



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

APRIL 28, 2026

ATTENDANCE: Tejas Basneth, Savannah Brock, Lillian Darr, Vivian Fox, Manas Garla, Patrick Graboviy, Preston Graham, Sophie Johnson, Sophia Langford, Hadley Nicolas, Lacey Paige, Tara Rakesh, Daniel Ratley, Prisha Shah, Aliete Yanes Medina, Austin Eric Vitato, Harper Blake.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Graham Borden, Delanie Crump, Charlie Kinkade, Abigail Ladwig, Gabriella MacAdams, Luisa Sanchez-Almenarez.

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome and Announcements

Presenter: Robbie Fletcher, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education

Summary of Discussion: Fletcher welcomed the students to the CSAC in-person meeting and went over the agenda. He followed with announcements.

Fletcher said KDE is conducting a website navigation survey that includes questions about the ease of navigation, findability, menus and content. He asked the members to share the survey information with other students, teachers, school staff and parents.

He also announced an upcoming workshop, Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in Kentucky, in Lexington for March 27.

Fletcher said a new analysis of the Kentucky Reading Academies shows the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling training is making a difference for student literacy success. Drawing on data from 574 elementary schools across 135 districts, the study by the Kentucky Reading Research Center found that schools with more LETRS-trained teachers experienced stronger growth in the share of students reaching the proficient level and a greater reduction of the number of students at the novice level on the Kentucky Summative Assessment.

He said Spencer County Middle School students showcased their math skills when they presented models of their dream homes during the Dream Homearama event on March 20. The Dream Homearama event was started by Michelle Gross, a math teacher at Spencer County Middle School and the 2026 Kentucky Teacher of the Year.

He shared several achievements, like Paducah Tilghman High School Principal Deatrik Kinney was named the 2026 Kentucky High School Principal of the Year by the National Association of

Secondary School Principals; about 1,700 Kentucky students showed off their technological skills during the 2026 Kentucky Technology Student Association state conference; and Vanessa Lyons, a reading intervention educator and program facilitator for Taylor County Intermediate School, and Kala Marshall, an instructional assistant and girls basketball coach for Spencer County Public Schools, were named recipients of the Kentucky Education Support Staff Professional Award.

Agenda Item: Approval of Minutes

Presenter: Rosalind Turner, CSAC Liaison

Summary of Discussion: After calling the roll, Turner asked for approval of the Feb. 24, 2026, meeting minutes. Patrick Graboviy (North Oldham High School) made the motion and Daniel Ratley (Grayson County High School) made the second. All voted for approval.

Agenda Item: U.S. Senate Youth Program (USSYP)

Presenter: Rosalind Turner, CSAC Liaison and USSYP coordinator, and Patrick Graboviy (North Oldham High School), USSYP attendee

Summary of Discussion: Turner opened the discussion on the USSYP. She said applications would open in August and encouraged eligible students to apply. Two students from each state are selected to attend Washington Week in Washington, DC. Those two delegates will also be awarded a \$12,500 scholarship each. Patrick Graboviy (North Oldham High School), was a Kentucky delegate, along with Ethan Morgan (Marshall County High School). Both attended Washington Week in March. Graboviy shared his experience and discussed the many networking opportunities and some of his favorite experiences, including meeting and getting to know delegates from other states. He encouraged the students to apply for the USSYP.

Agenda Item: Mindful Minute

Presenter: Thomas Tucker, Ph.D., deputy commissioner, led the council in a mindful minute

Summary of Discussion: Tucker reviewed the physical, health and social triangle and the importance of practicing progressive muscle relaxation. He led the council in a year-end reflection: did they meet their goals, what did they learn while working toward that goal, and how being part of the CSAC helped them grow.

Sophie Johnston, a junior at Morgan County High School, said she set academic goals at the beginning of the school year and those goals evolved as she evolved as a person throughout the course of the year. She said she accomplished her goals for the school year and also gained some insight.

“But I also realized that if I set my goals higher and I don’t accomplish them, I’m working toward bigger things and I’m pushing myself and finding my limit instead of setting my limit below where it could be,” Johnston said.

Sophia Langford, a senior at J. Graham Brown High School (Jefferson County), said she set many academic goals for herself at the beginning of the year.

“One of the important things I learned is that even though I didn’t accomplish all of them, I did accomplish new goals and that my goals changed in important and valuable ways and I was able to accomplish the things that really mattered,” Langford said.

Austin Eric Vitato, a senior at J. Graham Brown High School (Jefferson County), discovered not everything turns out perfectly – especially the first time it is tried.

“I learned to be more lenient with myself. I used to get so upset with myself if I didn’t accomplish something perfect the first time,” he said. “I learned in a hard way that not everything is going to be perfect or the way you envisioned it. So, I learned that giving yourself a little bit of grace and accepting that be first time I tried it – inside and outside the classroom -- it’s helped me a lot mentally.”

Agenda Item: House Bill 257

Presenter: Robbie Fletcher Ed.D., Commissioner of Education

Summary of Discussion: Fletcher gave the students an overview of the recently passed legislation, House Bill 257.

Agenda Item: Creating Vibrant Learning Experiences to Build Classroom Community

Presenter: Michelle Gross, Kentucky Teacher of the Year

Summary of Discussion: Gross discussed creating vibrant learning experiences to build classroom community. She shared practical examples from her teaching career and encouraged students and teachers to promote authentic, student-centered learning.

One vibrant learning project Gross leads in her classroom is the ratios recipe project. Students pick a recipe and use math to scale it up for a crowd or scale it down to feed just a few people. Then they cook the food, either for their family or their class.

Gross also started a class initiative called the Dream Homearama project, where each January, math students design and build a model of their dream house. Using the math they learn in class, students draw their house to scale on blueprints. Then they design it digitally and build 3D models using whatever materials they want. Students then get the opportunity to present their models to community members and local professionals at the annual Dream Homearama event.

“I love doing this activity along with others, because to me the important thing is creating opportunities for my students to see authenticity in their learning and to really know what vibrant learning experiences are,” she said.

Gross said she hopes schools can create more vibrant learning experiences. She encouraged council members to learn more about vibrant learning experiences and talk to their teachers about how helpful the experiences are to students.

Agenda Item: KDE ILP Showcase Project

Presenter: Karen Dodd, Chief Performance Officer; and Myles Young, Assistant Director of Communications.

Summary of Discussion: Karen Dodd and Myles Young led the discussion on the council's final project, an introduction video for a campaign promoting individual learning plans.

During their February meeting, council members decided for their final project for this year's council, they would create the promotional video for a statewide campaign promoting the ILP and other postsecondary resources.

Council members Harper Blake, a junior at Marion County High School; Manas Garla, a senior at Western Hills High School (Franklin County); and Preston Graham, a senior at Woodford County High School, narrated the introduction video.

The ILP Commercial Showcase, which will begin after the start of the 2026-2027 school year, involves giving students around the state the opportunity to submit commercials that define what the ILP is and how they use it in their district to help plan their future. Select videos will be shared on KDE's social media channels.

Fletcher said ILPs are a great way for students to personalize their high school pathways and have more vibrant learning experiences that align with what they want to do after high school.

"We want you to have choice," Fletcher said. "That's why the ILP is so important because there are so many parts. If you look at your science and social studies courses, they should be catered to what your Individual Learning Plan can be."

Follow-up Required: The 2026-2027 council will continue the project.

Agenda Item: Next Meeting and Adjournment

Presenter: Rosalind Turner, CSAC liaison

Summary of Discussion: Before adjourning, members reflected on their personal growth, the value of networking and the importance of student voice. They encouraged future members to participate and support one another.

The next meeting will be in person in August at 300 Sower Blvd., Frankfort. Members were asked to join the commissioner for lunch, when participation certificates were to be presented. The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Graham and second by Graboviy.