



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Local School Board Members Advisory Council (LSBMAC)
SUMMARY

FEB. 23, 2023

SUMMARY:

I. Agenda Item: Welcome and Roll Call

Presenter: David Cook, Facilitator, Director of Innovative Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Webster, Simpson County; Julia Fischer, Bellevue Independent; Brenda Rose, Whitley County; Brandon Rutherford, Madison County; Larry Dodson, Oldham County; Diane Berry, Nelson County; Joanna Freels, Shelby County; and Linda Duncan, Jefferson County

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christina Dressler, Bowling Green Independent, and Ruschelle Hamilton, Breathitt County

Summary of Discussion:

Cook said that his division is deep into the United We Learn work. A council, called the Kentucky United We Learn Council, has been formed and is made up of about 70 stakeholders from around the state. He explained the Deeper Learning projects occurring within the co-ops. All but five school districts are participating. Most of that work is happening with teachers as they are being provided training. Cook identified the Project Based Learning work that's going on in many districts.

Feedback: Berry asked for clarification regarding the standards and how they are incorporated into Project Based Learning. Cook explained that Project Based Learning is a way to teach the standards but should go deeper because it's not only teaching content but is an extension of traditional instruction. He explained students are demonstrating they know the content through their project. Teacher training for Project Based Learning is occurring across the state and it is hoped a third of them will be trained by the end of this year. Project Based Learning is probably the number one strategy under the Deeper Learning umbrella.

II. Agenda Item: KDE Safe and Supportive Schools Resources and Discussion of Use of Pronouns

Presenter: Matthew Courtney, Policy Advisor, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support Department of Education

Guiding Question: What resources does The Kentucky Department of Education provide to ensure safe and supportive schools for students who identify as LGBTQI?

Summary of Discussion: Courtney said LGBTQI+ student issues became part of his policy portfolio about 18 months ago. He asked for specific questions from council members.

Berry said there was a situation last year where students were asking other students what pronoun they wanted to use. He feels this is private information and the students did not have permission to ask. Courtney responded, “You have a right to be concerned about curriculum and activities that are happening in schools and if students are engaging in activities and lessons tied to pronouns, it needs to be known and addressed.” Courtney advised them to push back a little on the notion that all individuals would consider that topic to be private. The agency does know from research that youth as young as 3 years old have demonstrated a desire to identify in a way other than society has already identified them. Many students have strong opinions about what they would like to be called. Courtney explained that evidence shows us that using a student's requested name and pronouns reduces their risk of serious mental health by almost 70%. Courtney advised that in the specific situation mentioned, a conversation with the teacher needs to occur especially if conversation is being done during classroom time.

Rutherford said when LGBTQI+ became known and appeared in school that students “really focused on the pronouns and instruction was lost.” Teachers seemed to go along with this because that is what KDE wanted them to do. He explained that teachers felt the need to focus on the pronouns and they lost a lot of instructional time. Rutherford also said that high school students are “influential” so some students end up following others just based on the group they are in.

Courtney explained that KDE did not put out any guidance about this population until July 1, 2022, and the department intentionally waited to provide guidance knowing that districts and teachers were going to need to process the information and understand that it could disrupt instruction. When KDE starts to receive a large number of the same question, that triggers the agency to put together a document and release it so KDE decided to put out some clear guidance on the research and policies of the pronoun issue. KDE has never instructed teachers or administrators to seek that information and frequently advises against seeking that information out or to surveying students. The guidance does say that when a student expresses desire to use a different name or pronoun that they are registered with, it should be respected as it can have a positive impact on their mental health. Names carry weight and significance to everyone and the guidance advises to respect that but not to solicit that information.

Dodson asked if there are legal issues tied to using a name other than the one that is registered? Courtney explained that there are some implications for using alternative names in official documents. Federal law states that the parent owns the child’s educational record until they are 18. There can be legal issues regarding changing a name but within Infinite Campus

you can delineate a nickname or second name making it less official and it would not be a part of their record. Courtney mentioned being cognizant of releasing credentials, records and alternate names to avoid ramifications and to always talk to the school board when making decisions. Courtney stresses that leaders have an important decision to make when deciding to use a name aloud in class and also stresses the importance of using the legal documented name in official documents. This is definitely a policy making conversation for the future.

Dodson asked if parents should be contacted if a student requests to be identified by a specific name. Courtney said that the guidance states that if a student approaches school personnel in confidence expecting that confidentiality will be maintained, it is advised that the school personnel maintain confidentiality but provide wrap-around services, such as access to a counselor, until they can talk to their family. Courtney explained that an involuntary disclosure can create a mental health crisis. The one exception to this advice is an immediate physical risk to the child.

Duncan expressed her feelings about putting staff in a vulnerable situation with these conversations because the pronoun and name situation is different from what has to legally be reported. Duncan asked if there are any known situations where teachers were in trouble for having these conversations. Courtney responded that teachers know a lot about their students due to the personal bonds they build and are fairly comfortable with personal conversations and when to seek further assistance. There are some cases where teachers have held onto information too long or did not try as hard as they should have to support. There are not any Kentucky cases known where teachers have been involved in a court case. Courtney explained that the Supreme Court will be involved in the next five years and different conversations will arise.

Duncan commented that there could be a bullying issue regarding what a teacher calls a student. Courtney replied that part of the ongoing conversation involves helping them understand that there are larger societal consequences to these decisions beyond each classroom. They need to be comfortable with their decisions everywhere.

III. Agenda Item: Legislative Update

Presenter: Brian Perry, Legislative and Government Relations, Kentucky Department of Education

Guiding Question: What legislation appears to have the greatest chance of passage and how might that affect school districts?

Summary of Discussion: Perry explained that he is in the middle of the legislative session. There have been about 250 new bills dropped.

Perry briefly mentioned additional new bills and then opened up for questions from the board.

Feedback: Cook asked about a bill that included a student board member. Perry responded that there is one bill that would add student members to the local board and another that would add a voting member to the Kentucky Board of Education. They have not been assigned to a committee yet.

Duncan asked for an elaboration on an attendance or truancy bill. Perry explained that House Bill 3 is a top priority of the House, but it has not been discussed yet.

Duncan also asked about the discipline bill. Perry said that they just dropped this week so the bills are just not being explored and unclear which ones will move forward.

Fisher asked for more information about the comprehensive reading program. Perry did not have additional details but offered to connect Fisher with Micki Ray, chief academic officer, with the Office of Teaching and Learning at KDE.

Rutherford asked about Senate Bill 50, the partisan school board elections. Perry said there is conversation about the possibility of making school board races partisan. Perry said he does not feel it will move forward this session because it's the first time it has been introduced and it is a big change. He said he would not be surprised if it gets refiled during the next session.

IV. Discussion about Raising Teacher Salaries and The SEEK formula

Presenter: Chay Ritter, Office of Finance and Operations

Guiding Question: How will efforts to require salary increases for teachers affect school districts and will there be modifications to the SEEK formula to accommodate such increases?

Summary of Discussion: Ritter began by discussing teacher raises. He pointed out there is a chart that shows historically what state mandated raises have been over the years. He said that teacher raises are a competitive environment right now. He discussed the funding and explained what the governor proposes as raises across the board for all staff, which is around \$3 million and includes fringe, liability and health insurance. Ritter said there may be small changes in the SEEK formula but nothing massive all at once. He brought up SB504 which focuses on switching average daily attendance to average daily membership and it is still in review.

Dodson said the governor wants to give raises but wants to know how it relates to SEEK?

Dodson also stated his county is low on the formula and had to return \$25 million from raised taxes. Dodson why the formula is not set for districts to keep the money raised from taxes.

Ritter addressed the recurring raises stating the property assessments affects the amount of SEEK money. There are opportunities to discuss this issue with legislators and explain district problems.

V. Facilitated Open Discussion and Feedback, David Cook, Facilitator, Director of Innovation, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion: The council agreed to move future meetings to 6 p.m. ET to accommodate travel.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m. ET.

Next Meeting:

Location: Louisville Downtown Marriott (Room TBD)

Date: July 13 2023

Time: 6:00 p.m. ET