

SUMMARY MINUTES ARE DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED AT APRIL MEETING



KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Commissioner's Student Advisory Council

SUMMARY

March 22, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Solyana Mesfin, Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, Bentley White, Arivumani Srivastava, Logan Justice, Anastasia Panaretos, Delaney Daugherty, Charleigh Browning, Rohin Dutt, JuLeah Edie, Rox Lockard

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Smith, Dyllan Tipton, Gracie Smith, Dejah Armstrong, Spandana Pavuluri, Madelyn Blankenship, Drake Calhoun, Arnav Dharmagadda, Ollie Fegenbush, Vinessa Fressola, Jack Johnson, Ella Luking, Jacob Lyons, Joy Ntakarutimana, Emma Whitehouse, Sophia Retone, Alexandra Perry, Loren Little

Agenda Item: Welcome, Roll Call

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

Summary of Discussion:

Tatman welcomed members and outlined the meeting agenda. Members put attendance in the chat.

Agenda Item: Report from the Student Advisory Council's Kentucky Board of Education Application Review Special Committee

Presenter: Arivumani Srivastava, Student Advisory Member, Chair of Committee

Summary of Discussion:

The committee met on March 17 to discuss candidates for the Kentucky Board of Education's (KBE's) new non-voting student board member. The committee received 17 applications from the 4th congressional district and were given a rubric to score the applicants. Srivastava, a

senior at Gatton Academy (Warren County), said the committee discussed the candidates for over an hour before choosing the top three to be sent to KBE's review subcommittee. KBE's subcommittee will choose the final candidate.

He said the committee is very confident that any of the three candidates will be a good replacement for current student KBE board member Solyana Mesfin, a senior at Eastern High School (Jefferson County), whose term ends in June.

Agenda Item: Brief update on Future plans for online testing of ACT

Presenter: Rhonda Sims, Associate Commissioner, and Shara Savage, Education Administration Program Consultant, Office of Assessment and Accountability, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Sims and Savage gave brief updates regarding the new ACT 2022 Spring testing policy and testing progress. ACT state administration is moving online via a phased approach by the spring of 2023.

Savage said that 22,000 individual test sessions were completed at the end of the first online test window; approximately 100 schools indicated they would test with paper on the March 8 initial paper test date. The ACT window 2 (make-up testing for some districts) opened March 22.

She also said that one small school district experienced technology issues, but the issue was school-related or user error.

Feedback:

Soleila Elliot Gonzalez, a junior at Ballard High School (Jefferson County), said she had trouble with efficiency. She asked if students would possibly receive a wireless mouse for better control through testing. She said it was difficult to take the test with an attached mouse. Savage said they had not thought of using wireless mice but would consider it.

Agenda Item: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Updates on podcast and mental health

Presenter: Thomas Woods-Tucker, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner and Chief Equity Officer; Damien Sweeney, Ed.D., Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging; and Nicole Fields, Ed.D., Community Engagement Coordinator, Office of Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Woods-Tucker explained that the division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has now added the word belonging to become DEIB. He said that when someone develops a sense of belonging, they're more apt to contribute and they feel better being a member of their community. Ultimately, he said when looking at the DEI work, the division wants to arrive to a state of belonging.

Sweeney introduced two new members of the division, Nicole Fields, community engagement coordinator, and Florence Chang, strategic analyst of learning.

Sweeney also conducted a mindful moment with the students.

Student council member Anastasia Panaretos, a junior at South Oldham High School (Oldham County), and Woods-Tucker are looking into creating a podcast highlighting heroic stories and practices in Kentucky schools, as well as a monthly newsletter for stakeholders throughout the state.

Agenda Item: Update from Lt. Gov. Coleman on student mental health work

Presenter: Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman and Heather Dearing, Deputy Chief of Staff for Lt. Gov. Coleman

Summary of Discussion:

Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman and Heather Dearing shared data about student mental health across the Commonwealth that led Coleman's office to prioritize improving mental health and increasing access to mental health resources. Coleman and Dearing also shared data from the student-led mental health action summits.

"We wanted to make sure that we were working to collectively and adequately prepare to meet the needs of students," said Coleman.

The action summits were planned and designed in partnership with the student advisory council, educational cooperatives, the Department for Behavioral Health, and the Division of Family Resource Youth Services Centers.

Over 300 students from grades 6 through 12 attended the 10 summits last year.

Members of the student advisory council analyzed every response to questions asked during the summits and came up with various recommendations to improve student mental health in Kentucky schools.

Responses detailed that students want help but are not sure how or where to access it. Students said they need greater access to mental health clinicians in schools and updated

suicide prevention training. The responses also showed that students feel maxed out and want schools to allow for mental health to be an excused absence for students and staff.

Student leaders shared their recommendations which include, but are not limited to the following:

- Six excused mental health days per school year
- Allocate funding for a licensed mental health professional to be on school campuses at all times in every K-12 school
- Peer mentoring for students who aren't comfortable talking to an adult
- Require updated evidence-based and discussion-based mental health curriculum to foster a stigma-free environment
- Make suicide prevention materials and resources available in every classroom and administrative office; implement regularly updated suicide prevention curriculum at least twice a year
- Use trauma-informed curriculum to be mindful and respectful when addressing the needs of students regarding eating disorders
- Require schools and/or districts to provide student mental health check-ins that allow students to express their emotions and needs confidentially at least once a month
- Schedule time throughout the day and year to account for mental health, academic and transitional breaks
- Incorporate student voice into all levels of decision-making through tiered interventions and instructional methods
- Recognize and respect students preferred pronouns and use gender inclusive language in schools

Feedback:

Dearing asked for feedback on next steps. Students said the data and recommendations should be shared statewide.

Solyana Mesfin mentioned visiting all the cooperative regions and sharing data from the summits, as well as getting feedback from those students about what the next steps should be.

"I know we have sent all the data back, but I think it would be nice if we could discuss the data with the students and also get their perspective on how to move forward," she said.

Charleigh Browning, a junior at Marion County High School, said the work of the council and the mental health summits are the most important work to her right now.

Agenda Item: Focus Group Discussion on College-Going Campaign

Presenter: Bruce Brooks, Director of Executive Support and Logistics, and Sue Patrick, Chief Communications Officer, Council for Postsecondary Education

Summary of Discussion:

Brooks and Patrick discussed a new Higher Education Matters Campaign launched by the Kentucky Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE), which seeks to improve public understanding that postsecondary education is key to greater opportunity and economic growth.

The campaign seeks to combat the lack of information and misinformation about higher education.

The campaign supports CPE's new strategic agenda for higher education, called "[Higher Education Matters: A Statewide Strategic Agenda for Kentucky Postsecondary Education.](#)" The eight-year plan, which includes input from hundreds of people from across the state, reinforces a "60 x 30 goal" – that 60% of working-age Kentuckians will have a college credential by 2030.

Patrick and Brooks sought feedback on what students think about college, why they think the college-going rate has been declining and what CPE can do to help.

"How are you all defining postsecondary education? What are the parameters of that in your head?" asked Brooks.

Council member Bentley White, a sophomore at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, said that in his experience, "it seems like it has always been college or university, but it's not typically limited to that. It can be vocational school or anything that helps you go into the workforce after you finish high school."

Many students said the words postsecondary education to them usually means college, but higher education is more encompassing and broader.

Brittany Lippert, associate director of marketing for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, shared [resources from the Higher Education Matters webpage](#) with students, which includes information on how to apply and pay for college or trade schools.

Agenda Item: Legislative Updates

Presenter: Jason E. Glass, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education and Chief Learner, Kentucky Department of Education

Summary of Discussion:

Glass shared legislative updates, including the passage of [Senate Bill 1](#) (SB 1) which has been assigned to the House Education Committee and alters the decision making on who hires principals and selects the curricula. The school boards now hold the power, unless it is deferred to the superintendents. He also discussed [SB 138](#), an American history bill, and [HB 9](#), an act related to the funding of charter schools.

KBE Chair Lu Young released an [Op Ed related to HB 9](#), in addition to [a statement from KDE](#), which details the departments disappointment in the passage of HB 9 through the House on March 22.

Adjournment.

The next Commissioner's Student Advisory Council meeting will be April 26 at 9 a.m. ET.