next commissioner of the Department of Education. She also mentioned that the KDE has started a new publication, “Capitol Class Notes,” that highlights the “good work of students in schools and districts” and is directed specifically to Kentucky state legislators. She mentioned that the Legislative Research Commission offers resources to help navigate proposed bills from the current General Assembly. She discussed her recent school visits in Harrison County and LaRue County.

**Feedback:** None.

**Summary:**

**Agenda Item:** Roll Call and Approve Summary from Last Meeting

**Presenter:** GlyptusAnn Grider Jones, Ph.D., Information Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Jones called roll. The [summary notes from the Dec. 5, 2023, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council meeting](#) were approved. Motion made by Peter Jefferson, a junior at Henry Clay High School (Fayette County), and seconded by Owen Cody, a senior at McCracken County High School.

**Feedback:** None.

**Agenda Item:** Mindful Minute Activity

**Presenter:** Michelle Sircy, Ed.D., Program Coordinator for Comprehensive School Counseling, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Sircy led an exercise on the “health triangle” in preparation for the “Winter Blues.” Physical, social and mental health are the components of the health triangle, Sircy said. She led a discussion about how members define, maintain and can improve aspects of their own health triangle.

**Feedback:** Several students, particularly high school seniors preparing for post-graduation steps, mentioned that their health triangle is not currently balanced. One member said more attention should be given to educators’ health assessment, as well as students’: “I appreciate you being worried about our mental health, but somebody needs to be worried about our teachers’ mental health, too, because they’re struggling.” Some of the students said the exercise will help them be intentional in making improvements to several aspects of their health.

**Agenda Item:** Discussion on Kentucky Education Technology Systems (KETS)

**Presenter:** David Couch, Associate Commissioner, Office of Education Technology, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** [Couch discussed the services and accomplishments of KETS as an EdTech national leader.](#) He explained the importance of education technology to students’ learning experiences and the ways KETS provides support to districts, including internet service, help desk support and cybersecurity. He said this support, combined with the vast improvements for schools during the COVID pandemic supported by federal funds that are expiring, underscores the need for more funding. This has been submitted to the state legislature in the form of an additional budget request. Couch also discussed artificial intelligence and asked students how they use artificial intelligence in their daily lives.

**Feedback:** Students discussed their use of artificial intelligence and the variety of options available. Jefferson said that it may be a powerful tool, there is still a level of human review and

oversight needed. “It’s good at processing the language it’s given, but when it doesn’t know exactly what it wants, it does something stray or makes something up,” he said.

**Agenda Item:** Discussion with the 2024 Kentucky Teacher of the Year

**Presenter:** Kevin Dailey, Social Studies Teacher at Ballyshannon Middle School (Boone County)

**Summary of Discussion:** Dailey, who started a six-month ambassadorship at the Kentucky Department of Education at the beginning of January, discussed how he believes steps he took in his personal and professional background helped him become the teacher of the year. He encouraged students to say “yes” to opportunities that may come their way but to make sure those opportunities align with their values. Dailey discussed his goals for his ambassadorship and asked council members to identify and talk about a teacher who created magic in the classroom.

**Feedback:** Students identified several teachers who have made a difference in their lives. Hunter Combs, a senior from Knott County Central High School, identified Cathy Conley. “I never actually had her in a class and yet she still pushed me to be the best student I could be and to be the student leader I try to be in Knott County.” Owen Borden, a senior at Highlands High School (Fort Thomas Independent), said his AP Research class instructor Nina Kearns has made a big impact. “Mrs. Kearns’ constant encouraging attitude inspired every student to explore a subject of their own interest and give their fullest self into their work. Mrs. Kearns was always genuinely interested and invested in our success (and) had an amazing ability to make you feel like your work was making an impact.”

**Agenda Item:** Council Project Activity

**Presenter:** Raima Dutt, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Chair; GlyptusAnn Grider Jones, Ph.D., Information Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Representatives from other advisory councils run by KDE were invited to attend the council meeting for students to seek advice from them anonymously for their ongoing project related to student voice. The council divided into four groups and facilitated interviews with invited members. [The list of questions was identified in a previous council meeting.](#) After the interviews, representatives from each group shared highlights and key takeaways from each interview.

**Feedback:** When asked to explain their definition of student voice and why it’s important in education, a representative from the School Counselor Advisory Council said, “If I could tell every school something, it would be to give your students a chance to talk. We’re going through this together and you need to know how the students are doing and how are we helping you.” Council members asked the counselor how they felt about implementing meaningful student

voice in schools. “To get to the bottom of what’s going on, you must talk to students,” the counselor said. “They’re the ones who are going through it, so your voice matters.”

**Follow-up:** Dutt and Bentley White, vice chair of the Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council, will compile the transcripts for review at the next council meeting. Dutt said the council plans to use the next few advisory council meetings to discuss, review and analyze the interviews from stakeholders from the School Counselor Advisory Council, Superintendents Advisory Council, Teachers Advisory Council and other advisory councils for common themes.

**Agenda Item:** Opportunities for Students and Member Announcements

**Presenter:** GlyptusAnn Grider Jones, Ph.D., Information Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Jones shared upcoming opportunities of interest to Kentucky high school students including a call for applications to serve on the 2024-2025 Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council. Applications are due March 1 may be submitted via the [Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Application Form](#).

**Feedback:** Students shared updates and opportunities for high school students from their work on other councils and leadership groups, including announcements related to upcoming blood drives, workshops related to the Kentucky Student Voice Team and a mental health walk for schools across the state.

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m. ET. The next council meeting will be held virtually on Feb. 27 from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. ET.