

RAC- Central

September 6, 2023

- [Rebekka] Hello, the meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Central Region. My name is Bekka Meyer. I'm the Designated Federal Official from the U.S. Department of Education. Just a reminder, this meeting is open to the members of the public, and will be recorded for the public record. We will start by conducting roll call. So I will read the names of the members of the Regional Advisory Committee, please respond by saying "present."

First, Michele Williers.

- [Michele] Present.

- Mark Miller?

- [Mark] Present.

- Glenn Hancock? Matt Good? Dr. Allison Fleetwood?

- [Dr. Fleetwood] Present.

- Dr. Larianne Polk?

- [Dr. Polk] Present.

- Scott SchmidtBonne? Monica Waltman?

- [Monica] Present.

- Paige Fenton Hughes?

- [Paige] Present.

- Dr. Socorro Herrera? Cat Palmer?

- [Cat] Present.

- And Jacquelyn Edson?

- [Jacquelyn] Present.

- We do have a quorum for this meeting, and so we will be able to proceed. Now we are going to do brief introductions. I will go through the order once again, and just ask you to share your name and your organization when you introduce yourself.

And as you have been doing, please come on camera and off mute when your name is called. So we'll start by the introductions, with Michele Williers.

- Good morning. I am Michele Williers, with Peak Parent Center.

- Thank you. Next, Mark Miller.

- Good morning, everybody. I'm Mark Miller. I am an 8th grade teacher in Cheyenne Mountain School District.

- Thank you. Next, Dr. Allison Fleetwood.

- I am Dr. Allison Fleetwood. I teach theater at Nixa Public Schools in Nixa, Missouri.

- Thank you. Dr. Larianne Polk?

- Good morning. I am Larianne Polk. I am the Chief Administrator at the Educational Service Unit 7 in Nebraska, ESU.

- Thank you. Monica Waltman?

- Good morning. I'm Monica Waltman, I'm the Special Services Director at Douglas School District in Box Elder, South Dakota.

- Thank you. Paige Fenton Hughes?

- Good morning. I'm Paige Fenton Hughes, Superintendent Converse County School District 1, Douglas, Wyoming.

- Thank you. And Cat Palmer?

- Good morning, everyone. I'm currently a Program Manager at ACT Incorporated, but prior to that, I was the Assessment Supervisor for the Wyoming Department of Education.

- Thank you. And Jacquelyn Edson.

- Good morning. I'm the Director of the National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute at Johnson County Community College, and I also teach for the University of Kansas.

- Thank you so much. All right, I'm doing a quick scan to see if we have any of our RAC members in the attendees, and we do. So for our tech support, could Scott SchmidtBonne be moved over as a panelist?

- [Tech Support] Yes, Scott is now a panelist.

- Excellent. Thank you. Scott, could you introduce yourself, please?

- [Scott] Absolutely. Sorry, I have a special touch with technology. Scott SchmidtBonne, Executive Director of Research at Omaha Public Schools.

- Thank you so much. All right, we're going to move into the objectives for today's meeting. So for today's gathering, this is the first of two meetings for this Regional Advisory Committee, and our objectives are, one, to review educational data from each region, and the public comments that have been received.

Objective two, to discuss our initial observations regarding the critical education needs of the region. Objective three, identify clear action steps to be completed to gather information on the critical education needs of the region, and how those needs can be most effectively addressed through technical assistance activities. With that, I'm going to...here's our agenda for the day.

We will be reviewing the regional profiles, discussing need sensing, and also talking about the resources that all of the committee members should have access to on SharePoint. And then we'll be talking about next steps, which will help us prepare for our second meeting. With that, I'm going to turn it over to our Liaison, who's going to go over some of the regional data for us.

So Marbella Uriostegui, I hope I said your last name correctly, I will turn it over to you.

- [Marbella] Thank you. Good morning, everyone. My name is Marbella Uriostegui, and it is a pleasure to serve as your liaison for the Central Region. I'm looking forward to getting to know you in the upcoming weeks, and providing any logistic and technical assistance support you may need. So for

this meeting, I'm going to review the information that was in the regional profiles.

This will provide you with a chance to see what's happening across the individual jurisdictions, but also give you a sense of any trends or patterns you may see within your own region, along with any differences. So as mentioned in the orientation, we cannot cover every topic area, but we wanted to give you a flavor for some of the more pressing issues facing our education system. You can see that the first section is about the region's district and schools.

Based on the most recent numbers reported on the National Center for Education Statistics website, we have listed the number of operating districts, public schools, charter schools, and private schools for each jurisdiction in your region. This is followed by the number of students enrolled in both traditional public schools and charter schools, which is also disaggregated into pre-K through grade 8 enrollment, and 9 through 12 enrollment.

Thank you, yeah... Oh, sorry. The number of students reported to be enrolled in private schools is also included. Next, we have included disaggregated data for three to five-year-old enrollment, and public elementary secondary enrollment by race ethnicity.

Digging a little deeper into the region's geography, we have provided disaggregated data that shows the number of students enrolled in public and charter schools by geographic region, such as city, suburban, town, and rural. This is followed by information about special population students, and special populations including English language learners, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and students who qualify for special education services.

We have included data from the United States as a whole in these tables, so you can see how your region and jurisdictions compare to what is happening nationally. We then jump into graduation data, which includes the total adjusted cohort graduation rate, or ACGR, for four-year cohorts.

Disaggregated data are provided for students with disabilities, English language learners, economically disadvantaged, homeless-enrolled, foster care, and private school. ACGR information also was available by race ethnicity, which is provided to you. Students' academic information also has been provided.

To provide the best comparison data available, we included results from the National Assessment of Education Progress, or NAEP, also known as the nation's report card, for 4th and 8th grade mathematics and reading results. Non-academic data, such as information related to out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, are next. Other non-academic data includes information about the students who brought firearms to school, and the percentage of students who reported being bullied, either on school property or electronically.

Again, national data has been included as a comparison. The next section of the regional profile focuses on teacher information. This includes the total number of public teachers, and the pupil-to-teacher ratio, as well as a number of teachers in private schools.

We also looked at the available data regarding teacher qualifications. This includes degree levels, and year of experience. Although data on qualifications was not available, more recent data was available about the percentage of teacher candidates who were enrolled and/or completed a teacher preparation program, including those who enrolled in or completed traditional programs, and those who enrolled or completed alternative programs.

Alternative programs are also noted by whether the program was based in an institution of higher education or not. The profile ends with a large table, covering many financial resources of each jurisdiction, including federal, state, and local revenue resources, and current expenditures. Current expenditures were divided by total instruction and support services.

Brief information about Title 1 spending and salaries, wages, and public benefits are also included. We can return to this slide. Thank you.

The purpose of the Regional Advisory Committee, or RAC, is to identify priorities. To do so, the RAC must address the question, how can we identify the highest priority education needs of this region, and how those needs may be addressed through technical assistance activities.

So some questions that you may want to consider are bulleted here on this slide, how to ensure that all students achieve academic excellence, and have access to effective instruction? How to ensure all students and communities have the educational resources they need to fully participate in their education?

And how to ensure an outstanding, well-paid, well-supported and diverse educator workforce? Next slide, please. Oh, I'm sorry. And how to support the wellbeing of students, teachers and school communities? Thank you. The regional profiles are provided to you to give you a sense of what is happening across your regions. We know that you may have access to other data sets, or be aware of other areas of priority across your region.

To aid your thinking, each section of the regional profile includes reflection questions to help you think about what the data means to you, and how it can be used to support your needs assessment, and/or what other information you need. At the beginning of the profile, there are a set of questions to help you think about how to use that data provided, and what may still be missing. These questions include, what is your overall reaction to the data presented?

Is that what you expected? If it was not what you expected, what surprised you? What other data do you need to help you better understand the needs in your jurisdiction or region? Are the data available at the state level, or do you have access to this data through another vehicle?

How can the needs assessment help you attain this information? Thank you. So before we open it up for discussion, we did receive a few public comments over the weekend. As of September 6, 2023, six public comments were submitted for the Central Region.

Two respondents identified as administrators, two as educators, and two as parents. These comments are uploaded to the SharePoint file, under Needs Sensing Materials, public comments, data files, and data. The public comments form has four questions, which I'll review, along with the responses. So the first question was, what are one to two educational needs within your region the RAC should prioritize?

Responses include funding before and after school programs for children attending rural schools, funding alternative learning programs, literacy, children need structured literacy, and teachers need to be educated about it. Another response was inclusivity, mental health support, more programs or help with STEM in elementary schools, teacher retention and recruitment, and attempts to defund public fund public schools from third parties with interests rooted in profit or personal belief, broadband internet to rural areas, curricular reform

based on age-appropriate standards, and high-achieving outcomes, 8 to 10 per grade level/content level, not general standards.

Question number 2 was, why do you believe these are the educational priorities that your region should address? Responses include children are academically, socially and emotionally in need of additional support from the damage of the pandemic, children that are not finding success in traditional school programs are in need of alternative learning programs that can provide the supports and assistance that these students need.

Dyslexia is a common learning difference, and most teachers do not know what dyslexia is, or strategies to teach normal or above average intelligence children to read. Our schools need money to educate staff to prioritize literacy. We can always do better to ensure that all students feel belonging, as well as support mental health. Children cannot foster a strong desire to learn if they do not feel safe, heard, seen, and understood by those in authority.

Our teachers need to focus on standards within reading, writing, math, science, and social social studies, teacher retention and recruitment. Another response was student behavior, attempts to silence minority representation via book bans and legislation, a lack of access to internet, federal mandates led this breakdown in curriculum. And finally, we should give kids a chance to explore the content with depth.

The third question was, what information can the RACs collect about these priorities to better understand and address these needs? Responses include number of students at risk of not graduating, dropping out, number of students that do not have access to this programming.

Since property taxes mostly fund public education, the system is deliberately inequitable. Reading proficiency rates should be assessed. Strategies for teacher education should be implemented, and then reading should be reassessed. Parents and teacher surveys are one of the best ways to receive honest and accurate feedback, and making these surveys easily accessible with an option to submit anonymously will help ensure transparency.

In addition, a follow-up to the survey so that everyone can be part of the process that follows. What good is a survey if we don't get to see, have an impact on the outcomes from these surveys? Another response is technical colleges. These kids already in the 4th and 8th grade need to learn that it is okay

to not go to a four-year college. Data on how student loan forgiveness would impact retention, data on how to best engage families and students to encourage attendance and non-disruptive behaviors, data on how families would like students who are removed from the student environment due to disruptive and dangerous behavior, educated.

Achievement data tied to expected achievement, review national standards, review curricular practices, especially curriculum mappings, starting from the ground up. The last question was, please add any other comments about educational needs in the region, and how they could be addressed.

Responses were looking to increase technology usage and knowledge of students and teachers. I think it's important that all teachers be supported in the classroom to teach their students in the best way to meet individual and group needs. Teachers not only deserve higher wages, but some autonomy in the classroom to cater to individual students as needed.

We all learn differently, and if a teacher is trying to meet individual needs, but there are strict limitations to how they can accomplish that, both the student and the teacher fail to thrive. With the ESCL business so much, and kids need to learn how to deal with others, and education and high expectations. Let's get back to creating some hard-working adults.

Public schools are intentionally in jeopardy. If we don't figure out how to retain and attract teachers, we will have to rethink American public education, and what it means to guarantee an education. Schools have shouldered all public needs for 30 years, education, social-emotional needs, mental health and physical health.

What more can we bear without additional financial support from the government? We are the social safety net for 3 to 16-year-old persons living in the U.S. Funding without ridiculous strings attached. So just to summarize, overall themes include literacy, funding, equity and access, mental health services, quality instruction, and teacher recruitment and retention.

So now, we'll open up the meeting for discussion. Please use the Raise Your Hand function and/or chat feature if you would like to share. We'll be monitoring the chat, and getting to the questions as quickly as possible. There are some questions on the slide to help us get started, but please feel free to bring up additional comments or questions.

Some things to consider include, is there a specific area of the profile you would like to review in detail? What do you believe are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction or region? Why do you believe that these are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction? What input would you like to hear from other stakeholders? And how will you collect that input?

- Thank you, Marbella. We will now transition to the Chairperson for the Central Region to lead this discussion, and that is Cat Palmer. And I did want to add that by the end of the meeting, we do have a goal of voting on the priorities for the region.

So again, with that point that was made, that we need to identify the highest priorities in terms of educational needs in the Central Region, and we will be voting on that by the end of the meeting. And with that, I'm going to turn it over to Cat Palmer.

- Thank you, Rebekka. I think we should at least start with the questions that are already bulleted on the screen. So if any committee members would like to respond to a question on the screen, go ahead and raise your hand, and we can start our discussion. Okay, Raise Hand feature, I do see...

All right, Mark. I'm just going in order.

Mark, I see your hand raised. Go for it.

- Would you mind me deferring to Dr. Larianne Polk? Hers was actually up first, and then I'll go after her.

- Okay, perfect. Yeah, Dr. Polk?

- Thank you. That wasn't necessary, but I appreciate it. I just have a quick question about the public comment. I was waiting for a blurb from the RAC so that we could send it out. It was my understanding that we couldn't send it out until we had something written from you. So I didn't send it out until yesterday, and I sent it out with some of my own language, so how long will it be open?

Because I did send it out to a great number of people. So that's question one. And while I've got you on here, I will tell you one item that I think is being omitted from the list simply because I don't know for sure which question it fits under, but especially in our region, we're having a terrible time with bus drivers, with getting bus drivers.

If we can't get kids to school, we can't teach them. And I think some of that is a product of a recent federal change in how new bus drivers need to go through some training, and access to that training is tough around here. So those are just two comments I wanted to start with.

- Is there anyone that can answer the question about how long the survey will be open?

- Yes, I can go ahead and answer that. We will have the survey open through your second meeting. People have up to 48 hours prior to that meeting to submit comments, so we'll be looking at those regularly, and updating information on the SharePoint site.

We'll enter a date, so you'll know which ones are the most recent ones. Thank you for sharing that.

- That's great. Thank you.

- Chair, is it okay if I go ahead now?

- Oh, sorry. I was on mute. Oh, my goodness. Thank you, Dr. Polk. Mark, you're good to go.

- Great. Thank you. So I really, when I look at this, I think of this in kind of three buckets, and maybe we should think about adding some buckets to this. But when we talk about priorities for our region, I think there are facility priorities, whether the buses fall into that, whether it's buildings, whether it's tech going out. There is a teacher bucket, when we're talking about shortages, and respect, and compensation, and teacher preparation programs.

And then I think the third bucket I had was students, and that is talking about mental health, talking about learning, talking about curriculum, post-secondary preparedness, so some of those things can go into the students bucket. I just would feel remiss if we end up this meeting with focusing only on one bucket, and then having our priorities focus just on one.

So thinking about what buckets we want to put these in maybe at the beginning might be a good place to start.

- So Mark, what I heard was facilities, students, and teacher prep? Or did I get your buckets wrong?

- Yep, just teachers, students, and buildings or facilities, kind of that's where I was at. And then if there's others that we want to add, or if they don't fit into a nice, neat bucket, we could definitely change. But I just want to make sure that when we're done, we have addressed kind of different categories of needs for our region.

- Okay. And something maybe in...while you're thinking about that, if you look at the very bottom, where we have themes listed for us from the six survey submissions, we can possibly start using those too, and creating those buckets. Michele, I see your hand up.

- Thank you. So as I was listening and trying to catch all that data, but I'm going to dive deeper after our meeting, one of the things that really pointed out was the teacher recruitment and retention piece. Because I think if we don't have teachers and paraprofessionals, and people that need to support education and our students, we won't have any of the other things we're shooting through.

So I really feel like that is a top area to dive deeper into, and really look on how that's affecting education, and our outcomes for students. So, I just really wanted...that really just hit home for me. And I know I hear it every day, you know, from parents, and from fellow educators and folks, that that is a real big concern that's going on now, not just even in our region, around the country.

So...

- Thanks, Michele. I agree. In Wyoming, that's...in all the Central states, I agree, this has been a really hot topic for years now. And after the pandemic, we really saw an increase in leavers, which is unfortunate.

So let's...knowing that we have a set amount of time, and we have a goal here, if we can maybe start with that bucket discussion, and then we can start thinking about, do we have the data to actually have this conversation? What data is missing? And then, what stakeholders do we need to start pulling information from might be a good way to spend a few minutes.

So Mark, I'm just going to start with the buckets you already threw out there for us. So facilities, students, teacher prep, does anyone on the committee feel like we need to rename those buckets, or add buckets? Facilities operations? Okay. All right, Dr.

Polk, so I changed that to facilities operations, students, and teacher prep. So looking at our feedback from our six submissions on our survey, we have literacy funding, equity access, mental health, quality instruction, teacher recruitment and retention. Is there a place for all six of those bullets in our buckets?

Just let me turn off some of my sound here. All right, Mark, I see your hand raised.

- I see what Paige just put in the chat as well, and I think we need to broaden the teacher bucket to just teachers generally. And then a subtopic in teachers would be the teacher preparation and recruitment, which I think we have some data to support that, you know, we're in a shortage for sure. But I think the bucket as a teacher, and then some sub-buckets with teacher prep, teacher recruitment would go underneath.

- Okay. So for students, some of the things that were highlighted in the survey, literacy, equity access, mental health, would you all agree...like, where would that fit? Would that fit students?

Is that maybe a hybrid between teacher and students? Is it operations? Is it providing those things? Scott...

- Yeah, it's hard, because I think it's kind of cross-boundary, or across a number of buckets. I mean, I think it affects teachers as it relates to like a job demands resource model, where it provides more demand on their job, and has to be coupled then with additional resources, if the same level of performance is expected to be maintained.

So I do think, you know, there is a reflection across students and teachers that likely will be permeated by a number of different topics.

- I really agree. It's like the idea that these are themes, so here's the theme, and how does it impact our three buckets, right? So how does equity and access impact our three buckets? What does that look like? All right, let's see... Mark, is your hand back up, or did it never go down?

- Nope, back up.

- Okay. Go for it.

- So I've got a visual picture of, like, the, you know, ancient Greek, and we've got pillars with our teachers and buildings, and then across that we've got like an equity that is the roof on top, or you could talk about it as the floor, however you want to. But just kind of that visual of these are our pillars, these are the things that we need as a region, but cross-cutting through all of those is going to be the equity, inclusivity, diversity of teacher prep, all of that kind of goes through all of those.

So it should be within our buildings, our facilities, our teachers, our students, so somehow, like, cross-cutting through it. Maybe there's an art teacher here. I'm a math teacher, I can kind of structurally see it, but we need somebody to give it life.

- Well, what that sounds like, if we have any science...I'm also, my background's math, but our three-dimensional science standards, the cross-cutting concepts, right? That's what that sounds like, is something that... It looks a little different for everyone, but it does touch upon all of them.

And maybe USF can help us make a pretty infographic to make that make sense. All right, let's look here. We don't have...I mean, we have a lot of data, but as far as the data that we all have access to right now, it's really that three-page region snapshot, plus the results of that survey.

So, let's look back. Let me find something really quick. If there's any other...oh, yep. Let's see, Dr. Polk...

- Is there some...are there some data that we can find about cybersecurity safety in our schools? I think that would fall under facilities and operations. But those data aren't collected in the profile data. Neither are the bus drivers, for that matter. But I think that would be an area that could fall under safety maybe, for maybe another bucket could be safety.

And then... But again, cross-cutting concepts, if we have student well-being and student safety around bullying, for example, or online or in person, that would also fall under safety. So I don't know if we would have a different bucket for safety, but cybersecurity is absolutely something I think we need to be considering in here as well.

I don't know which data we'd pull on that.

- Do your states have... I mean, this is difficult. We all represent so many different states, and priorities in those states. But I know that in Wyoming, there was a time where we were collecting some of this data, and so that might be something.

As far as homework goes, we may need to just see... Maybe before we leave today, if we can make a list of the missing data? Like if we're saying this is a priority for our region, let's make a list of the missing data, and then figure out what platforms, who we need to talk to to answer the question, do we have this data?

Was it even collected? And if so, how do we get it? Michele?

- Yes. As I'm sitting here processing, and I was thinking about our buckets, I just want to add one element, the parents. I do think, you know, and there is data, I believe, on the parent-school partnerships and relationships. So I know it kind of can cross-sector too on all the things we're talking about, but I think, you know, the parents are as key, working together with the students, the teachers, and overall with schools in operations.

So I just didn't want to lose sight of that, and as I was processing that, and I think it's really an important element to add our parents to the discussion, and to hopefully, maybe some of the areas that we'll look into that could be part of solutions, if people are working collaboratively.

- Yes, I almost think we should flip it, right? Maybe we focus on what are the themes that we want to focus on, and then these themes, how it impacts right now, how that would impact facilities, operations, students, parents, teachers. And the theme of...I know that right now we have teacher prep and recruitment under teachers, but maybe we pull that out and we say, this is a big priority here, and so how does that impact students, right?

When you don't have teachers in the classroom for two-plus years, and they have a new teacher every year and things like that, maybe we kind of flip it and we say, here's what we want to focus on as a region, this is how we think it may impact, looking at the data, how it impacts all of these big four buckets. Do we agree of the theme, I mean the themes that were pulled out?

And I don't know who pulled out these themes. But do we agree with those six themes, looking at the survey responses? Did they miss anything? Paige? Hi, Paige.

- Good morning, Cat. I feel like I'm pretty reluctant to pick themes off six responses. And I'm a little bit like Dr. Polk, I sent that survey out to a ton of groups. And of course in Wyoming, when I say a ton of groups, some of them don't have a lot of members.

I'm sure you all are aware of that. But I don't even think they've really had a chance to distribute that survey to their members yet. So, if I send it to the elementary principals group, I don't even know if that's gone out. I do think that your thought of saying, here are some themes, and how do those things impact the buckets that Mark put out for us, I feel okay about that.

I feel pretty reluctant to choose themes unless we're going to go back into those hard data to inform those as well. And I did appreciate how Maribela said these are kind of the themes of the six pieces of input we've received, but I feel like if we get 40 of those, or 400 of those by the next time we meet, we could do a lot of work on themes that don't even show up in a much larger, I guess, much larger response.

- Yep. All right, great. Let's see... Well, if...let's start with stakeholder groups. So there's a bunch of things that are missing, and we know that this was a really quick turnaround. Paige, did you have another comment, or is your hand just...?

- Sorry, bad etiquette. I'll put my hand down.

- Okay. It's a student that's like this. All righty... Well, what stakeholder groups do we need to hear from? Not even want, but need to be at the table for these kind of discussions to happen. So who do we need to make sure responds or engages with this work? And you can put stuff in the chat, or you can raise your hand.

And whoever is running the slides, I think it may be helpful if we go back to the slide that has the considerations, how to ensure that all students achieve academic excellence.

It was a while ago. Great. Oh, nope... So, there were four bullets, and it started with how to ensure that all students achieve academic excellence, how to ensure all students and communities have the educational resources...

Mark, go ahead. Yes, that slide right there. Thank you.

- It's actually a question for those of you that sent out some communication already. What did you ask for? Because part of what we're doing today is trying to find out... Was it just the same questions that went into public comments? What were you hoping to get out of that? And then, how are we going to have time to use that, I think, is my...if it comes in at the second meeting time?

So, just a couple of questions.

- Dr. Polk?

- So I was referring specifically to that public comment survey. So I just put kind of a little bit of information in the body of the email about what the RAC is, and then I sent that out to my educational service unit administrators and some other superintendents in Nebraska.

I didn't encompass the whole of Nebraska yet, which is what I need to do with some of this other information. What I was curious about is I know that the NDE collects priorities of student information, priorities from teachers, etc. So do I have to gain any special permission, I'm trying to remember from our ethics training, to use those data, and insert them into the SharePoint?

I just can't remember... I think we have to share what we're going...we have to tell them what we're going to be doing with the data, but if it's public information, I don't believe we need to do anything different than that.

- Is there anyone that can answer that from the ethics training?

- I'm not sure. Can you repeat the question one more time, and I'll see if a colleague could perhaps respond?

- Sure. I know that our State Department of Education collects information about Nebraska's priorities related to students academically, their well-being, and the same with some teacher information. Are there any protocol I need to follow to get those data, and post them on our SharePoint? Because I think those could be useful data.

I think there's some cybersecurity information in there, there may be some other information... My assumption, if it's public data and I just tell them what I'm using it for, it should be fine. But I'm just curious, your thoughts.

- If... Sorry. Go ahead, Tara.

- Okay, sorry. Yes, you are welcome to submit whatever data you think will be helpful in determining your priorities to help writing the report. We ask that you submit it through your Liaison so we can track what's coming in, and then let other members of the committee know where it's located on the SharePoint site, since that will be your primary method of communication.

- Sure. Makes sense.

- And if it is public, then that data is fine to share.

- Mark's question... Well, to answer the question if it's public, is it fine to share, I just want to make sure it's really clear that that's the case.

If it's public-facing, then everyone on the committee, it's fine that we have access to it?

- Yes.

- Yes? Okay. And then, Mark has a question, "Do we need to leave today with our priorities?" I think that's the goal.

- Yes, that's the goal, by the end of the meeting, to vote on priorities for what you...and then see what sort of data you need to understand those priorities.

- And what it sounds like, because we only have six responses, it seems like there's this uneasiness, maybe with the group to set the priorities. We can all bring our backgrounds, I think, to the table and say this is what we think our priorities should be.

But making that decision based on six survey responses, I think makes a few of us... I'm speaking for the group. Let me know if this is incorrect, but makes us a little uncomfortable. Paige, go ahead.

- So, I guess I'm not saying we shouldn't set some draft priorities, I just am reluctant to have those six responses set the parameters for those priorities.

- Okay. Well, let's set some priorities, then. So I took note of all of the groups that you guys put in the chat. It might be helpful if we can...

Because there's going to be some groups that really are 20 steps away from maybe a priority that's set in this committee, so maybe they're not the ones that

we originally reach out to for some information, so we might need to set our priorities. Dr. Polk...

- I was just going to suggest if we have a priority, perhaps we could find some additional data in that regional profile that would support the priority. So for example, if teacher prep is going to be one of the buckets that we select, I have made an observation on the percentage of distribution of teachers enrolled in traditional or alternative programs.

Obviously, alternative programs are very low for us, and across our region. And if teacher prep, and providing more teachers is the expectation, then perhaps that's an avenue that we can look at, or the alternative programming. So I guess that might help us support... We have more than six pieces of data to determine our priorities, so there's a lot of good information in the profile.

- Well, one thing in the profile, and let me know if I missed it, anything about safety or mental health? And I didn't go deep into this, I looked at it last night, but that's something...you know, that's talked about a lot.

It comes out a lot as far as what we're asking educators to do in the big shift. But that might be a...if we decide as a group that that is a priority we want to tackle here, it's a gap in the data. So, using the data in front of us to inform the priorities.

And I get that. I do get that. But if we're seeing that the public is talking about things that we haven't yet collected data on, does that make it less important, or is it something that we really need to talk about here?

Matt Good...

- [Matt] Hi. Sorry, a couple thoughts. You did ask the question about in the regional profile, there are a couple items that are related to safety. We have some students who brought firearms to school data from several years ago, and even older data on percent bullied at school reported.

Outside of that, I don't see any immediate safety-related data in that regional profile. I think also, this is to echo a comment made a little bit earlier, but I do think if there's one thing we all from our perspective could agree on is an immediate and pressing priority that we can figure out who we need to reach out to and what we need to find out, it is the absolute staffing crisis across public schools, across all positions in our region.

And if there's anyone who's in the state that is not at absolute crisis point when it comes to school staffing, I think now is the time to speak out, because that's certainly the case in Missouri.

- Yeah. Thanks, Matt. So, I have that. I have... It sounds like that's going to be a focus for us, prep, retention, I think I had... Mark, did you have your hand up for a second?

- I did. I just wondered if it was possible for... The questions up on the screen are okay, but I feel like we need a whiteboard to write some of this stuff, or if somebody starts a document that could be shared? I'm trying to keep up with what we were just talking about, teacher prep programs... I'm not trying to keep us on task, but I am trying to keep us...we've got 30 minutes.

I think Scott just put a great question in the chat, but we need the rest of the afternoon, I think, to fix the 100-year-old broken model. But at the same time, it's a great [inaudible] to look through this.

So can we get a document going to put our priorities down, or do we take our own notes? Or is somebody taking notes for us, and then can refresh with us which priorities we've put out? We have, like, 30 minutes.

- And I really liked... Oh, I didn't raise my hand.

- Dr. Polk, go ahead.

- This is really hard, and I have a new appreciation for having students wait until their hand is called. I think I really like going from the buckets to priorities. So we've already talked and talked about buckets, and I think what Mark was saying, if we can get a document up here so we can keep in our vision what we're working on, it would really be helpful.

Even if we did teachers, so our priority is staffing shortage. Facilities and operations, our priority might be, my broken record, cybersecurity and bus drivers. Maybe students, a priority is whatever that priority is... And then we can end here with those four or five buckets that we have determined to be buckets, and each one has a priority.

I think that that's a place for us to start by the end of this 30 minutes. And I'm happy to type on a shared document, and share my screen, but I'm not sure I have the authorization to do that on this webinar.

- I'm checking on that right now, if a screen can be shared. One moment.

- Okay, so while she's checking, while Rebekka's checking on that, let's go ahead and continue. I am taking notes. I had asked days ago if I was able to share my screen. At that point, I wasn't able to share my screen, so I have been trying to take notes of the conversation.

We can go that route, Dr. Polk. So for those of us that are visual learners, this is going to be difficult, but we've got our four...we have facilities operations, students, teacher, and parents. So from what you just said, Dr. Polk, you're thinking let's go ahead and under each of those, what is one priority?

So under teacher, it's teacher prep and retention. Teacher prep, recruitment, and retention, maybe? Yep, okay. Under students, and feel free to chat this or raise your hand, what would be a focus area? And this is discussion, so throw it out there.

When we're thinking of students, what would be something that this committee would like to tackle? Post-secondary preparedness. Michele...

- Sorry. I'm thinking about equity, right, and inclusiveness across the board, when I think of students. Across all sectors of inclusion, right, including students with disabilities. And then I'm also thinking of achievement, how all students can achieve and thrive.

I know that sounds very, like, big and global, but just looking at achievement, and tying that to effective student outcomes.

- So right now, we have three very, very big things under students, so let's spend some time talking about that. Monica, I see your hand raised?

- Yeah. Well, I come...I'm from South Dakota, and we are a very...and probably Wyoming too, a hands off...I'm going to be the person that says mental health is a problem. And we will hear it in our state over and over again that that's a family issue, the school should not have to field that. However, again, knowing that we also have, you know, a large amount of geography covered from reservations, and they're suffering greatly with mental health issues, I just think we can't leave that off the table despite...

I mean, it's only six respondents, and the "Quit the SEL already..." Like whatever comment that was, I was like, well, that's all fine and good, except for

we have kids that are really struggling, and where do they come every day? They come to school. So I think that needs to be a priority, at least, for us here, too.

- Okay, thank you. I have some chat. There's some chatting, chattering going on. So Scott added literacy, student well-being/mental health needs, and engagement. So, I did add literacy to the list. I feel like there's this connection between...possible connection, achievement and literacy, that if we wanted to start combining some of these...

Oh, man, I don't know how to make this...You guys are really using the chat feature. Welcome, Glenn. We are just trying to get our our priorities set.

Let me see, Mark, I see you have a comment here. Tenth percentile [inaudible] data... So, I can't actually read your full comment on my screen, Mark. Can you just read it aloud?

- It's just we were talking earlier about making sure that we have the data in front of us to back up our needs, and so, there's definitely data behind the need for academic growth. And so academics is important, so if we're making the list of student priorities, making sure that academic achievement and growth is on there. But I think if you look at what Scott said, you have literacy, student well-being, mental health needs, engagement, you could add academics into there.

So I think we're hitting on some major themes for students, and then if we can hit on some major themes for the facilities, then we can kind of get into a little more details on each one underneath those, and parents.

- Let's jump to facilities. Earlier in the conversation, we were talking about would this fit, I don't know if this fits under facilities, but just hiring bus drivers. Or would that be someplace else?

- I think we'd said facilities and operations. Sorry for not raising my hand. But facilities and operations, that's there. I'm with you.

- Has retaining the staff been an issue? Apart from our educators, has retention in other areas been an issue in your state? Michele?

- So I know we have, you know, the teachers prep and retention and recruitment piece, but I also think tying that with all staff shortages, which I do think also correlates...I know busing could go into facilities and operations, but I also

think it's staffing shortages. I think paraprofessionals is a huge issue, especially in the disability community shortages.

So I just, I don't know... Not to say I want to create another bucket, or complicate things, but I don't think we should just restrict it to solely teachers, because I think all of those shortages make education a whole. Right?

- Yeah, so I can...I see this comment down here. I can just change it to staffing, and then we can add...teacher prep is still under there, paraprofessionals. As far as facilities and operations, what were you all thinking as a focus there?

What's a need in your state?

- And if I could jump in here too, you'll see on the screen we have the needs assessment matrix brought up. Because today's discussion is to think about those priorities, and to figure out where else you need to go to get any additional information you may need. So you might want to be thinking about what stakeholder groups can provide you with that information, and how you would go about getting information from that group.

And that's where we can support you in determining if it is operations, who would you talk to to gather more information across your region about that issue? And what would you need to do in order to get that data. So, we can also focus on this chart too, to help kind of prioritize what needs to happen in the next couple of weeks.

- Can we wrap up? We're really close, as far as under our four buckets, just kind of topics to focus on, and then we'll jump to the needs assessment.

- Yep.

- Okay. And then, is there someone that's capturing all of the chat? Because there are some really great suggestions here that we could spend the entire day talking about.

But I don't want to lose it, so is there someone else capturing all the chat comments?

- Yes, we'll have our chat record.

- Thank you. Dr. Polk...

- I did share a Google Doc. We can't share it on the screen, but we can look at it together, so there's a link in the chat box. And I missed the fourth bucket, so all of you have edit access, so please feel free to type in there, and hopefully that'll help a little bit.

- Yay. Okay... Oh, I can't. ACT has blocked the link. I can't open any of those links. But you all go ahead, and I'll pull it on my personal computer later today, and add it to the notes.

All righty, well, I want to make sure that we get to the needs matrix. Classified staff shortages...okay. Good.

So, it sounds...not good. This is definitely an issue. So, it looks like staff shortages all around, maintenance, transportation... Parents, what is something, and it may have... There's a bunch of chats that I wasn't able to see, so please take yourself off mute, raise your hand.

Is there a focus area for parents that we want to dive into as a committee?

- I couldn't find... My thing didn't pop up, so I'm raising my hand this way.

- Go for it, Michele.

- So I was looking at parent engagement, and parent and school personnel partnership.

- ...gives us something to start with. As far as facilities, I don't really have anything.

For those of you that are able to get in that shared Google Doc, please let me know if you guys had typed something underneath that bucket for facilities and operations. Scott?

- Just to...I'm sorry to fill the chat with comment after comment. I had suggested for facilities maybe some modernized buildings, or funding for modernized buildings. We in Omaha just built two high schools for the first time in decades, and the high school I went to in rural Kansas is largely the same as it was when my grandparents went to it. And having watched these two new high schools built with much more modular, flexible learning environments, all the teachers being housed in one area, and the students essentially stay in a classroom and the teachers rotate, learning space in the hall, it's amazing.

And so having some of those purpose-built flexible spaces I think would be critical, but most can't afford it for many reasons. As it relates to parents, I think it's a number of things around engagement, to include how they can support their student academically through the process, and recognizing that our families by and large live very chaotic, hectic lives, trying to grapple with all the things we grapple with outside of, you know, our general 9:00 to 5:00 roles, so it's a lot.

There's a lot of things in the way of their engagement, I think.

- Yeah, I like that idea. And I've visited a few modernized buildings, and watched students engage in amazing cross-curricular lessons, and it really...the environment lends itself to that type of learning.

So, I think that's a great suggestion. Okay, let's jump to what's on the screen right now. If we focus on these areas, we do have a list of stakeholder groups, and I can add that to the shared Google document later. Just let me make sure...

Marbela, can I...I just want to confirm this part with the matrix. We're really just, we're just trying to make sure we've pinpointed our stakeholder group, and how we're going to collect information from these groups.

Or Rebekka?

- That is correct. We want to get to a clear list of stakeholders that we can capture data from.

- All right. Let's start with our teacher prep recruitment and retention, our staffing. Do we have the data?

If we don't have the data, then what stakeholders do we need to reach out to to get data to inform the needs in the teacher...or just staffing in general? Now the chat is silent. We went from you guys chatting every two seconds, and now the chat is silent.

You know the RELs? I'm just going to throw this out there. I know REL Central years ago, when Marzano had the contract, they already did a study on teacher retention for a few of the Central states. So I'm wondering if for a lot of these, if we can reach out to the RELs or the local RELs, like in your state, to see what they already have collected, what studies have already been conducted, so we're not reinventing the wheel.

And kind of pulling that, saving it into our shared SharePoint file so everyone in the committee has access to that report might be helpful. The State Department of Transportation... Okay, I'm going to have to move you guys to my bigger screen.

I'm sorry. State Department of Labor and Transportation might be able to inform us on the number of new CDLs issued. All right, so I'm adding that to our...stakeholder group where we can get data. All right, I am going to have to ask...

Something is going on with my computer.

Let me... Mark, you've been a wonderful contributor today. Is there any way that you can keep the conversation rolling while I'm going to stop my video, put myself on mute? I need to... Something's going on with my computer, and I can't engage in multiple screens at the moment.

- I'm happy to help as your unofficial vice-chair. All right, without seeing any hands up, I see a couple of things, and I've thrown a couple of things in the chat as well. If we're not going to be able to get the conversations out there, I think the chat is a good place to put this so that we have record of it while we're in conversation.

So I'm not going to be able to keep up with it either, but I threw in a couple ideas about some places we could get some more data. If you have some ideas, throw them out, because if you have a group that you might be able to get some data from, and that might give somebody else an idea that they could use in their own state, or we could come up with that. So we're talking stakeholders here, and we're talking ways to collect some data.

Go ahead, Scott.

- Thank you, Mark. It's kind of to a comment I made, but I think what we need is some anticipatory data, so what's coming down the pipeline? So as we talk about staffing shortages, I mentioned the CDL thing, it's how many teachers are coming out, or are currently enrolled, if you will, and some longitudinal data for folks in preparatory programs. Because I think seeing, you know, what's in the pipeline or not could target our energies a little better.

So, you know, is it about getting kids into teaching programs, or getting them through them, all of the above? And can we divide that much to all those areas, and be able to be effective?

- Yeah, Scott, I agree with you. We have some of that in our set of data that we got on our regional profile. States like North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, it doesn't look like you have alternative licensure programs, but I know in Colorado and in Kansas, they do.

Twenty percent of their teachers are coming from alternative licensing programs. So, how do you fill your teacher shortages in South Dakota? That might be a place to check on their pipelines, to see what they're doing to get those teachers. Dr. Polk, you're up.

- Yeah, I was just going to ask if the other states represented here do, like, a teacher shortage survey, if there are...that's from your Departments of Ed, we should be able to gather those data. It has some of the information that's pulled into this profile, which might help us. It is, it's looking back. It's not pipeline data, looking forward.

And I like that too, we should be able to pull that out, too. I'm trying to put this stuff in the chart that we've created. Thank you. I'm back, Mark. I'm back.

- Welcome back. The train did not fall off the rails while you were gone. So we got some good info from Dr. Polk, and Scott shared, so just looking at some anticipatory, what's coming in the pipeline for teachers, so just to get your caught up, and ways to collect that data. So, it's all yours.

- Okay. So looking at this needs assessment example they have on the screen, there's other types of avenues. So right here, the example is focus group. So we might get to a point where only two of our states have any data that hit on this, so we're going to have to move forward with creating a new data stream, and that might be having a focus group.

US Ed, can you confirm, is this something that this group is able to move forward with? Like if we say we want to prioritize here, but we don't have sufficient data to even know if this is the right step, are we able to actually say, okay, let's get a focus group together?

- Yes, exactly. And that's what Marbella will be supporting you with. So once you figure out exactly what stakeholder groups you want to talk with, and then

decide is a focus group the best way to reach them, or would it be more appropriate if we want to do, you know, a five to ten item type survey, we will help you develop that content, and disseminate that to your stakeholder groups.

So, that's why we want you to kind of focus on who do you still need to talk to, and what is the best way to reach out to that group to get the information that you need.

- Okay. I like the idea in the chat too, someone said the stay survey. I'm not sure...I don't know if school districts are doing that. For those of you that are working, currently working in school districts, is that a common practice?

You know, there's those exit interviews, but do you actually pull the information from teachers that decide to stay in the profession? And if not, maybe that's something that we could think about as a committee.

- Oh, Kansas... Dr. Herrera, can you speak more about that? What's the research question being worked on in Kansas?

And if you're speaking, you're on mute. Okay.

Let's see... All right. Well, for those of you, I wasn't able to see everything that you guys had put in the chat yet, but does it feel like we have enough stake-...

Are we missing anyone? Can we pull information that will inform facilities and operations decisions, students, staffing, and parents? Okay. How are we going to get information from the schools?

It sounds like surveying is what we're all familiar with, but is that how we need to move forward with this group? Do we continue to survey them, to pull from any gaps in the information that we find? Yeah, maybe the most accessible.

So for schools, teachers... Oh, okay.

I'll put this in the chat. Mark, go ahead.

- So I can say that NCES, through the pandemic was collecting surveys from schools about in-person, you know, remote, and then they continued that after the pandemic was over, to collect what they call a pulse survey of schools, and students in school.

So I know there is a great amount of information, it would just be trying to sort through it, and figure out exactly what they have and what is useful to our region, if we want to try to...if it's possible to pull it from their sources. Also, there's a high school transcript study that NCES does, National Center for Education Statistics, and that could give us some information on the course-taking of students.

One of the things we haven't really talked about, which I just want to get out there, is that when we're talking about the academics of our students and we're talking about looking at state results and national results, we have to be careful that we don't overlook the fact that states have their own state standards.

And then, when we're looking at their national test results for our state from 4th and 8th grade students, we want to make sure that we recognize that they may be teaching something in our regions that isn't necessarily aligned with the national assessment. And so if that's the case, how do we make sure that our standards in each of our states are aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress, if that's what we want?

Because now we're comparing two different, you know, sets of standards. The standards for the assessment are different than the standards that our teachers are delivering in classrooms in our region. And so if those aren't aligned, then how...not accurate, but you know, how can we use that as being ideal information that we use?

So I just want to make sure that we're... That's something else we could collect, is we could collect data on how closely our standards are aligned with the National Assessment of Educational Progress standards on their frameworks. And if they are aligned, then the results are speaking loudly. If they're not aligned, then should they be, or should they not be?

That's a different conversation. But we want to make sure that the data we're using makes sense for its uses, for our purposes.

- I agree. I know that in Wyoming, there has been...I mean, that kind of crosswalk takes a lot of people, and a lot of man hours to get that done. So that would be an interesting study.

I think the question is, how useful do we think the NAEP data is in something like this, when all of our states are probably all over the board? I think it's really

useful... Like in Wyoming, we do, we look at that, and when we're creating and revising the standards, I know that that is looked at. But I don't know if educators in the classroom, if it goes all the way down to what's happening in the classroom, if they really understand the framework, and what's happening with the state standards.

Labor unions will hit a large [inaudible] yes. Well, and so if we do go the survey route, first we...especially if we're targeting, you know, especially that stay one, right? We're targeting the teachers that are staying, we want to know why, like, our survey questions really have to be meaningful.

I know that the public comment survey that's still open, those are very general questions, which is great, but if moving forward, to really help us inform some sort of report that we're to write for US Ed, I think we have to have very specific questions we are asking each of our stakeholder groups in order to write this report.

We need to try and find already collected.

- Okay. So, what support...so thinking about, we have five minutes, what support do we need to help collect all the data that have been talking about? Yeah, it looks like there's concern in the chat.

Oh...sorry, I don't know how long you guys' hands were raised. But it does look like there's a lot of concern in the chat about us creating a new survey and sending it out.

It seems like we want to focus on just finding data that's already collected and out there. So, let me have Dr. Herrera go ahead and go.

- [Dr. Herrera] Apologies. I was having so much trouble with technology a few minutes ago. But going back to the teacher recruitment and retention, there's a faculty member in the College of Education at Kansas State University and a colleague in Iowa who have collected from national data sets recruitment, retention, and attrition for teachers.

It's a very recent report, and I think it provides some useful information. I'll be glad to send the report on to the team.

- Yeah, so that would be helpful. Do you want us to send everything to the Liaison, who will then drop it in our shared SharePoint file? Or do we save these documents ourselves in the SharePoint file?

- Hi, this is Marbela. If you can all send me the information or the files, and I will upload them to the SharePoint.

- Okay.

- Thank you.

- So as far as next steps, I'm going to let...

- I had my hand raised [crosstalk]

- ...but can I just wrap up something really quick?

- Go ahead.

- Just so it's on the record. I don't think that we are to a point where we can answer question number four, because we really have to pinpoint what, as a committee, we're going to focus on. We've narrowed it down, and I can say under students, there are huge, huge topics that we're not going to be able to tackle.

So I think we still have refining to do before we can say we need your help in this way. Possibly all of us can look at that shared Google Doc and say, what data do I know is already available nationally? What data do I have in the state that's available? And then we can send it all to our Liaison, and then put it in the shared folder so that we all are looking at the same data, might be one of the next steps moving forward.

I don't know what that Google Doc looks like, though, so I'm hoping that it's in a way where it's clear that we can say, oh, I have data that would help inform this. Or nationally, I know exactly where we can find this. Oh, and Marbela put her email in the chat for us.

- Yeah, put everything there, and then we will get it uploaded on SharePoint, because that's the approved hub for all the data information to go through. So everything will need to live there, and that's where all the communication will take place. So for next steps, Rebekka, Marbella, and the Chair will meet together to debrief on this meeting, and really sit down and hammer out the full

needs assessment matrix, and the next steps, and that will go to the full committee for approval.

And then, at that point, those conversations will lead to determining, is it more data you need to collect, is it reports, and how are we going to use that to help us define the full report that will ultimately be submitted to the Department?

- Okay. We have one more minute. Is there anything else that we need to know as a committee, before that follow-up email?

- You'll have access to these slides, and they'll just walk you through a little bit more of how the SharePoint site is set up. It just goes through what the folders are, and the subfolders. And so if we could move ahead to the reminder slide, number 27, please. I'll turn it over to Bekka.

- Michele, did you want to say your final comment? I know you had your hand raised.

- Yeah, I was just typing feverishly.

- Sorry.

- So just a couple of things. That's okay. I know it's a busy session. One is, again, we should look at staff shortages. So I think when I was looking at stakeholders, it did not have paraprofessionals or speech therapists or folks in there. I think we need to add them as key stakeholders to a school. And then for data to collect, I was wondering if we also want to look at the different states, and maybe state complaints that resulted from staff retention issues, you know, for services not being met for the student because of the lack of staff.

And I know Cadre for the alternate dispute resolution, and they do their T&D center through OSEP, they have data on that. So, I just wanted to throw that in.

- Thank you. And Dr. Herrera, if you can also keep it really fast, final comments?

- I think that, again, that there's...the buckets seem to be very, very wide, but there needs to be some narrowing because...just to get all of this done, and get a report that's actually comprehensive might be a little bit much.

- Thank you for that. And to that point, that's actually a good segue for our reminders here. So we are...I'm going to jump to that second reminder, we are

working on adjusting the date for the second meeting, to give you more time to do this analysis and data collection.

So stay tuned for information about that, and when that is available, please register for that meeting. In the meantime, for the committee, SharePoint is the primary communication point. So please use that as a place to share data, documents, utilize Marbella, and we can get everything shared for the group there.

As follow-up, you're going to get a copy of the need sensing matrix, and also the next steps, which will be determined when Marbella and Cat and I meet as a debriefing of this meeting today. So with that, we are a little over from our end time, so I'm going to move to adjourn the meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee for the Central Region.

Can we all respond, if you agree, by saying aye?

- Aye.

- Thank you. I know that's tricky on Zoom sometimes. Appreciate that. All right, so the meeting is adjourned here at 12:32 Eastern time, on September 6th. Stay tuned for more information about the next meeting, and we thank you all for your participation today.