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Education forum at WKU seeks to gauge progress

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University of Kentucky student Natalie Bolen places reflections on one of the Council for Better Education decision at a Kentucky Student Voice Team meeting.

WILL POWERS / KVST

The Kentucky Student Voice Team will seek input from Bowling Green students, teachers and parents through its ongoing series of education-centered forums.

Organizers will host their third Rose Revival Campaign forum in partnership with Western Kentucky University at the Jim & Eva Martens Alumni Center from 2:30-4:45 p.m. Jan. 13 to collect feedback on the state's educational progress.

“There are seven components of a quality education laid out in” *Rose v. Council for Better Education*, KSVT Public Engagement and Policy Partner Will Powers said. “Our goal, via these forums and a survey and interview process, is to discern whether or not these promises are being met in Kentucky.”

Rose v. Council for Better Education went before the Kentucky Supreme Court in 1989 after 66 school districts alleged the General Assembly and then-Gov. Wallace Wilkinson had not met constitutionally-bound requirements for education quality.

The seven capacities for quality education outlined in the court's decision include, among others, “sufficient oral and written communication skills,” “sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems,” “sufficient understanding of governmental processes,” and “sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness.”

The court also determined access to arts education, advanced class options and vocational training were also critical to quality education. The decision has helped guide education policy in Kentucky for decades.

The final ruling found that Kentucky lawmakers and leadership then had not met these capacities. Powers and the KSVT want to know if the public agrees today.

“Our goal is not litigation or legislation necessarily, it’s purely fact-finding and almost a listening tour of sorts,” Powers said. “We chose (Bowling Green) as our next site because our goal is to hit each congressional district.”

Powers said KSVT previously held forums in Corbin and Louisville, with the additional goal of crafting a public report later this year. That report will help advise policymakers, school districts, advocacy groups and more.

He added that a civic education aimed at helping students vote, stay informed and participate has been a recurring theme so far, with many participants sharing that more class instruction is needed.

Powers said inequity between districts, even those close together, has also sparked conversation at previous forums.

“We had teachers in Corbin – one was at Corbin Independent Schools and the other was at Knox County, and they’re maybe three or four miles away from each

other,” Powers said. “But the teachers spoke of such differing ability to provide adequate education because of the resources they were afforded.”

Guests at the Louisville event noted similar sentiments, according to a KVST memo, pointing to successes and difficulties found in local districts relating to each education capacity.

The event will begin with an introduction discussing the goals of the forum and their findings so far. Attendees and organizers will then share their thoughts in groups on each educational component and learn more about the *Rose v. Council for Better Education* decision.

The forum will end with a larger discussion facilitated by organizers and local students, allowing attendees to share personal experiences and explain their thoughts.

KSVT will synthesize its findings into a memo published on its website a week or two after the event, Powers said. The memos feature quotes and anecdotes from guests but are anonymous unless explicitly allowed by the attendee.

“It’s pretty simple structure-wise but I think people really enjoy that ability to have three different methods of sharing out – small group, individual then large group,” Powers said.

Additional information, including an RSVP form, can be found at [ksvt.org](https://www.ksvt.org) under the “Upcoming Event in Bowling Green” link.

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