



**Kentucky Department of Education  
Commissioner's Student Advisory Council  
Summary  
August 27, 2024**

**Present (23 members present):** Lisa Abrampah, Mary Beth Bolen, Graham Borden, Ani Cockerham-O'Donnell, Isabella Edghill, Aniji Fox, Manas Garla, Preston Graham, Samarah Higgins, Honette Irakiza, Peter Jefferson, Allan Kalambayi, Sophia Langford, Gabriella MacAdams, Tanvi Rakesh, Daniel Ratley, Luisa Sanchez-Almenarez, Abigail Sears, Sophia Staples, Koah Ta, Austin Eric Vitato, Aliete Yanes Media and India Young

**Absent (1 member absent):** Carley Watts

**Summary:**

**Agenda Item:** Welcome

**Presenter:** Robbie Fletcher, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education, Kentucky Department of Education

**Summary of Discussion:** Fletcher, who started his role as commissioner of education on July 1, said he was looking forward to working with the council, as it allows him to be with students. He discussed his professional experience in education and outlined his priorities for his role as commissioner. The first priority, he said, is building relationships. Another priority is encouraging others to be "all in" when it comes to student success. "I have a commitment to you that you're going to get my best," Fletcher said to the council members. "I'm honored to be your commissioner, and when I say yours, I'm here to serve you."

**Feedback:** None.

**Agenda Item:** Roll Call and Approve Summary from Last Meeting

**Presenter:** GlyptusAnn Grider Jones, Ph.D., CSAC Liaison, KDE

**Summary of Discussion:** Jones called roll. The [summary notes from the April 24, 2024, Commissioner's Student Advisory Council meeting](#) were approved. Motion made by Sophia Langford, a junior at J. Graham Brown School (Jefferson County), and seconded by India Young, a senior at Craft Academy at Morehead State University/Marion County High School.

**Feedback:** Students shared their goals for the upcoming school year as part of the roll call.

**Agenda Item:** Mindful Minute Activity

**Presenter:** Michelle Sircy, Ed.D., Program Coordinator for Comprehensive School Counseling, Office of Teaching and Learning, KDE

**Summary of Discussion:** Sircy led students through several reflective activities, including a mindful breathing exercise, a “pulse check” on how the start of school is going and a goal-setting activity. Sircy discussed “W.O.O.P.” (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle and Plan) goal-setting techniques and encouraged students to reflect and build on their goals as part of their council experience.

**Feedback:** Students shared their goals, which included learning more about and discussing solutions to vaping in schools and how to advance minority representation in gifted and talented programs.

“I want to understand the full scope of Kentucky’s school and students,” said Peter Jefferson, a senior at Henry Clay High School (Fayette County). “The rationale behind that is that I live in Fayette County where there are lots and lots of people but we’re all kind of in the same place. Through this (Student Advisory Council), I’ve started to meet new people from western, eastern and northern Kentucky. I’d love to know more, ever farther from where I live.”

**Agenda Item:** Student Feedback: Kentucky’s College and Career Access Platform

**Presenter:** Jessica Fletcher, Marketing Analytics Director, Kentucky Center for Statistics (KY Stats); Trinity Walsh, Coordinator of Early Postsecondary Opportunities, Student Access and Success, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)

**Summary of Discussion:** [Fletcher and Walsh presented a platform, currently in development, to council members and asked for their feedback.](#) The platform is being designed to help Kentuckians visualize their paths from the classroom to their career and will provide access to resources about financial aid, career paths, career and technical education (CTE) pathways related to careers and information about Kentucky postsecondary schools to encourage students to create their career roadmap. Walsh said the platform may launch in early 2025.

**Feedback:** Council members explored the platform on computer and mobile devices and shared their feedback with presenters. Lisa Abrampah, a senior at Craft Academy/Frederick Douglass High School, said she appreciated that anyone could use the platform without having to sign in or create an account, making it easy to access.

**Agenda Item:** Career and Technical Education Opportunities

**Presenter:** Beth Engle, Director, Division of Technical Schools and Continuous Improvement, Office of Career and Technical Education, KDE

**Summary of Discussion:** Engle discussed the value and impact of career and technical education (CTE) for Kentucky high school students. CTE complements and enhances academic core classes, builds professional and employability skills and allows for technical skill attainment, she said. High school graduates that complete a

CTE pathway are now employed in Kentucky at a 4% higher rate than all high school graduates and now have a 12% higher median wage than all high school graduates, according to Engle. She encouraged students to explore what CTE courses and pathways were available in their district.

**Feedback:** Students asked about advantages of CTE coursework compared with Advanced Placement (AP) and dual-credit course offerings.

**Agenda Item:** Discussion on Chronic Absenteeism

**Presenter:** Judi Vanderhaar and Florence Chang, Program Consultants, Division of Student Success, Office of Continuous Improvement and Success, KDE; Jennifer Ginn, Director, Division of Communications, KDE

**Summary of Discussion:** Chang and Vanderhaar discussed how school districts have been dealing with chronic absenteeism for years, with a notable spike following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, 5% of districts were considered to have high or extreme levels of chronic absenteeism; in 2023, that percentage was 77%. Vanderhaar asked students to provide their feedback on strategies or policies they would make to help improve chronic absenteeism in their schools. Ginn discussed the department's public messaging campaign to raise awareness of chronic absenteeism. Part of the campaign includes ads on television, radio and billboards across the Commonwealth emphasizing that attendance matters.

**Feedback:** Students presented solutions they would offer principals on how to address chronic absenteeism. "I think the biggest thing is connection-building overall. I think it depends on the district, but creating a district-wide event for students to get together is an incentive and motivation," said Khoa Ta, a junior at Owensboro High School (Owensboro Independent).

Samarah Higgins, a senior at John Hardin High School (Hardin County), said she knows some students have free periods, study periods or peer mentoring periods and instead of attending those in person, they will sometimes choose to work instead.

"It feels irrelevant when you could be, I don't know, out making money, and that's where a lot of schools face the issue of competing with outside opportunities," said Higgins. "I feel like our generation especially is more focused on the hustle and trying to make money and get ahead on certain things."

Langford also mentioned the importance of communicating with parents and making sure they understand the impact attendance has on their students and their futures.

"It kind of starts at home, and I feel like connecting with the parents would be a way to prevent absenteeism because if the parent doesn't care, then the student doesn't see a reason to care either," said Langford.

**Follow-up:** Presenters asked students to provide additional feedback on chronic absenteeism solutions on the meeting exit-slip.

**Agenda Item:** Announcements

**Presenter:** GlyptusAnn Grider Jones, Ph.D., CSAC Liaison, KDE

**Summary of Discussion:** Jones shared announcements of interest to high school students, including invitations to apply for chair and vice chair of the advisory council.

**Feedback:** None.

**The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m. ET. The next council meeting will be held virtually on October 29, 2024, from 9 to 11 a.m. ET.**

DRAFT