



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Student Advisory Council

MINUTES

VIRTUAL MEETING DATE: MARCH 25, 2020

ATTENDANCE: Madelyn Blankenship, Mi'Keyla Crumble, Reece Dicken, Rohin Dutt, Joshua Griffith, Elizabeth Holcomb, CJ Johnson, Solyana Mesfin, Katelynn Perkins, Lauren Shackelford, Samuel Smith, Lauren Witt, Luke Wyatt

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nicole Arnett, Sarah Davenport, Renuka Gentela, Laila Hayes, Ying Lin, Madison Ortega, Anastasia Pohlgeers, Caleb Spencer, Parker Stobaugh

SUMMARY:

Agenda Item: Welcome, Introduction and Purpose

Presenter: Kevin C. Brown, Interim Commissioner

Summary of Discussion:

Education Commissioner Kevin Brown expressed his appreciation to the members for participating and reminded them that it is more important than ever to get feedback from this group. Non-traditional Instruction (NTI) is scheduled until at least April 20, though superintendents have been asked to prepare NTI lessons through May 1. We will find out more, but there is the possibility that we will not return to in-person school this year.

Agenda Item: NTI Program Information

Presenter: Dr. Kelly Foster, Associate Commissioner and David Cook, Division Director

Summary of Discussion:

The group was asked to provide feedback about the group members' experiences with NTI in the form of a plus/delta, where a plus is a positive and a delta is a negative, or an area for improvement.

Plusses included:

- NTI is going well and they are not losing instruction. They are learning more about current issues.
- It's helpful when teachers hold virtual classes and make themselves available for extra help online.

Deltas included:

- The course load can be overwhelming for students taking a lot of AP classes. Learning new material without traditional classroom instruction is more difficult.
- Teachers are not able to provide immediate feedback.
- Some students are new to NTI because their districts have not participated in the program before and are unsure of what to expect.

The group was asked to share their experiences related to other parts of the NTI experience that aren't directly related to instruction and classwork. Feedback included:

- Teachers take attendance during video calls.
- Teachers hold students accountable through Google Classroom.
- Classroom work hasn't changed drastically, but students must diversify their computer skills.

Follow-up Required:

Group members were encouraged to share their experiences by writing a column. Toni Kunz Tatman, Communications Director, will contact group members to collect written pieces.

Agenda Item: High School Graduation Requirements

Presenter: Dr. Amanda Ellis, Associate Commissioner

Summary of Discussion:

Dr. Ellis reminded the group that there is a state regulation setting the minimum high school graduation requirements, and districts can add requirements. There is a concern about all seniors in Kentucky having the opportunity to fulfill the requirements and this group's feedback is being sought on two options being proposed.

Option 1: Ask districts to waive extra local requirements and allow seniors to meet the state minimum requirement of 22 credits for graduation.

Option 2: Ask districts to waive extra local requirements and ask the Kentucky Board of Education to waive the requirement for 7 credits of electives and only require 15 credits of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Health, Physical Education and Visual or Performing Arts.

Another waiver is being sought regarding the civics test requirement. That is a statutory requirement that was passed into law, so a waiver will need to be granted from the General Assembly.

Feedback Given:

- A question was asked about using pass/fail grading for elective credits so GPAs would not be affected for some students.
 - It was explained that grading is a local decision. There has been pushback about pass/fail grading because it impacts GPA and may not allow students to maximize KEES money. Local boards could still decide to use pass/fail.
- One district is allowing seniors to take their civics exam online and email evidence of the passing score to their guidance counselors.
- Most seniors should have the credits needed for graduation, as P.E., health and art requirements are often taken during the freshman year.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: School Counseling Services

Presenter: Dr. Damien Sweeney, Program Coordinator

Summary of Discussion:

Dr. Sweeney introduced himself as a resource for school guidance counselors. He wants to solicit feedback from this group on three topics: academic, career and social/emotional counseling. The group was asked to provide feedback about the mental health issues they or their peers are experiencing and how they're dealing with frustrations.

Feedback Given:

- There is a lot of anxiety and stress about juggling schoolwork and college admissions requirements.
- Seniors are dealing with anxiety over missing out on end of year activities such as prom and graduation.
- Students are trying to interact as much as possible through social media, Facetime or hanging out with social distancing. Students are unsure of how to handle the disappointment of missing milestone activities in a positive way.
- Teachers are doing a good job of checking in and trying to help ease anxiety.
- It's nice to talk with classmates on Zoom calls. It's even making it easier for peers who didn't talk much before to connect.
- Counselors conducting Zoom calls to answer questions about scholarships is helpful.
- The yearbook staff of one school is conducting spirit week from home, where students can dress up and send in pictures for the yearbook.
- Counselors who haven't made contact yet should reach out to students and let them know they are there.
- Loneliness is a factor when parents are gone, so online classes and contact with school staff or peers is beneficial.

Dr. Sweeney shared a list of concerns during this extended time at home, such as abuse, trauma and poverty. A crisis text line was shared with the group.

Group members were asked about academic concerns they are seeing.

Feedback Given:

- Students are worried about the possibility of returning to school with only one or two weeks before finals. This would be a challenging transition and could impact GPAs negatively.
- A question was asked about whether NTI days will allow seniors to graduate on time.
 - Commissioner Brown informed the group that yes, NTI instruction will count toward the required hours of instruction districts must provide and allow seniors to graduate on time. The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 177 stating that school would not extend beyond June 12.

Follow-up Required:

None.

Agenda Item: Open Discussion

Presenter: Toni Konz Tatman, Interim Director of Communications

Summary of Discussion:

Ms. Konz Tatman called upon each group member to provide any additional feedback that may not have been covered during the discussion.

Feedback given:

- Worried about APs – overwhelming.
- Things are going well for the most part and group members commended their districts.
- Districts who have not done NTI before seem underprepared, causing some anxiety about what to expect.
- One district is finding innovative ways to allow staff to continue working, such as maintaining the high school greenhouse and compiling NTI packets for students without internet access.
- Sometimes slow and unreliable network connections cause issues for students and teachers.
- Some teachers who are not as technically savvy have trouble posting assignments.
- Some assignments are perceived as busy work.
- Concern over being ready for finals.

Follow-up Required:

Ms. Tatman will send an email to the group for additional feedback, resources and setting up the next meeting.

Agenda Item: Next Steps and Adjournment

Presenter: Kevin Brown, Interim Commissioner

Summary of Discussion:

Feedback will be shared with the Education Continuation Task Force, a group of about 40 members representing education advocate groups. The task force is charged with giving districts “just in time” guidance and this group has given valuable feedback on key issues.

Follow-up Required:

Group members may email Commissioner Brown or Ms. Konz Tatman if additional questions arise. The next virtual meeting will be held on April 14, if not sooner.