

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT JANUARY 2022 MEETING



**KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Commissioner's Student Advisory Council (CSAC)
SUMMARY**

Dec. 10, 2021

PRESENT: Delaney Daugherty, Arnav Dharmagadda, Rohin Dutt, JuLeah Edie, Ollie Fegenbush, Logan Justice, Ella Luking, Gavin Breunig, Jack Johnson, Loren Little, Roxanne Lockard, Anastasia Panaretos, Spandana Pavuluri, Alexandra Perry, Sophia Retone, Sam Smith, Arivumani Srivastava, Dyllan Tipton, Bentley White, Emma Whitehouse

ABSENT: Dejah Armstrong, Trevin Bevins, Madelyn Blankenship, Drake Calhoon, Vinessa Frissola, Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, Jacob Lyons, Solyana Mesfin, Joy Ntakarutimana, Gracie Smith

SUMMARY

Agenda Item: Welcome (Roll Call)

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Toni Konz-Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Commissioner Glass welcomed SAC members and outlined the meeting agenda.

Agenda Item: Kentucky Board of Education Legislative Priorities for 2022 Session

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Meredith Brewer, Director of Education Policy, Office of the Commissioner

Summary of Discussion:

Meredith Brewer presented the board's priorities to the SAC. The legislative priorities stem from five of the Kentucky Board of Education's (KBE) annual goals, which are to:

- Champion the Kentucky Coalition for Advancing Education's efforts to reimagine learning in Kentucky as we co-create a vision with communities, foster local innovation and advance policy recommendations aligned with this work;

- Amplify our voice in support of minority students, their families and minority educators by not only listening to their concerns and aspirations, but also pledging to leverage those concerns and aspirations to guide our actions. Continue to support and promote the Kentucky Department of Education's efforts to foster a culture of anti-racism and further equity within our public schools;
- In cooperation with the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), advance policies and regulation reviews that strengthen the future teacher pipeline and increase the qualities and competencies of Kentucky's educator workforce, emphasizing the critical need for increased representation of teachers of color;
- Galvanize support of strong, developmentally appropriate early childhood education as a path to equity by taking steps toward fully funded full-day kindergarten and universal public preschool; and
- Promote the creation and implementation of a statewide profile of a learner/graduate, identifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions all Kentucky learners need to become successful citizens. Utilize and strengthen key partnerships, including those with the Commonwealth Education Continuum and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, to inform this work.

KBE's 2022 legislative priorities include ensuring all students have access to a wide range of political, social and cultural perspectives in order to develop the critical thinking skills, interpersonal competencies and problem solving capabilities required for success in the workforce and in life; the recruitment and retention of an educator workforce that includes individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds; significantly increased funding for primary and secondary education; and increased funding for 2019 Senate Bill 1 (SB1), including funding for an adequate number of mental health professionals in every school.

Feedback:

Glass said that although there are funds available the legislature could allocate toward KBE's funding requests, there are many other interested public and private sector businesses and agencies throughout the state that also will be requesting those funds. He said it will be up to state, district and school leaders to advocate on behalf of education, along with the other associations that are in the state that also advocate for education.

Spandana Pavuluri, a junior at duPont Manual High School (Jefferson County), praised the priority for increased funding for counselors in schools and said the benefits go beyond students' mental health. She said counselors can also help with postsecondary transition advising. Pavuluri said counselors are essential in so many ways, and that she thinks it is important that students can get to know their counselor.

Bentley White, a junior at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, said he would like to see increased transparency within schools between students and staff, as well as a better way to inform KDE or their legislator about problems within the school system and how they recommend it be changed.

Regarding Konz-Tatman's request for students to discuss how KDE can advocate for them in the General Assembly the following comments were made:

“I agree with a priority being mental health. There have been conversations I heard about that were focusing on allowing mental health days to be in the school year schedule or having excused absents for mental health days.” – Anastasia Panaretos

Delaney Daugherty emphasized administrative accountability. “Just throughout this year, a lot of things have gone unaddressed, and those problems are only growing as we progress through the year. It's not districtwide, though. Also, I love the idea of increasing postsecondary transition advising! I feel like most students are left to figure things out on their own because nothing is made clear.”

Brewer and Glass encouraged the students to register their concerns by contacting their legislators’ offices and advocating for the issues that are important to them.

Glass reminded students that they should never underestimate the effectiveness and efficacy that they have as students.

Agenda Item: Update on the Selection Process of Ex-Officio Student Member to the Kentucky Board of Education

Presenter: Toni Konz-Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Konz-Tatman discussed the upcoming selection process for KBE’s next non-voting student member.

Solyana Mesfin, a senior at Eastern High School (Jefferson County), was selected last year to be the board’s first student member. Her term expires in Spring 2022.

The recently approved regulation, which is on track to become effective March 1 next year, requires that students be selected from each congressional district in numerical order. Since Mesfin is from Kentucky’s 3rd Congressional District, the next student member will be a rising junior selected from the 4th Congressional District.

Once applications are submitted by the April 1 deadline, the SAC will review applications for the position and select three applicants to recommend to KBE.

The application process will be publicly advertised to Kentucky public school teachers and superintendents for further dissemination to students.

Feedback:

Jack Johnson stated that he thought the best way to advertise the position was by going through the guidance counselor’s office.

Roxanne Lockard said she believed it would help to have the position publicized through school announcements and sent out via digital newsletter.

Bentley White asked about the position becoming an elected position that could be voted on by students.

Agenda Item: KDE Student Advisory Council Social Media Presence

Presenter: Jackie Thompson, Information Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Thompson discussed with students about the SAC Twitter handle and asked students to use it to showcase their voices and the initiatives that are important to them. She discussed clear process to allow students to elevate their voices by having two student volunteers be chosen to maintain the Twitter account. Students would draft the posts and return it to KDE for editing.

It would be a simple, streamlined process where students send Thompson the content to be posted after which she looks it over and shares it through social media.

Agenda Item: Student Mental Health Check In and Equity/Inclusion Update:

Presenters: Damien Sweeney, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education; Thomas Woods-Tucker, Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Commissioner, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

Sweeney and Woods-Tucker discussed upcoming initiatives including:

- Equity Toolkit and Equity Dashboard
- Advanced Placement
- International Baccalaureate
- Governor's School for the Arts
- Regional Cooperatives
- District Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officers
- New Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) DEI Page
- New KDE Document (Facilitating Conversations About Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)

Konz-Tatman shared a document called facilitating conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion that is being provided to school districts. She shared questions that will be asked including:

- How to promote student equity through standards implementation.
- What are some other current discussions at KDE about equity?
- What is inclusion and what does it look like?
- How can we make sure that we're modeling inclusion in our schools and that everybody feels like welcome members of our school culture and climate?
- What is equity?

Woods-Tucker asked students to continue to share additional things happening in school districts. He said he wanted to continue to highlight student stories to spread the word on what is being done right regarding diversity, equity and inclusion and what still needs work.

Agenda Item: Discussion on January 2022 Meeting and Adjournment

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Toni Konz-Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Konz-Tatman reported that the next SAC meeting would be in-person at the Sower Building in Frankfort. Items to be discussed will include messaging and framework for the student position on the Kentucky Board of Education and information on the selection of the 2022-2023 student council.

Glass reiterated that the KDE will continue to balance in-person and virtual meetings to accommodate student schedules.

Feedback:

Bentley White asked if the agency has issued an opinion on the Surgeon General's advisory on the mental health of students and faculty in schools throughout the nation.

Glass said that a response would be formulated after a thorough review of the document and agreed that the pandemic has created multiple disruptions witnessed in behavior, mental health and stress issues in students and staff.

Glass concluded the meeting by asking students to "extend yourself grace" when dealing with school and personal situations.