

**SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT DECEMBER 2021
MEETING**



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

Nov. 17, 2021

PRESENT: Logan Justice, Bentley White, Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, Spandana Pavuluri, Solyana Mesfin, Dyllan Tipton, Sam Smith, Dejah Armstrong, Delaney Daugherty, Emma Whitehouse, Vinessa Frissola, Roxanne Lockard, Joy Ntakarutimana, Anastasia Panaretos, Rohin Dutt, Ollie Fegenbush, Sophia Retone, JuLeah Edie, Alexandra Perry, Jacob Lyons, Arivumani Srivastava, Jack Johnson, Ella Luking, Loren Little, Trevin Bevins

ABSENT: Madelyn Blankenship, Gavin Breunig, Drake Calhoon, 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:

Glass welcomed SAC members and outlined the meeting agenda. He also explained the upcoming legislative session and gave a brief rundown of which topics may be included in the session. Konz-Tatman explained to the students that there will be a full agenda item regarding the General Assembly and legislative session during the December meeting. She asked for any feedback the students might have, along with priorities they would like to see the General Assembly address.

Agenda Item: Update on COVID-19 Vaccine for Ages 5-12 and Community Immunization Dashboard

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Connie White, M.D., Deputy Commissioner, Kentucky Department for Public Health; Angie McDonald, Education Nurse Consultant, Kentucky Department of Education; and Michelle Malicote, Education Nurse Consultant, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Connie White began by thanking the SAC members for their work and applauded them for their dedication to helping improve education. She showed the data on new COVID-19 cases per week from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 to present. She also showed the COVID-19 inpatient census for Kentucky hospitals from Aug. 1, 2020 through Nov. 15, 2021, the ICU census, and the ventilator census from the same time period. She mentioned a program that provides surveillance testing in schools weekly through contracts with various laboratories. Test-to-stay is another program that was federally funded. Vaccination resources were shared, including the [Team Kentucky COVID-19 webpage](#).

Feedback: Spandana Pavuluri asked: “If there were to be another surge in COVID-19 cases, how equipped are we to handle it?” Glass responded that we have learned how to operate in-person relatively safely with mitigation strategies in place, and there are now vaccines available for ages 5 and up. However, Glass stressed that they are focusing on treating it as a public health issue and not a political issue.

Connie White said that each of the COVID-19 mutations have been controlled by the vaccine and stressed the importance of students getting vaccinated in order to safely stay in school.

Bentley White asked two questions: “If there were to be another uptick in cases, how close would we be to overtaxing the healthcare system?” “How far do you think we are from the virus stabilizing and not mutating?” Connie White said she thinks the virus will continue to mutate, but fewer people contracting the virus will make it harder for the virus to mutate. She also said there are various treatments for the virus and the healthcare industry is becoming more advanced. She said the healthcare system has come a long way since the start of the pandemic and she hopes that will continue.

Glass asked what is known about the waning effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine and wanted to know if booster shots may continue to be necessary in the future/what boosters and vaccines may look like in the next year or two. Connie White said that older individuals are more likely to need boosters more often because younger individuals will have longer lasting antibodies. However, she thinks the COVID-19 vaccines could end up being like the flu, where vaccines are offered every year.

Soleila Elliot Gonzalez asked what the DPH is estimating for the percent of vaccinations for ages 5-12 will be as we get further through the year. Connie White said she thinks there will be a higher percentage of vaccinations at the start and that will continue to decrease as it did when the vaccines rolled out for older age groups.

Agenda Item: Kentucky Education Summit Recap and Student Video Release

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education; Toni Konz-Tatman, Chief Communications Officer, Kentucky Department of Education; and Logan Justice, Student Advisory Council member

Summary of Discussion:

Glass gave a brief rundown of the Kentucky Education Summit, noting that there were more than 500 participants. He said the highlight was the work the students did with Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman on the mental health roundtables. He also detailed the unveiling of KDE's new initiative, [United We Learn: Investing in Kentucky's Future, One Student at a Time](#). He encouraged the students to look at the United We Learn report and shared a few highlights.

Logan Justice [created a video at the conference](#) that highlights students who attended the summit.

Feedback:

Spandana Pavuluri praised Justice for his work to give a clear voice to students.

“Paraphrasing can only capture so much of what people say, but giving their authentic words in interviews is wonderful,” said Pavuluri.

Bentley White appreciated the video's emphasis on student voice in conversations surrounding changes to the education system.

“It highlights that it's a system for the students, by the students,” said Bentley White.

Solyana Mesfin said she enjoyed seeing an increase in student participation at the summit.

“It's an example for all adult-driven spaces to have students feel more comfortable,” she said.

Agenda Item: Student Mental Health Action Summit Recap

Presenters: SAC members

Summary of Discussion:

Soleila Elliot González explained the main three focuses within the mental health roundtables and said recommendations gathered from students during the roundtables included giving students and staff mental health days, training for students and staff and a workshop for students to discuss their mental health needs as a group.

“A lot of times students become drained from the pressure and expectations of schoolwork on top of extracurriculars, so the big thing was being able to identify that students need space and breaks,” said González.

The student team working on these roundtables is now focusing on gathering recommendations from the roundtables to bring to policymakers ahead of the next legislative session in January 2022.

“The summit showed that students have a voice and an opinion on how they can improve the system,” said White. “They just need to be given the chance to voice their opinions.”

Charleigh Browning said that the summit gave her the opportunity to talk to the Marion County Board of Education and advocate for a student representative on the board in order to make sure that mental health is a priority among the board.

Agenda Item: School Funding Taskforce Update

Presenters: Robin Kinney, Associate Commissioner, Office of Finance and Operations, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Kinney provided a detailed update on the School Funding Task Force, which was created by [House Bill 405](#) to look at how the education funding system works and how it could be changed in the future.

The task force – which is preparing for the biennial budget request – consists of two state representatives, two state senators, the commissioner of education, three superintendents and three local school board members.

Adopted recommendations include: Full day funding for kindergarten; consideration of transitioning from average daily attendance to average daily membership; full funding for transportation; full funding for School Safety and Resiliency Act of 2019; expanding Family Resource and Youth Service Centers; a school district impact statement; asking the Office of Education Accountability to research the cost of an adequate public education; referring KDE’s nonresident funding report to the Senate and House Appropriations and Revenue Committees; and asking the Legislative Research Commission to continue studying school funding during the 2022 interim session.

Agenda Item: Discussion on December 2021 Meeting—In person or Virtual?

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 opened the floor to discussion on if the next SAC meeting should be in-person or virtual.

Feedback:

Charleigh Browning said a virtual setting for December would be fine if it doesn’t interfere with finals.

Rox Lockard expressed concern about the date of the meeting due to the finals she has scheduled for that week.

Solyana Mesfin said that the scheduled meeting week is hectic for almost everyone and although they cannot accommodate everyone’s schedule, she said they need to try and make it accessible for majority of the SAC members to attend.

Arivumani Srivastava said he also has finals that week and a meeting, whether in-person or virtual, wouldn’t be feasible.

Bentley White said meetings on Friday's aren't possible for him unless they are early in the morning.

JuLeah Edie said that the first two weeks of December aren't feasible for in-person meetings for her.

Dyllan Tipton suggested making a Google Form to gauge what people prefer and mentioned that if there is an in-person meeting, they provide a virtual option for people to join in.

Soleila Elliot Gonzalez said she really likes being able to see people in-person, but that December is a busy month for her. She asked if there could be a possible meeting later in the winter break.

Glass said that he and Konz-Tatman would get together after the meeting to process and decide how to proceed with the December meeting.