

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT MARCH 2024 MEETING



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

**FEB. 27, 2024**

**Present (24 members present):** Ava Benson, Reese Blakeman, Cameron Breier, Owen Cody, Hunter Combs, Justin Dunning, Raima Dutt, Manas Garla, Nicholas Hazelett, Honette Irakiza, Peter Jefferson, Shraman Kar, Seth Langford, Danica Love, Gabriella MacAdams, Anopa Musoni, Tanvi Rakesh, Daniel Ratley, Jocelyn Reddick, Sarah Umbarger, Carley Watts, Bentley White, Aliete Yanes Medina, Joshua Zyzak

**Absent (12 members absent):** Owen Borden, Joud Dahleh, Trey Jackson, Vijaykumar Karthikeyan, Constance Martin, R.J. Osborne, Caleb Robinson, Amy Roblero-Perez, Sophia Staples, Ian Swenson, Austin Vitato, India Young

**Summary:**

**Agenda Item:** Welcome

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

**Summary of Discussion:** Kinney shared several updates with council members, including KDE’s recognition of Public Schools Week and the status of the search process to name the next permanent commissioner of education.

**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 Jan. 23, 2024, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council meeting were approved.](#) Motion made by Aliete

Yanes Medina, a sophomore at Fern Creek High School (Jefferson County), and seconded by Owen Cody, a senior at McCracken County High School.

**Feedback:** None.

**Agenda Item:** Mindful Minute Activity

**Presenter:** Damien Sweeney, Ed.D., Director, Division of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Sweeney led students through a deep breathing exercise, asked them to discuss areas in their lives that they are proud of and spoke about the importance of inclusion and belonging. He shared that 8% of elementary, 15% of middle school and 22% of high school students in Kentucky either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “I feel like I am part of my school.”

**Feedback:** Students discussed ways adults in their schools have helped them feel included or as if they belong.

“Our school counselors are very involved with our student body and check in on students as often as possible. Many of our students feel comfortable reaching out to them,” said Tanvi Rakesh, a junior at Cooper High School (Boone County).

“Efforts made by my school for me to express my African culture in the multicultural fair or African fashion show have made me a lot more confident about my heritage,” said Anopa Musoni, a senior from Lafayette High School (Fayette County).

Students also identified moments when they have overcome mental health challenges, as well as situations in and out of the classroom.

“I’m proud of myself for pushing through the end of my senior year and continuing to work hard in classes,” said Cameron Breier, a senior at DuPont Manual High School (Jefferson County).

“I am proud of being able to keep a level head with all of the after-high school decisions coming up,” said Lyon County High School senior Justin Dunning.

**Agenda Item:** Updates on the February 2024 Kentucky Board of Education Meeting and Selection of Next Kentucky Board of Education Student Member

**Presenter:** Meredith Brewer, Ph.D., Executive Director of Education Policy, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Brewer updated the council about the [Feb. 7, 2024, Kentucky Board of Education \(KBE\) meeting](#) and noted that applications for the 2024-2025 KBE non-voting student and teacher members are due March 8. She discussed what a student member gains from board membership. Additionally, she invited council members to serve on the Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Special Committee to review applications for the non-voting student KBE member.

**Feedback:** Students were asked to indicate their interest in serving on the selection committee on the meeting exit slip.

**Agenda Item:** Highlights from the Annual Safe Schools Statistical Report

**Presenter:** Blake Konny, Education Academic Program Consultant, Division of Student Success, Office of Continuous Improvement and Support, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** [Konny presented highlights from the 2022-2023 Safe Schools Annual Statistical Report](#). He said that roughly 92,700 of the 634,424 students enrolled in public schools last year were involved in one or more behavior events. Behavior events involved specific violations such as assault, violence, weapons, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, bullying and harassment. The report included behavioral events that resulted in expulsion, in-school removal, in-district removal, out-of-school suspension or corporal punishment. The data was separated by sex, race and ethnicity, grade level, socioeconomic status, and location. Konny asked the council to reflect on the data and think about who needs to be influenced to change the outcome of these students and reduce behavioral events.

**Feedback:** Members discussed the variety of people impacted by behavior events and discussed their view on the report.

“I know from growing up in an impoverished area where the crime rates are high, it is hard for students to focus on school and getting a chance to go anywhere because they are not motivated to try harder,” said Seth Langford, a sophomore at J. Graham Brown School (Jefferson County). “I think if we can help students see no matter what their current situation looks like, they can always improve.”

Peter Jefferson, a junior at Henry Clay High School (Fayette County), said, “I would say within the school, especially in comparison to other personnel in the school, teachers have the highest ceiling to influence student behavior because of the time spent with them.”

**Agenda Item:** Council Project Activity

**Presenter:** Raima Dutt, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Chair; Bentley White, Commissioner’s Student Advisory Council Vice Chair

**Summary of Discussion:** Dutt provided an update about the council's work to date related to student voice. [The council's interest in student voice began at the May 30, 2023, council meeting.](#) Next, the council divided into two groups, led by Dutt and White. The two groups reviewed transcripts of interviews conducted with invited representatives from other KDE advisory councils from the Jan. 23, 2024, council meeting. White also asked members to review the current draft of the council's presentation before the council's next meeting on March 26.

**Feedback:** During the breakout session the members reviewed transcripts from the Jan. 23, 2024, meeting. Dutt and White asked members to highlight areas that responded to the interview questions related to student voice and to identify themes to highlight in the council's final report.

**Follow-up:** Dutt and White will share further updates about the presentation with members by email before the March 26 meeting.

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

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

**Summary of Discussion:** Jones said that applications for participation on the 2024-2025 Commissioner's Student Advisory Council (CSAC) are due March 1 and may be submitted via the [CSAC Application Form](#).

**Feedback:** Hunter Combs, a senior at Knott County Central High School, and Nicholas Hazelett, a senior at Paintsville High School (Paintsville Independent), thanked Kevin Dailey, the 2024 Kentucky Teacher of the Year, for recently visiting their schools. Dailey said that he enjoyed the opportunity to visit and invited council members to continue to share their recommendations of teachers to celebrate as part of his Teacher of the Year project.

The meeting adjourned at 11:16 a.m. ET. The next council meeting will be held virtually on March 26 from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. ET.