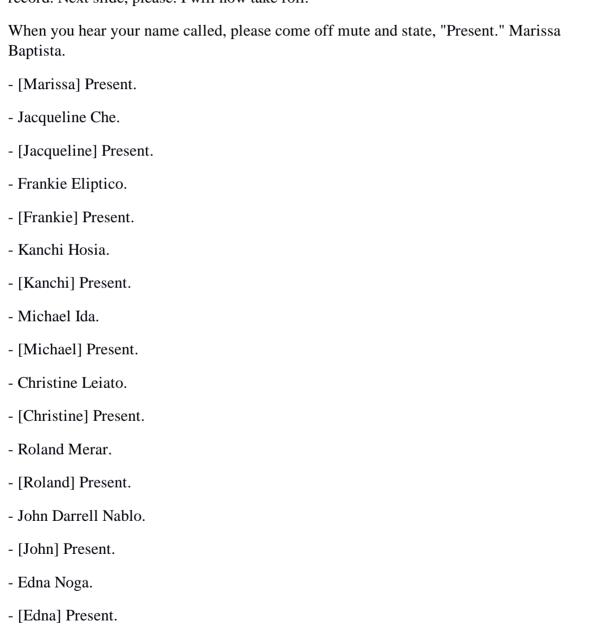# RAC-Pacific Region
Meeting #2
October 16, 2023

- [Erin] The meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Pacific region. This meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. Next slide, please. I will now take roll.

When you hear your name called, please come off mute and state, "Present." Marissa Baptista.

- [Marissa] Present.

- Jacqueline Che.

- [Jacqueline] Present.

- Frankie Eliptico.

- [Frankie] Present.

- Kanchi Hosia.

- [Kanchi] Present.

- Michael Ida.

- [Michael] Present.

- Christine Leiato.

- [Christine] Present.

- Roland Merar.

- [Roland] Present.

- John Darrell Nablo.

- [John] Present.

- Edna Noga.

- [Edna] Present.

- Mary Okada.

- [Mary] Present.

- Josephine Paulo.

- [Josephine] Present.

- Winston Sakurai. Elizabeth Switaj?

- [Elizabeth] Present.

- Lisa Watkins-Victorino? I'll note that a quorum is present so we are able to continue moving forward. Next slide, please.

During this meeting, I would like you to use the Raise Hand feature to make a comment, and wait for the chair to call on you. We're excited to have you engage in both the chat feature, as well as speaking to the group as a whole. So feel free and we encourage you to provide comments and insights on all of the things you'll deliberate on today.

As you can see here, this is our agenda. And we will now go over the review of the assessment framework, reviewing all of the data collected, deliberating on our priorities, and discussing assessment reports, and making assignments for the writing of that report.

And by the end of this meeting, we will have reviewed additional input from stakeholders and public comments in order to finalize the assessment of the critical education needs of the region, and deliberated on the education needs assessment to finalize recommendations to be included in the final assessment report.

Finally, we'll establish subcommittees to complete the assessment. Now I'm going to hand it over to our liaison, Ashley Sheppard.

- [Ashley] Hello, everyone. So as we are reviewing the assessment and the report, that is the goal of the completion of all of our work together, I want you to consider these four questions that must be answered in the final report that we submit.

And those questions are, why did the committee determine that this is a priority need for the region? How will you justify to the U.S. Department of Education, or referred to as the Department, that this should be a priority for the region? What technical assistance support can the Department provide to address this priority? And are there other educational issues that were not determined to be priorities, but the Department should be aware of and consider as they plan for the next five years and beyond?

So keep those four questions in mind as we continue through to deliberation and reviewing the outline of the report. Next slide, please. Again, this is just an outline, an overview of the report that will be submitted for the Pacific region, and all other regions.

Each report will contain the cover letter, an introduction, an executive summary highlighting the priorities and findings. An introduction, an explanation of the data collection that has been completed by you all as members. And that will include methods and outreach, regional education leadership, and public comments. And then a summary of the findings, which will include an overall summary of all findings from data collection, as well as priorities.

And then for each recommendation for priority for technical assistance support, you will discuss the outcomes of the findings from the data collection for that specific priority area, as well as the priority needs and recommendations. Next slide.

So you will see that is repeated. And so for each priority area, you will give that overview of the outcomes and findings, the priority needs and recommendations for each one. And then in the end there will be a conclusion, as well as an appendix where you can include additional supporting documentation and information. Next slide.

So next, we will provide a brief overview of the need-sensing activities that were completed by committee members. I do just want to acknowledge that after meeting number 1, there were about 15 or so potential priority areas for conducting additional need-sensing, and committee members completed two surveys to help narrow down the priorities that would...that additional need-sensing activities would be completed for.

And so that was the first step after meeting one. And now I will pass it to our chairperson, Kanchi Hosia, so he can explain to you all the need-sensing activities that were completed.

- Yeah. Thank you, Ashley. Yeah, absolutely look at our 15 or so activities. We had a chance of narrowing down all the activities to three priorities that will be discussed during this meeting.

And how we were engaged in different ways of collecting information on [inaudible] priorities prior to narrowing them down, including several surveys and need-sensing with community [inaudible].

Now we are down to those three. Now, back to you, Ashley. So...

- Anne, can you move us to slide 11? Thank you.

So now we will, with the leadership of Kanchi, take the time to go over these two bullets. And we'll look at what the top priorities for our region are, and then we will go forward through each of those on a note-taking document that Ashley will support the recording of our discussion and capture those highlights.

And Kanchi will keep our kind of discussion focused and give us opportunities to discuss each of them. We are budgeting roughly 10 minutes for each of the discussions, so that you're able to keep your comments succinct. But also, more importantly, give us time to

deliberate over those priorities, and give our rationale for why or why not we feel they should be included.

I also see two members, I believe, that have joined us. If you recently joined us, can you come off mute and state your name?

- [Dr. Sakurai] Winston Sakurai from Hawaii.

- Thank you, Winston.

- [Lisa] Lisa Watkins-Victorino from Hawaii.

- Welcome, Lisa. And when you have a moment, if you could change your name.

- Yeah.

- So that it says yours. Because right now we have two Ashleys, which is not a bad person to be. But that way, when we take our votes, it'll get recorded as yours, and we'll have your name attached to it. Are there any questions before we get started with the deliberation process? With hearing none, Ashley is going to share her screen now, and start on priority one, which was CTE/STEAM workforce development.

- Are there any... This is Frankie. I just have a question. Are there any questions...should we use these questions that are on the sheet to guide the discussion, or should we introduce our own?

- Yes.

- Either/or. But I think making sure that we're answering each of these, and then adding in where we feel like we need to add additional context or information is perfect.

- Okay. Got it.

- Okay?

- Can I go ahead and begin with...

- Absolutely.

- ...some of our responses for the first question? This is the why or why not should this be a priority? This is after some of the conversation with some of the educational leaders here, and also with folks from the Department of Labor. We in the CNMI, and it may be true for the other insular areas, we had an injection of some ARPA funding that we had used to fund some of the CTE programs, as well as some of the career and college readiness programs that help build capacity amongst students to be able to enroll in these programs from either remote or from distance learning, in that distance learning environment.

Those funds are now expiring or have expired. And we want to make sure that these programs continue because there is obviously going to be a funding gap after ARPA funds are either exhausted or no longer accessible for the insular areas. So that is a key concern for some of the public education, our K-12 educational leaders is how can we continue to ensure that these programs that help our students...how can they be sustainable, given that much of the funding that sustain them are based on COVID-related funds?

So that was one of the responses to why this should be a priority.

- Thank you. Frankie. Can you please explain what ARPA is? I want to make sure that I capture that appropriately.

- Sure. Let me just make sure I get it. It's... What does ARPA stand for?

- [inaudible] It's the American Rescue Plan.

- There. Yes, that. Yeah. I just wanted to make sure it was correct. We just use ARPA here, and it's become part of our regular lingo. But Jacqui is correct, it is the American Rescue Plan.

- Okay.

- And just to be technical, it's the American Rescue Plan Act. That's why it's ARPA.

- And I know there were a few people that collected information on this topic. So if you want, what would be really helpful, I think, for those who may not have had an opportunity to read that data yet, or to review the findings, or weren't a part of that group who were doing the need-sensing, if you could go over some of the process that this group went through to get there.

And I see two hands. And I don't know who had theirs first. So Christine, if you're...

- Thank you. So just to add on the why this...why CTE workforce development should be a priority. We conducted an interview with our assistant director for our local CTE division. And the struggle is real with regards to the program out in the schools.

Even though there is some funding that they've had through the ESF, the Educational Stabilization Fund, and also the consolidated grant, the funding hasn't been adequate to provide the necessary equipment, the training, opportunities with the partners in the community.

And so she was very adamant that if there is assistance provided, we could go so far in providing the CTE pathways for our students.

And she also did comment that there was a a survey conducted by our human resources. It was the workforce... Oh, shoot, I forgot. It's a summer employment program, or student

youth employment program. And so they conducted a skill set to the survey for the students who participated. And about 60% lacked basic clerical skills, keyboarding.

And the finding made them realize that we needed to really focus on the CTE working and HR working closely with Department of Education to really get the pathways implemented in the schools. Because as of today, it is only present in two high schools.

And so that's why I feel that CTE, the workforce should be a priority, especially with the situation in American Samoa. Thank you.

- Dr. Okada, you're the other hand. And then we'll go to Edna.

- Okay. [foreign language]. Good morning. So the Guam Community College really is the state agency for career and technical education here on Guam.

And we do...even though we are a community college, we have a presence in each of the six public high schools on Guam. The interest in expanding career and technical education really is to reach students at a lower level. So starting to introduce students into CTE as early as the middle schools.

And so this current initiative is not as apparent. There are some programs, but it's not system wide. The reason CTE is a...or should be a priority, primarily because having students obtain career and technical education skills is what is needed in the workplace.

And we often hear from employers, and there are several employers currently on Guam that are in need of workers. And we see it across the spectrum, whether it be in tourism and hospitality, whether it be in law enforcement, whether it be in construction to support the expansive military build-up here on Guam.

But we're starting to see more and more employers that are seeking for additional workers. During COVID, the college hosted a virtual conference that basically had a discussion with employers that post-COVID, what are the areas that you would need workers in once COVID is...I wouldn't say necessarily over, but once we're off the restrictions that were caused by COVID?

And it was based on that information that we received from employers that we as an educational institution started to set up boot camps. And boot camps were the direct link between education and training and employers with support from the government of Guam, and the governor, and the funding that she had available, either through ARPA or ESF.

So throughout this process, we have been continuing to provide training for the transportation industry in terms of bus drivers and truck drivers. Cybersecurity is an area that is of increasing demand. Health care providers is another area, and home health aid workers.

And so these are just a few of the areas, but there seems to be an increase in demand from employers to continue to bring in individuals that have some baseline of career and technical education as they enter the workforce.

Thank you.

- Thank you. Edna, you can go ahead and share.

- I think it's just echoing what our previous members shared. I just wanted to highlight when we talk about CTE, STEAM seems to be like the elementary to high school pathway, just exposing our kids, our scholars to these opportunities with the hopes of them pursuing careers, whether it be engineering, nursing field.

And also, we do have with our Department of Education a STEAM framework that does include everything from early learning to high school, and then post-secondary, and then also the workforce, and where the community. We also have a STEAM partnership.

And based on our last meeting that we had it's right before COVID, and just conversations afterwards. There's definitely a need for our STEAM professionals on island. Just last week we announced that we just...we were importing a lot of the highly skilled in STEM professions.

We just got, I think, about 15 or 20 Thailand nurses because we're lacking it here. We are getting a lot of the doctors and nurses also from Fiji. I mean, these are all great, but we really want to focus on building capacity locally as we have kids that are pursuing those fields.

But just really with the CTE also moving lower, but we're looking at STEAM as overall framework from ECE, early learning all the way to post-secondary and career. Share some data as far as some other service our students use just for career and interest

[inaudible] second. Yeah. Thank you.

- Christine, I see your hand up. Did you raise your hand again, or did you not put it down?

- Yes. Just to correct what I had shared earlier that the CTE program is in all six of the public schools, but the Pathways itself is only in three schools. Sorry about that.

- Thank you. You said are only in three schools. Okay. And I do want to acknowledge that a lot of what you all have shared, the next question is asking for the rationale for why this should be a priority.

And by rationale we mean what evidence do you have to support that? I did hear some of that evidence come through in what you shared previously in terms of data availability, surveys that have gone out, conversations with employers around their needs. So I did hear that data. I think if it's okay, I think maybe we can get to this next question, which are what ideas do you have for how this priority could be addressed through technical assistance activities?

- And Ashley, I just want to acknowledge that there's one comment in the chat to all of us, that is a good point that we can capture. Dr. Sakurai noted that our Hawaii State superintendent envisions a K-12 public education system that prepares all graduates to be globally competitive, locally committed.

Which sounds a lot like what Edna was just outlining as well. It's meaningful to have your graduates stay and support your communities.

- Yes, Frankie. Frankie, you can come off mute if your hand was up.

- Sorry. Just wondering. So you're taking responses for the ideas for how the priority may be addressed through technical assistance? Is that correct?

- Sorry, I muted myself. Yes, Frankie. Yeah.

- Okay. So one of the ideas that came up in my conversations with, again, educational leaders and others in our community is technical assistance may be needed for helping insular areas like the CNMI. And I really speak for the CNMI because I am not sure what the other situations are.

On Guam, it may be different, and in American Samoa, but in the CNMI there are...there's still very much strong silo. Like for the public school system, the higher ed system, the Department of Labor, and the State Workforce Development Board are operating in silos that makes it difficult to come up with unifying policies and unifying strategies to address the shortage of workers, and the strengthening of our CTE programs in a very robust way because everybody's doing their own thing.

So technical assistance may be needed to help kind of align all the different agencies, because we want to start them young, as Mary Okada alluded to. But we also want to make sure that we follow as students along from a very young age all the way up through college or through their careers and keep them supported.

And how each agency, whether it's a K-12 system, whether it's the higher ed institution, or whether it's the Department of Labor, or whether it's some other workforce related agency, how are we aligning ourselves to support our students as they make that journey from being a student to deploying a very meaningful, and impactful, and sustainable career?

- Go ahead, Christine.

- Thank you. I just want to echo what was shared of what's happening in CNMI. Same thing with the shortage of workers. And I think what the assistant director for CTE shared with me was she would really think we would really do well for a comprehensive needs assessment because they haven't had one for years.

And she thinks that would really help to identify and support CTE here in American Samoa, besides the shortage of teachers. And she also mentioned the curriculum assistance with curriculum review and alignment. Because past years, the silo, folks working, not really connecting.

And so when they do try to come together to make things happen, it was very difficult. So I think she's really adamant that the comprehensive needs assessment will be great TA, and along with the curriculum alignment and review.

Thank you.

- Dr. Switaj, I think I saw your hand up next.

- So one key piece of technical assistance that would be useful certainly in the Marshall Islands would be assistance with training of trainers.

Very often when schools are trying to set up these training programs, these courses for students to learn CTE skills, they have to bring in people from other locations to teach them because the people with the CTE skills do not have the skills to teach. And that is not a very sustainable model.

- Thank you. I think I saw one other hand, but I don't see it anymore.

- Well, let me just add to what Elizabeth said. This is Kanchi.

- Go ahead.

- Yeah, like in the Marshalls, we also have a program with the University of Hawaii that teachers STEM to masters teacher that will then pass on those skills to students, through curriculum... through the curriculum in the schools.

- Kanchi, I apologize. I wasn't able to hear you so great. Are you able to either repeat what you shared, or type it into the chat?

- I was just adding to what Elizabeth was saying. [inaudible] there's a teacher training through a master's program [inaudible] that teaches STEM activities on curriculum.

- Thank you. And Edna, did you want to share before we have to call for a vote?

- Yeah. Yeah, I saw the note that we need to confirm. Just for the [inaudible] for American Samoa is we have a board. We need to look at our...we all have a state plan. And tying into the comprehensive plan that Christine's talked about.

It's looking at all the CTE or career pathways even from the state itself, and then rolling it into the education system. So similar to what CNMI shared in the beginning, it's like a state comprehensive plan, I guess. Thank you.

- Okay, [inaudible].

- Okay. Yep, go ahead, Kanchi.

- I think we need to move to vote to allow for other priorities to come up. So we are ready, are we? We're going to go ahead. And is there a present function to put on this

[inaudible] priority and to see [inaudible] priority at this time? We're going to vote on CTE as a priority. So... All those support that this is a priority for the region to continue working [inaudible].

- [Anne] Screenshot taken, we can move to the next priority.

- Okay.

Next priority that we're going to discuss is qualified teacher shortages. We will pursue the same process. We'll discuss why or why not should this need be a priority.

Then we'll talk about the evidence and discuss support for this priority. So this is a very important discussion.

- This is Merar Roland. Can I go first, or?

- Rolan, go ahead.

- Okay. So why or why not should this need be a priority? So based on my interview with CNMI public school system commissioner and also HR director, it has come that there is...this is a priority need of CNMI.

There is a about 6% to 10% of retention and turnover at the end of the year. So they wanted to figure out a way to keep the teachers at PSS or find another means of recruiting more teachers, certified teachers.

One of the things that came up during the interview was what were the barriers that keep the qualified teacher shortage? One of that was the barrier was the PRAXIS 2 examination and get a license from the Board of Education.

So they're addressing the needs of how they can be able to help the teachers, non-certified teachers in the PSS also to pass, to take and pass PRAXIS 2. The areas of subject that they really need is a greater turnover in special ed. They seek a lot of teacher aide to actually train them so that they can be able to help a teacher in a special ed class.

And the other area of a need is early childhood area, and also secondary area. So this is also another means in relation to priority one. They also need to establish some program in a higher ed to be able to create a certificate program to train the CTE teachers in a public school system.

So that is one of the priority that also we need to look at. Thank you.

- Thank you, Roland.

- Lisa, I think you have your hand up.

- I didn't put it down from the vote. I'll put it down. Sorry.

- Okay. No problem.

- Edna, you can go ahead and share.

- Sorry, I think I'm the same with the previous...I missed the vote, so I was just sending you a message. Sorry about that.

- No problem. I see that. Anne, is it okay to acknowledge Edna's vote for the previous priority?

- Yeah. If she wants to put in chat that she approves votes for the previous priority, then we can have a record of it.

- Thank you. Josephine, if you want to share. And Dr. Sakurai, I will copy your comment in the note in the document as well.

- Hi. Oh... Can anybody hear me? Because... Can you all hear me? Sorry.

My internet connection is pretty, pretty low.

- We can hear you.

- Okay. Okay. Okay. All right. Why or why not should this be a priority for the qualified teacher shortages? Based on my interview with [inaudible]

directors for the instructional divisions, there is a need for the teachers, locally for us. Based on the interview, they had mentioned that there is a specific need for us, especially for the teachers in elementary divisions, and then the secondary divisions.

They also had provided given the incentives for the teacher professional development, the programs. This will help teachers.

This will help bring our teachers, developing our teachers with retention programs, and identify the challenges that they face. So based on the interview that they had given me, the information that they provided that this is a priority, and this...because there are teachers, teachers face challenges due to the pandemic.

So they feel that... They also had mentioned that there is a need. And this is... I feel that this is also a priority that we should accomplish. Thank you.

- Thank you. Go ahead, Christine.

- Thanks. Just to add...

- I think you're on mute.

- Oh, sorry. Just to add, CTE about 20 plus every year, that's why many of the programs are not implemented in the high schools.

And also, the assistant director did mention when CTE trained or specialized teachers do apply, they are pulled to fill content areas. So that's another struggling challenge for them. But I do know that they're working closely with our secondary division to be part of that interview process to ensure that those who are majored in CTE are placed in the CTE positions, as opposed to the content.

Thank you.

- Okay. Are there any other comments, or evidence, or why qualified teacher shortages should be named a priority?

And if not, we can then move on to how this priority could be addressed through technical assistance.

- Okay. So if no additional rationale or reasoning for why this should be a priority, in what ways could the challenge of qualified teacher shortages be addressed through technical assistance?

Dr. Okada?

- So I will share that prior to COVID and for many years, the region actually hosted a Pacific Educator Conference, and that brought together educators from the various jurisdictions to include K-12 and higher education.

And this was a means for individuals to interact as to how to get support for what they needed in their particular region, and identify what programs exist. So as I listened to the different requests as to why teacher shortages can...needs to be a priority, we can identify that there are some models, and there are some higher educational opportunities for K-12 systems and other post-secondary institutions to engage.

And so I think this is a great opportunity if we continue the Pacific Educator Conference through technical assistance, if that is provided, to bring folks to the table to identify and develop a strategy to address this particular priority. This will give us the information and the evidence that is needed for higher education to expand their programs, because oftentimes the programs are jurisdiction specific.

But if the need is such that we can develop something, I mean, COVID has taught us that we could provide some online education to some degree, then that should be looked at as a opportunity for us to expand services to the other area.

- I'm going to just go from the top of my screen down. So, Roland, I see your hand, and then Edna.

- Okay. I want to echo what President Okada was saying. It's really true that we really need the PE Conference to come back. It's inclusion of insular teachers, and also provide incentives and new ideas that we can implement in its regions.

What I wanted to add on to this is we need a technical assistant to come to CNMI and help us align the program from K-12, and to Northern Marianas College or NMTI, so we can start the career pathway as early as kindergarten, elementary, middle school to high school and then college.

So I think that's what we need. And strengthen it, try to create a program in higher ed so that we can teach and train the CTE teachers to be actually capable, and strengthen their areas of expertise on how to teach the career pathway classes.

- Thank you, Roland. Go ahead, Edna.

- A lot of our educators here in American Samoa, after they teach, they move on to the institution or the government.

From our partnership meeting, there were some offers, and they would love to come back, and teach if there's a need from the school side. There has been a lot of talk about how do we create a teacher sub pool, but maybe on a systemic level. And then, I don't know.

I've seen it in other states and island territories. Like for American Samoa, it'd be great to have technical assistance regarding creating like a sub pool plan. And then instead of just teachers moving forward. But if we did have volunteers or people that work in our government agencies, if there's a way, how do we make it happen where we could be this sub pool, go back into the classroom.

Just it also helps create that kids see people that look like them, and their engineers are like, "Oh..." But it's just the technical assistance, how to create a sub pool, and we can...that's systemic, right?

- Thank you for that. And I just wanted to make sure I'm understanding. When you say sub pool, you mean substitute teachers? Like professionals guild who volunteer to be substitute teachers, and come back and teach on an as-needed basis?

- Yes. Thank you.

- Yeah, no problem. I thought so, but I wanted to make sure. Okay. Dr. Switaj.

- In the Marshall Islands, the teacher shortage is especially acute...

- Oh.

- You're muted, Elizabeth. Sorry. You weren't, and then you were. I don't know what happened.

- All right. So in the Marshall Islands, the teacher shortage is especially acute in the more rural neighboring islands. And I think technical assistance could be useful to try to put into place some technological approaches to solving that, such as having master teachers at one location, working with teacher assistants on the ground through online learning, or some sort of approach similar to that.

- Okay. And I see Roland and Josephine.

- I just want to add something. One of the very important that came about our discussion was the distance education.

How can we improve that through distance education learning? We're in a different island. And the only communication that we have is through virtual or online. But we are being sanctioned by...not sanctioned, but under accreditation we can only require offer courses, online courses at 51%.

And if you go beyond that, it's... So what we're trying to do is if we can be able to change the definition of the distance learning courses, like a fully online asynchronous or synchronous classes, there's hybrid, there's virtual courses. If we can be able to change some of the definitions of distance learning or distance education learning, I think we can be able to accommodate those teachers, and a separate island like Tinian and Rota within the CNMI.

So we can be able to train, hold the courses, and train the teachers from those areas.

- Okay. And Josephine, did you want to add something before we have to call for a vote?

- Yes.

Just to add on, just an idea that just came back. So a month ago, we had a discussion with a director about a program that was discussed during the...

- [Female] [inaudible]

- Stop, stop. I have a meeting. Sorry about that. There was a program that was discussed in the NGA meetings that we held last...it was this year January. One of the program directors shared about Grow Your Own Teachers program. So that was an interest to our director here.

It's a great program that we're talking about. And it's a program that we're trying to implement to our teachers on how to ease the pain, ease the shortage of our local teachers.

And then this is a strategy that will help bring our school districts, community organization to help recruit and to help with the shortages.

And then this will be a goal for us in the upcoming years. Thank you.

- Thank you. I'm going to copy a couple more of the comments into the notes. But, Kanchi, if you would like to call this for a vote.

- Okay. Thank you, everyone, for your discussions and input. At this time, I call on the Pacific RAC to include the [inaudible] teacher shortages as a priority. I'm going to call on the vote now.

Please raise your hand to [inaudible].

- Screenshot taken.

- The next priority area to be discussed is student health and wellness.

- [inaudible] we're going to go through the same process [inaudible] student health and wellness.

Who is open for discussion at this time?

- Yes. So if your hand is still up from your vote, please take that down. And if you would like to share why this should be a need or a priority, please feel free to raise your hand and share your thoughts.

- I have a couple of thoughts. This is Lisa. So when I was looking through the data from the public comment, there's...

Let me see if I can bring that up. There's a small section for student basic needs and wellness. And when I look through that, I see a lot of things that are related to poverty, right?

And so we know that for our own schools, we have 66% of our schools who are eligible for Title I funding. And so when you think about that, and the context that our students are in, I'm looking at these comments, things like food security, again, lunch, food stamps, and benefits for kids, so those kinds of things, and when we think about wellness, and we think about student health and wellness, our kids have to, like everyone, have to have...

have to be well-fed in order to be ready to greet the day, and all of the things they have to do. And they have to be in a safe environment. And at least for the school environment, we want that to be a safe environment for our students as well.

I mean, then we have to think of their mental as well as their...I would argue, as well as their spiritual wellness, however you define that. So their physical, social. And so we look to things, like we measure students' SEL, right? Social-emotional learning.

We look at their well-being, we look at their physical, making sure they're physically okay. So I guess just the context of where students are and where their families are at, I think that's important. And just knowing for each of the areas, knowing what their own students are facing in terms of these larger areas of mental, physical, spiritual wellness and well-being.

For our state, besides the amount of schools that are facing...that have students who are eligible for Title I funding, when we look at other indicators of other data, we can also look to...in Hawaii, our schools participate in our Youth Behavioral Risk survey.

And so when we look at some of those numbers, students seem to...they seem to be getting a little better over time. But there's still...when we think about things like whether or not students even had a physical exam, we don't think about that.

Right? But whether students even had a physical exam. So for their physical health. Or it's going up, I think...I don't know what it was in 2015, but I know that it was increasing. In 2017, we had 70% of students reported to that survey that they had had at least a physical exam. But the target, the national target is really 82% of students have it.

So we can see we're a little behind in that. Things like depression and suicide, while those numbers are...while those percentages are low... We would think of them as low if you're 20% or in teens-percent, 20% or 30%.

While those percentages are lower, when we dig down into those numbers, we can see that females seem to have higher percentages of thoughts of suicide reporting, of depression. So we have to really think about, even though those are not specifically coming from our DOE, those are our DOE students who are participating in this state-wide survey.

And those are some results. So thinking about what our students are experiencing, and then how do we provide these safe spaces for health and wellness.

- I'm not sure who's next. We can go with Jacqueline.

- Hi. Am I next?

- Yeah.

- Okay. To talk about whether health and wellness should be a priority or not?

- Correct. Yeah.

- Okay. I do feel that in my discussion with some of my colleagues of the mental health department at CNMI PSS, we talked about focusing on curriculum, academics, but if students are not in a place where they're supported or healthy, not in a place where their mental health is being catered to, they will not be able to succeed in school.

So we have invested a lot of our federal funding into student support and mental health wellness programs here at the district. And what we're realizing is as a result of COVID, when we did our surveys, a lot of our students are not in a good place going back to school.

So I do think that it should be a priority. If our students are not healthy or well, they will not be able to succeed. And that's it.

- Thank you. Roland, I see, is the next person with their hand up.

- No, I think that was accidentally. I don't know what...

- Okay. No problem. Frankie.

- Thank you. So it should be a priority for the also discussions here in the CNMI, primarily for two reasons. We're still kind of scratching the surface of what impact COVID has had on the mental health of our students.

And couple along with that is also the nature of natural disasters that continue to be faced here in the Pacific territories, particularly in the CNMI, and probably Guam, we're considered to be in Typhoon Alley.

So meteorologists are predicting more frequent and more powerful storms. In the last five to seven years, we've seen several storms. Two of them were super typhoons. So taken with the...those natural disasters with the health disaster of COVID, we haven't had a really in-depth study of how that has had an impact on the mental health of our students and continue to have a mental health impact.

Those are very traumatic experiences that students are either just packing away and compartmentalizing to deal with their schoolwork and other things. So I think that needs to be...or we think that needs to be a priority. The other reason why student health and wellness needs to be a priority is because there is still some sort of stigma around mental health issues.

And we in the CNMI still have a lot of work to do around normalizing the conversations around mental health. Because a lot of times when students say they are having mental health issues, they are not necessarily put into a context where it's just like having other types of ailments.

There's some sort of stigma still involved with mental health that needs to be addressed from a more systematic and systemic perspective.

And just for example purposes. So some of our students still have a lot...harbor a lot of trauma from the pandemic and from these super typhoons.

And when they are triggered because there's another storm coming, and they're stressed, and they are not sure how to deal with that stress, teachers are not all the time prepared to

identify those triggers. And maybe just categorizing these triggers as, "Oh, students are just scared that there's a typhoon coming."

Well, it's actually deeper than that. And the tools that they're using to address these triggers are not sufficient to address them holistically.

- Thank you, Frankie, and thank you for that example. I think that's really helpful to understand the context there that students are experiencing and teachers as well.

I would venture to say that teachers are probably experiencing that trauma, and it manifests in different ways as well. And so thank you for that example.

- Absolutely.

- Sorry, go ahead.

- I just pulled up global obesity. And it doesn't matter how I move the demographics around, the top 10 is always our region, the Pacific Islands.

Maybe reverse the orders, but obesity is a very real concern for our community here in American Samoa. But just when I pulled it up on worldobesity.org, the top 10 is always a Pacific Island, our region. Seeing it with a lot of our diseases with...just the non-communicable, the obesity.

I mean, we're not...as far as infrastructure here, we have to look to build more dialysis. I mean, we're not going the right direction.

But just seeing even elementary kids use to get it. So just some reasons why. And we have data that backs it up.

- Thank you for naming that. Christine, did you want to share? And I think we may need to move on to how we can address this through technical assistance after you share, Christine.

- All right. Okay. Just to add in, I agree with everything, the comments shared so far. For American Samoa, our guidance and counseling division really stepped up with the use of ARPA funds, as noted here, the mental awareness, but also the telehealth and the numerous trainings for their counselors to address our students' emotional needs.

So it's been a big plus. And a lot of work still yet to be done. And it's all right. If the students aren't emotionally set, they won't be able to concentrate on their education. Thank you.

- All right. So with that, we can move to how this priority could be addressed through technical assistance. I think we have a couple of minutes for that before we move to a vote.

Roland, you can go ahead and share.

- Yes.

Actually, I just want to say, based on this, I think we just need a lot of data to support what we're saying, especially for the burnout of the students and teachers.

- Roland, do you think that some type of technical assistance around developing a way to assess teacher burnout, and both from a outcome perspective, and then a follow-up to address some of the burnout concerns?

Is that something that [crosstalk]?

- Yeah. Yes, I think so. I think so. And also, yeah. And also, just to... Enough time to collect data regarding an obesity, regarding suicide rate, regarding on that. And try to help us on how we can interpret the data and find solutions.

- Okay. And Edna. I think Edna, and then Dr. Okada.

- Just wanted to share that I know we have the YRBS data. I haven't seen the latest for American Samoa, but that would be another great data set for us to look at, at least from the student perspective.

- Is that YRPS you said?

- B.

- Oh, okay. That was their Youth Risk Behavior Survey?

- Yeah.

- Okay. So I'm hearing maybe technical assistance around how to analyze the results of that survey, and identify programs or resources to meet the needs based on the data that's collected.

- I think they analyze, but...

- They analyze it.

- ...I think what's...just programs that we get based on the data. It's not a data I use, but definitely one I'd like...need to read up on.

- Yeah, they actually, if you go to their website, they do the analysis. So they provide the bar graphs, and line graphs, and charts, and the data. But there might be...what would be nice for technical assistance, I think, is to maybe get some help with...if the region could figure out what were some of those questions, that we could ask for a special run of data because not everything is reported for race and ethnicity, because the numbers are low once you start disaggregating further down.

But it would be helpful if perhaps we could see to what level we could get data. And maybe it's only...maybe you'd have to aggregate all Pacific Island, right? Maybe we couldn't get it lower than that.

But if we could even do that. Some of it does have race and ethnicity data, and some of it doesn't. So...

- And Dr. Okada.

- Well, I would like to add that the use of how the priority can be addressed to technical assistance is really in three specific areas.

One is perhaps an awareness campaign because oftentimes individuals don't know where to go. So maybe information as to what's available and where to go for help. That's one area, maybe an...public information and awareness campaign. The second piece or second areas, as discussed earlier, is possibly on the needs assessment. But the needs assessment really is to focus on the data, is what is needed to determine the need, to what extent does a need exist.

And using that data for the third component that I'm interested in, or that our jurisdictions would probably be interested in, would be using that data to write grants, and getting grant funding or grant writing technical assistance to help support that.

So again, three areas. Public Information Awareness campaign. Identifying the needs assessment because needs assessment is needed in order to determine to what extent there is a problem. And then the third piece is grant writing, so that we can avail of funding that might be available to address these specific areas.

- I really like the idea of the needs assessment. I think that's really...that is something that's really important. And if I can tag on to that, one of the other things is, so this is YRBS data. And then every department will have sort of the other data that they're collecting internally for their schools, their students.

Right? And then there might be other surveys that the departments have that they're participating in for other things. So even a scan of...a way to kind of scan where all the data are. So I don't know if that's part of the needs assessment or separate piece, but what are all these pieces?

And then helping states understand the connection between them so that there's some way to kind of look at it, because the sampling is maybe different. Right? And so you want to get an idea of what can we take away from looking across this data?

- Okay. Anything else before we call for a vote? If there's something you'd like to add, feel free to drop it in the chat as well.

And with that, I will pass it to Kanchi to call for a vote.

- Thank you, Ashley. And thank you, members, for very good discussion on this issue. This time we're going to call to a vote, see [inaudible] priority for this reason. Place your vote by raising your hand.

- Screenshot taken.

- I'm not sure if we have time. We have three priorities.

If there are any additional priorities that you would like to call for attention, or if we need to move to the subcommittees?

- I just have a question. This is Frankie.

- Sure.

- And I'm not sure if this is covered under CTE and STEM education, but throughout our conversations with the RAC members from the CNMI, and through other stakeholders, college readiness is issue that has come up. And I'm not sure that's folded into the overall discussion of CTE but ensuring that our students are placing into college level math, college level English.

And addressing what are the challenges that prevent that from an earlier standpoint, whether it's at the junior high level, the high...where are the breakdowns, if there are any breakdowns? But college readiness is a priority issue for the CNMI. And I'm not sure if that's going to be included in the overall CTE discussion.

- Frankie, thank you for raising that. And Kanchi, I'm not sure if you have thoughts on that. To me, CTE is separate from college readiness.

I think there's two different priority areas that may require different supports. That's just my inclination. So I'm curious to hear folks from other jurisdictions are experiencing...would agree with that that it would be separate, but also if they're experiencing similar challenges.

That may justify this being a fourth priority.

- Yeah. It might be good to give a few minutes for that discussion.

- Sure.

- So [inaudible] discussing on what Frankie has just brought up. [inaudible] college readiness would be a priority that we would want to consider at this time.

- Roland, you can go ahead and share.

- Yes.

I want to...what Mr. Frankie was saying that actually the challenges we go through in CNMI college readiness or student achievement gap, I think we need to work to improve the K-12, especially secondary education level, and how we can align their program with college readiness into NMC, Northern Marianas College, or any other colleges.

And then try to look at the PSS curriculum and see what kind of math and English that we can improve before they're coming into the college to see the achievement gap and try to align them into the college based on the data.

Five years ago the number was very low. And see if we can make this as a priority. And then create a program or anything to help that. Thanks.

- Edna, you can go ahead and share next.

- Just wanted to echo.

It's the same thing for here in American Samoa. A lot of our kids that go from high school to our local community college, over 90% of them have to take the cap courses, which is their college readiness... which extends the time they're in school. And so that's one of the...

When we do our stuff here in American Samoa, for some of our STEAM stuff, college readiness is a part of the framework. But I think it's good to call it out because it's different for everyone.

- And Christine...

- So just...

- ...did you have your hand up too.

- Sorry.

- Oh, sorry, Edna.

- Just wanted to call out, our college placement course, it's reading, writing, and math for entrance.

- Okay. Any other...? It sounds like this is...most of you all are in agreement with making college readiness a fourth priority for the different reasons identified.

If there are no other additional evidence or rationale for this, I would encourage us to move on to think about how this might be addressed through technical assistance activities before we call for a vote. We can spend a couple of minutes on this.

I know we only had a little bit...a certain amount of time allocated, and we have a couple other things we need to do as well. But, Frankie, go ahead and you can start.

- Thank you. I just have a...it's very similar to the recommendation I made for the first question, is to help systems better align between the K-12, and the higher ed systems, whether it's a career and technical higher ed providers, or the academic higher ed providers. Just a better system alignment, and the technical assistance needed to make that happen would be greatly appreciated, and actually very much needed at this point.

- Great. Thank you for that. Roland. And then Dr. Okada.

- Yes, based on that alignment, we need assistance in conducting a survey from K-12 from elementary...K-6, elementary and then middle school, then high school, and then college. If we can see those gap between those, and where we can identify the needed, where should we...so that we can know what gaps do we need to work on.

- Okay. Thank you. And Dr. Okada.

- So I put in the chat, the evidence for this priority can be identified through the information obtained from the community colleges in the region. So the placement test is basically an indicator as to how a student placed in terms of being able to enter college at college level, math and English.

But the other thing is taking the data from what schools they graduated from, and providing the information back into the institutions that they came from so that they can assess what kind of English and math curriculum they are using. In addition to that, this college readiness can also be a discussion through technical assistance as provided through the Pacific Educator Conference.

So there's different ways and different means because not all colleges require every student to take a placement test. So there are some alternatives to placement testing already that exist. And so taking a look at those that how those can be provided as information to high school students, one, so that they can pursue post-secondary education.

But two, giving them some opportunity to take some pre-testing or summer workshops, for example, that can be used to help them take it during the summer so that if they are ready to enter college in the fall, that they've already taken care of that component, and taken whatever developmental math that they need at that time.

- And I see Roland, and Dr. Switaj, your hands are up. And then we do have to move to a vote.

- No, no, I forgot to lower down my hand. Sorry.

- Okay. No problem.

- So just quickly, I wanted to note that it's very important when we're talking about alignment, that it isn't just high school to college, that it does go all the way down into the

elementary schools, because otherwise the high schools are playing a little too much catch up.

- Okay. So with that, Kanchi, if you don't mind calling us to a vote for this fourth priority.

- Thank you. Thank you, members for this serious discussion. It looks like we had a fourth priority that we need to vote on. So it is college readiness. So please cast your vote if you are in favor of inserting this as priority number four.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thanks. So, Kanchi, I think this is you to call us to establish subcommittees for the drafting and writing of the report.

- Well, at this time, we're coming to the last item on our agenda and establish [inaudible] committees, to work on the reports. [inaudible] we're going to select different committees on different priorities. Okay, so...

- Yeah.

- So let's go by priority areas. First [inaudible] on the first priority.

- May I ask if you can please repeat that?

- We're voting on...we're nominating members to take the lead writing the reports, and we are going to ask for four...summary report is on the priorities that we just established.

And at this time, I'm asking for volunteer to lead the report at the first priority, which is CTE. Does anybody want to volunteer for that report?

- It may help if we advance to slide 14.

- Okay, go on, Erin. And can you [inaudible]?

- Yeah. And it just...that summarizes what Kanchi just went over, that we have our four priorities that we've established, and that his request is that we have members who are leading that work. And so you may nominate yourself, or you may nominate someone else.

But we'll need to ensure that we have each section covered, and that we are ensuring that we have the writing of the sections completed by the timeline that you'll see on the next slide.

And so as you volunteer, note that each of the sections, as you saw on an earlier slide, follows a similar cadence of topics. They're roughly three pages or so apiece. They're not a huge research dissertation, but it is important that we have people assigned to each of these, and willing to kind of commit and contribute to that work.

And so I guess, Kanchi, if you just want to go priority by priority, and get those volunteers. And I think we'll also be paying attention to the chat as well because I know some people are volunteering in the chat.

And so we'll call those out, and we'll be taking those groups. We just have to ensure that we also...one of the other things we have to pay attention to is that as a subcommittee, we cannot make a group that is...that constitutes a quorum. So we have to be aware of that. And so a quorum for us is eight.

And so we would need to keep our numbers to seven or below. So with four priorities, we are able to do that. So we can either have a full committee that's a writing committee, or we can have them by each subcommittee...or each topic, I'm sorry.

- Looks like there is already been volunteer for priority areas on the chat.

- Yes. So, Kanchi, if you want to nominate those people that you're seeing in the chat and the priority they've associated with themselves so that we can formally nominate them.

- So let me take it from the top. Mary Okada has volunteered with priority area number one.

- I second that.

- Thank you, Roland. We have a second. And all in favour to nominate Mary Okada for priority number one?

- Do we vote by raising our hand?

- Yes.

- Yes, just raise your hand.

- Screenshot taken. I'm sorry. Screenshot taken.

- Kanchi, do you want to move to Marissa Baptista to serve on the mental health subcommittee?

- Okay.

- [inaudible] - We only have Marissa, right?

- Yes.

- Yes. Then Marissa is a volunteer to serve on mental health committee and student wellness. Do I get a second for Marissa?

- Second.

- Thank you, Marissa.

- Can I ask a question really quickly?

- Go on.

- Okay, so I don't mind leading it, but that's only if someone else on this call is not interested in leading. I feel passionate about it, but I would willingly give that to someone else also.

- Okay. Thank you.

- I believe that Jacqueline Che also... Oh, I'm sorry. She was number four. I was trying to keep a shorthand of it, of who's volunteered for which ones, and I flip-flopped it. So right now you are, I think, the only one that, through the chat at least, has volunteered for that subcommittee.

- Would Edna be interested in joining me?

- Okay.

- Which one are we at?

- Mental health priority.

- Mental wellness, priority number two.

- No pressure.

- I'm very into my... I'm more in the STEAM, but I can help if that's okay. I can be your support in that.

- Thank you.

- All right, thank you.

- And I shared my screen. I'm taking notes based on the chat and what you all are sharing. So if it's helpful for you all to see the priorities, and who has volunteered so far for each of the areas, I think that may help us keep track, if that's okay. And if it's not helpful, I'm happy to take it down.

- Okay. So... Yes, Dr. Elizabeth is very fitting for two.

- I see my name in two.

[inaudible] You can remove me from the STEAM. But I can be a support there as well if needed. But yeah.

- I was going to say too. It is okay to work in two areas, I know there are duplicate names, so I'm just trying to take a count where those are.

- And I think... Ashley, can you scroll up just a little bit because we may have to...we need to be paying attention to that number.

Just so we can see all of this.

- So right now, I think we're looking for Frankie, and Kanchi, and John, and Christine.

- We don't have to have each...we...

Yeah, one for...in the chat, I'm wondering if we'll have separate subcommittee for each of these, and then we'll be okay. Just none of them can be over eight.

- Okay.

- I'll join on priority number one.

- Okay. And I think... And if there's anyone else that would like to support Marissa and Edna on priority three, because they're the only two on there now, we can...that would be a spot that probably could use additional support.

And I know that one of our members had to leave our meeting early. And so I have already reached out to them for their interest in a certain topic. Okay? To see if they...if Lisa would like to serve on that one, because she has an interest, and has collected some data for that one.

So let's go ahead. I think we've got Christine on the CTE. You've got that one. I think that was the last one that we haven't gotten captured, Roland you got. Okay.

So let's go ahead and move to the adoption of these as we have them represented right now of these subcommittees for each of these areas. And I'll leave that to, Kanchi, if you want to lead that vote.

- So looks like we've established some members for the priority areas. What is the next step, Erin?

- Yes, just by a show of their hands, the adoption of the subcommittees as they're currently represented.

- All right. So these are the members that are volunteers who... to be [inaudible] priority areas. So I'm going to ask for members to take a vote if you're in favor of the all these [inaudible]. Raise it right now, please raise your hand.

- Sorry. Screenshot taken.

- Thank you, Anne.

I'm just putting in the chat for the record the priorities we adopted. And we have now adopted the subcommittees. And Kanchi, would you like me to go over just a little bit of the next step on slide 15, just so everyone can see it?

- Go on, Erin.

- Okay. This is the final kind of timeline that we'll be working on. So until November 2nd, those subcommittees will meet to draft the assessment report. Ashley, our liaison, will be reaching out to you.

And we will set up meetings so that we can come together to kind of plan the writing. But also that is something that you'll be able to work on when you're able to allocate time to it. And we'll set up those timelines within those work groups. Those subcommittees will submit those drafts November 3rd to our liaison.

And then we'll release our assessment to the full committee for review. So if you aren't authoring a section, that's a time where your review and your knowledge of the content and the conversations that we had today will be really helpful to kind of review, and go over, and comment on what's been included.

And then during the week of November 14th, or the week of November 13th, but on the days of November 14th, 15th, and 16th, we will have that third meeting, and the full committee will come together and vote on the report. And then it will be submitted to the secretary. During that time, there will also be working on the report to create it in kind of one...in a one voice structure so that it's not a...it doesn't sound like it was written by multiple individuals, that we have a very cohesive structure to the voice and the cadence of the writing.

And the liaison will support that work as well. And then next slide. So if there aren't any other questions or comments, our next step will be to adjourn. So I just want to make sure that everyone...

I know there's some hand raised. I'm pretty sure they're from our last vote. But I just want to make sure that people had their questions answered and comments heard before we adjourn our second meeting today.

- [inaudible].

- Say that one more time, Kanchi.

- I was just asking if anybody have any questions or anything else.

- Oh. Thank you. And you're always allowed to email questions later, because I know I'm a person notorious for...as soon as I get off the meeting, I've got 10. Okay. Hearing none, I move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee meeting for the Pacific region.

Committee members, could you concur by saying, "Aye?"

- Same thing. Aye.

- [Together] Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Thank you so much. Our meeting is adjourned on October 16th at 8:04 p.m. Eastern time.