

RAC-Southeast Region
Meeting #2
October 11, 2023

- [Elisabeth] Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for joining. My name is Elisabeth Lembo, I work with the U.S. Department of Education. This meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southeast Region. This meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. So we'll start with a roll call, so I'm going to read names aloud of our Regional Advisory Committee Southeast.

Please state your name as present when I call your name. Dr. Omar Riaz?

- [Dr. Riaz] Present.

- Thank you. Ronda Gedward?

- [Ronda] Present.

- Thank you. Joanne Sweazey? Shana White? Dr. Larry Collier? Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis?

- [Dr. Katsiyannis] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Bronwyn Ragan-Martin?

- [Dr. Ragan-Martin] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Berta Rios? Dr. Orletta Rush?

- [Dr. Rush] Present.

- Thank you. Anna Barrett-Smith?

- [Anna] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Lesley Thompson? And Dr. Kyle Wagner? All right. Thank you, everyone.

So now we're just double-checking on a quorum being met, so we'll need half the members plus one. Tara, I'm noticing some of our RAC Southeast members are in the Attendees, so I'm assuming they're not able to come off mute.

They're probably in the Open to Public.

- [Tara] Okay. Give us one minute, and we'll move into the right room.

- Thank you. All right. I'm seeing a few names have moved over, so when I call your name, please say present. Joanne Sweazey?

- [Joanne] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Larry Collier?

- [Dr. Collier] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Berta Rios? I think Berta's still over in Attendees. Yolanda Averett?

- [Yolanda] Present.

- Thank you. And, Dr. Rios?

- [Dr. Rios] I'm here, present.

- Thank you so much. All right. Is there anyone else from the Regional Advisory Committee Southeast whose name was not called who is present or who has not had the chance to note present yet? Okay. Great. We've met our quorum, so if we can go to the next slide, please? Great.

Thank you. So for today's agenda, our broad outline is that we'll review assessment framework, we're going to review data that's been collected, we're going to deliberate on our priorities, and we're going to discuss our assessment report, and make assignments for writing the report.

Next slide, please. For our meeting objectives for today, we'll start by reviewing additional input received from stakeholders and public comments that were received. Based on the information received, we'll finalize assessment of the critical educational needs of the region, of our region, for Southeast.

We'll deliberate on the education needs assessment for the region and finalize recommendations to be included in the final report. And then we'll close by establishing subcommittees to complete our final report. Right. And I'm going to turn it over to our liaison, who today is Tara Donahue. Thank you, Tara.

- Thank you, Liz. Good morning, everyone. Yes, I am filling in for your liaison, Sally Wade, who, unfortunately, had a previous work commitment today. But she sends her greetings and wishes she could be with you, but she's looking forward to going through these last couple of phases of this process with you. So before we get started, and as Liz had mentioned, we will be making report assignments at the end of the meeting, but we wanted you to have these questions in the back of your mind as you go through the deliberation process today, as these are the key questions that you will be addressing as you write that final report.

So as you go through all your priorities today and deliberate on the data, please be thinking about the following. And the first one is, why did the committee determine that this is a priority for your region? And then, how will you justify to the U.S. Department of Education that this should be a priority for the region? And once those priorities are established, what technical assistance support can the Department provide to address this priority for your region?

And in addition to the priorities and the data that you've collected, there may have been other concerns or issues that have come up that may not have risen to the level of a priority, but they are things that you think are important enough that the Department should be aware of and consider as they plan for the next five years and beyond. So you'll also have the opportunity to include those types of issues, too, within your report.

And so on the next slide, please, we will go over a high-level overview of what this assessment report outline looks like. So, like any report, you'll have a general cover page and introduction, and this will be followed by an executive summary.

And then you'll have an introduction, which will just provide background information about the RACS itself, composition, and just some general background information about the intent and purpose of the report. And then beginning in section IV is where you will really get into what your committee was able to accomplish, and you'll provide an overview of the data that you collected, what methods and outreach did you use from the Regional Education Leadership, what comments did they provide, and how did that impact the priorities in your region.

And you'll also have the opportunity to include the public comments that have been available for anybody in your region to reflect on the education issues that they feel are important. Then you'll go into the summary of the findings, which is an overall summary and an introduction to the priorities that you will be voting on today.

That sixth section will look at recommendations. And so in order to frame the report, we have created six different headings, and these include...or the first couple are supporting strong instruction and academic achievement, and this is followed by supporting specific student populations.

As you go into the next slide... ..the other topics are supporting teachers, leaders, and school personnel, supporting student and educator well-being, developing an effective technical assistance response, and then those other priorities I mentioned that may not have quite risen to the level of being a recommended priority, but things, again, that the Department should be aware of and take under consideration for the next five years or so.

And so you can see, under each of those headings, you'll be discussing the outcomes and the findings from the data collection that you were able to do over the past few weeks, what those needs look like, and then the recommendations for the technical assistance provided by the Department. And this will be followed by the conclusion and an appendix that will really put those details in about the data collection that you did.

So we really want these reports to be very concise and succinct, but being able to really provide that justification for why you think this is a priority for your region and then the technical assistance needs that the Department may be able to provide for you. So just be keeping that in the back of your mind as you go through the deliberations.

And as I said, at the end of this meeting, you'll be thinking about which areas of the report you would like to work on and then voting on who will be taking the lead on those sections. But before we got into deliberations, we wanted to provide you with an overview of what that report will look like.

So with that, I will turn it over to your chairperson, Omar, to lead the discussion. He will first summarize what those activities were that you were able to accomplish over the last few weeks, and then lead the deliberation.

- Good morning, everyone, and thank you. I'm Omar, the Southeast RAC Chair. And at this point, we will begin with an overview of the needs-sensing activities that were completed. Just to summarize, we had identified five areas that we were going to investigate and explore, so I will provide some information regarding each of the areas that we identified.

The first one was literacy and mathematics achievement. Hopefully, everyone's had the opportunity to go into the external SharePoint folder, but within that folder, we added some information regarding NAEP for the jurisdictions within the Southeast Committee.

The NAEP data covered Grade 4 and Grade 8 reading and mathematics scores for our jurisdictions. The second priority that we had discussed was post-secondary data. And in the folder, we included some data from the National Student Clearinghouse, with a focus of a couple of jurisdictions.

We did not have data available for all of the jurisdictions identified, but we did include data for South Carolina and North Carolina. We also included OCR data, or behavior data, that was included through a link to an external site.

Another priority that we identified was teacher shortages, or teacher retention and recruitment, and there was a focus group that was conducted, and there is data in the folder with the focus group summary. And then finally, the fifth priority was teacher...sorry, student attendance and engagement, and there was a link providing resources to data for attendance, and particularly attendance, within the folder.

So we can move into the next slide, please. So our next item is to deliberate on the priorities and the recommendations that were provided. We had five priorities, but we will be discussing whether or not we want to keep the five priorities for the report and voting on each one.

As a reminder, when we're nominating a priority to discuss, we should be keeping in mind why it should be or why it shouldn't be considered as a priority, the explanation to the Department why it was a priority, and then any ideas or types of support that can be provided to the Department on how to support this priority.

So we are going to begin with the first, which they're not necessarily in the order that I provided to you, but the first one is teacher recruitment and retention. And as a reminder, the data that was provided to you in the needs-sensing folder was the focus group that was held on teacher recruitment and retention.

So I see, Dr. Rush, you have your hand raised. Dr. Rush, you're on mute.

- Sorry. So we're deciding now if we're going to keep that one as a priority?

- Yes, that's correct.

- Okay.

- We are [crosstalk].

- I would like to recommend that we keep that one as a priority because I see that it's going to be a continuation of a problem across the nation, especially in our areas, just in the public education field altogether.

- Dr. Ragan, you have your hand raised.

- Hey, good morning. I agree with Dr. Rush, it's definitely a problem that we have seen here in Georgia. It's also reflected in the public comments, if you go through the public comments, as well as the focus group.

In Georgia, we have also had a teacher burnout report to be conducted by the Department of Education. And so I agree with Dr. Rush, that it should definitely be considered to be one of the priorities.

- Thank you. Dr. Rios.

- Yes, I think it should be a priority because after COVID, the workforce environment has changed, particularly with remote work. So it's a totally different landscape in terms of recruitment of anyone in the field of education.

- Thank you, Dr. Rios. Ms. Gedward? Ms.

Gedward, you're on mute.

- I'm sorry, I forgot to unclick it. This is one of the areas that's definitely high on the list. And if you look at some of the college graduations, when they list the degree areas, education is one that is very, very scary because it's one or two people graduating with degrees in education.

So I don't know what it is that we need to do to encourage the younger generation to want to teach. I've worked on this in Atlanta as a teacher recruiter for HR, and we just had to keep going out into the community and just trying some things in middle schools and high schools, having clubs to get the kids interested in pursuing education.

So yes, this is definitely needed.

- Thank you. Dr. Rush, your hand is raised?

- Yes. I just wanted to add one additional thing. From the special ed perspective, we have less than 2% of teachers that are graduating in the ex ed field. There's a huge shortage, even more in the general ed factor than just with the special ed. I mean, we have limited therapists, limited speech pathologists, limited anything that is coinciding with that ex ed, and we have less than 2% that are graduating from colleges at this time.

So, across the nation, across...I know in this state, there's anywhere from 15 to 20 vacancies in the special ed population as well.

- Okay, thank you. Mr. Collier, I believe you had your hand raised?

- Yes. Can you hear me?

- Yes.

- Well, you know, I think this problem is going to persist because in the field of education, there's barriers in terms of salaries and benefits that are dwindling. And so as we recruiting males into higher ed, that's one of the biggest issues we face, is that many of our candidates don't want to pursue this route because of the condition of public education in terms of salaries and benefits.

And so I think that's going to always be a barrier to prevent us from being able to recruit the numbers unless we begin to improve in these areas.

- Okay. Thank you for that comment. Ms. Barrett-Smith.

- Good morning. I just wanted to add that here in North Carolina, and I assume that we are no different than anywhere else, we're having an extraordinary problem in staffing our buildings, I think like everybody else, and so I think this has to be a priority. In addition to all the data that was collected, just sort of anecdotally, last night I was at a Parents for Public Schools event, and a 7th grader came up to me and said, you know, "I still don't have a science and social studies teacher. So they're handing me worksheets every day, but nobody's teaching me anything."

And you know, that's...I think that's, you know, what's going on everywhere, so I think that's a strong piece of evidence or compelling evidence for sure that we've got to do something. These kids cannot be learning by worksheet alone.

- Thank you. Ms. Sweazey.

- I just wanted to say, first of all, Dr. Rush had mentioned the special education population, and with the exponential increase in autism, we're going to need lots of educators who have the ability to meet the needs of those students, in addition to the fact that we also don't know what the results of COVID are going to be on our children and what those needs are going to be down the road.

But at the same time, we're also...we've lost a lot of the teachers who had been in this field for a long time and who were the mentors to our younger teachers. And so now they're losing

out on a lot of those years and years of experience that could be helping to support these young teachers, and helping them to feel more successful.

- Dr. Riaz, you're on mute, too.

- Sorry. Are there any other comments regarding teacher recruitment and retention? Okay.

There's one last section for the note-taking purpose, ideas how this may be addressed through technical assistance activities, before we call this to a vote. So I should say, from the focus group, one of the recommendations was for individuals to perform a study of the labor market and provide possible policy solutions.

Dr. Rios?

- Yes. Technical assistance on best practices for teacher recruitment and retention, Disseminating best practices for teacher recruitment and retention.

- Thank you. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- One suggestion is for educators, and I know this is technical assistance, but as we are looking at policies with the expectations that are put on teachers and as well as considering the funding that's available for salaries, because salaries, you know, are a huge factor in teacher recruitment.

- Thank you for that comment. Dr. Rush.

- I think we also need to look at the availability of funding when it comes to certification and additional degrees. I think that will be a huge effect when it comes to the recruitment aspect, where you're looking at some of your paraprofessionals going into the ex ed field. But if you're allowed to be able to support fundamental and funds to be able to support them to get that certification, that may lock in more teachers for the long run.

So looking at that funding for certification and for overall higher degrees.

- Thank you. Ms. Sweazey.

- And providing funding for student loan forgiveness or scholarships for educators who are trying to go into the field, to reduce the cost for those teachers, future teachers.

- Any additional comments the committee would like to add to this note-taking activity? Okay, so I will bring this priority to a vote.

So as we vote on this priority, please remember to use the Raise Hand function so that we can accurately call the vote and so that we can take a screenshot for the record. So I call for a vote for the Southeast Regional Advisory Committee to include teacher recruitment and retention as a priority.

So as a reminder, if you are voting, if you could please use the Raise Your Hand feature to indicate your vote.

- Screenshots have been taken.

- Thank you.

If you could please lower your hand. And then we'll begin the deliberation on the next priority. So the second priority, we can begin with the deliberation on literacy and mathematics achievement.

As a reminder, the data that was placed into the needs-sensing folder was the NAEP results for Grade 4 and Grade 8 reading and mathematics for our individual jurisdictions. So now we'll open the floor to begin the deliberation on why or why not, why this should not be considered a priority.

Go ahead, Dr. Rush.

- I do believe that this should be a priority, also, that we keep. In the state of Alabama, this is one of the requirements, that each individual school district is based on their growth. Looking at this overall for years to come, we've put a lot of emphasis on the ELA, the literacy portion of it, and we've seen an increase in growth overall.

In mathematics, we have not. We've just begun to do that. I think it is a continuation of a lot of work that needs to be done. So in order to have a factor just of data to be able to look at for the growth and success of the students, this has to be a priority.

- Thank you. Dr. Katsiyannis?

- Yes, proficiency rates are very low. We have seen that from the Nation's Report Card, in the 30s, and lower when it comes to minority groups. And that applies for both literacy and mathematics.

- Thank you for sharing. Dr. Ragan-Martin.

- I agree with both my colleagues that literacy and math should be a focus for us, a priority. I mean, they're just foundational to everything. Students have to have both those literacy and numeracy skills to be able to do anything else, to be successful.

That was also prevalent in the public comments from the teachers who weighed in that they're seeing definitely the effects of COVID, with the learning loss, and that we've got to provide more intervention, more support for those students who are behind. So I definitely recommend this as being a priority.

- Thank you. Dr. Collier.

- I'll also agree with my colleagues on this as being a priority because primarily, the Title I schools are always on the lower end of the performance in math and reading. And so that is definitely an area where they need to continue to focus to try to close those learning gaps.

- Dr. Rios.

- All the performance in mathematics for reports on 4th and 8th grade have increased since 1990. There has been decreases since 2019. So the trend is declining for mathematics.

- Thank you. Yes, you make a good point, and that's in relation most likely to COVID.

- Yes.

- And I agree with Dr. Katsiyannis and Mr. Collier, that that achievement gap which we mentioned with Title I schools and minority groups is also a prevalent concern. So as we summarize the rationale for this priority, we'll move on to ideas for how the priority can be addressed through technical assistance provided by the Department.

Dr. Katsiyannis, do you have your hand raised?

- Yes. I would suggest that we increase Title I funding.

- Okay, thank you. And Dr. Collier...or Mr. Collier?

- I think that, you know, teachers need professional development to support students in the classroom in this area, so we've got to figure out a way to provide better professional development for our teachers.

- Okay, thank you. Dr. Rush?

- I believe we need to have more specialized teachers within the early years, the K through 5, to give that foundational support, more of your math coaches, your reading coaches to be able to provide that small group instruction to be able to help that proficiency rate at their earlier ages.

I do think we need to look at, as far as the secondary level, implementing some of the elementary ways, which are those math coaches, reading coaches, specific areas of Tier 1, and Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction at the secondary level, and not letting it be a silo for elementary, taking some of those fundamental areas to go all the way on that K-12 pathway.

- Thank you. And, Ms. Sweazey.

- Addressing the effects of language impairments on reading and math so that, hopefully, we can support those students. Right now, it does not seem that educators have the interventions needed to improve those skills which later affect students' outcomes.

- Okay. Thank you for the comment. Ms. Gedward? Ms. Gedward, you're on mute.

- I did it again. Sorry. If we could just stick to a curriculum longer than a year or two and let the teachers ingest how to best teach these strategies to the students instead of changing every time we get a superintendent change, everything changes.

And listening to teachers, and working with teachers. The professional developments is too many. The after-school meetings, the planning meetings, it's too much. They just need to

have...they just need to stick to a curriculum long enough to make sure that the teachers know how to teach the strategies and teach the students.

And another help that would be given to the teachers, if there are paraprofessionals or tutors assigned to the classes to work with small groups in the classrooms or outside of the classrooms to push some of the skills that the students are lacking in early elementary.

That would be a tremendous help as well.

- Thank you, Ms. Gedward. Dr. Thompson. Dr. Thompson, you're on mute. Okay, we'll move on to Dr.

Ragan-Martin.

- Yes, I'd like to just reiterate what most of my colleagues have said. Definitely also looking at the leadership development, making sure that leaders have the professional learning they need to become instructional leaders, really helping them to understand what the instructional expectations and demands are.

Looking at the funding for interventionists, looking at that funding for the professional learning that those teachers need, as well as a focus on those special ed teachers, and providing the support those students and teachers need.

- Thank you. Dr. Katsiyannis?

- Yes. I think we need to go back to the basics and focus on evidence-based elements of reading and literacy instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We know that is what we should be focusing on by the National Reading Panel, so the Department needs to emphasize and provide technical assistance to address fundamentals in reading and literacy.

- Thank you. And, Dr. Rios.

- Teaching and learning for limited-English-proficient students.

- Okay, thank you. So now we are going to call this priority to a vote. Just as a reminder, we're going to use the Raise Hand function so that we can accurately call the vote and take a screenshot.

So I am calling the vote for the Southeast RAC to include literacy and mathematics achievement as a priority. Again, to vote, if you could please raise your hand, and keep your hand raised so that we can take the screenshot and record the vote.

- Screenshot is taken.

- Thank you. If you could please kindly lower your hand...and we will move on to our next priority.

Okay, so we will begin deliberating our third priority, which is our post-secondary data. As a reminder, the needs-sensing folder included data from the National School Clearinghouse.

As a reference, the National School Clearinghouse usually includes about 95% of the students who end up moving on to college and post-secondary learning experiences. However, we were only able to include data for two jurisdictions.

Although we request the data from all jurisdictions, two of our states, I believe Florida and Alabama, do not have contracts with the National School Clearinghouse at the state level. And we were unable to get the other requests from the remaining jurisdictions. So we can begin deliberating why or why not we should include this priority.

So we can begin with Dr. Rios.

- Yes. I think because I work in higher education, so, you know, as important as is the, you know, K-12, it's important to increase attainment rates, educational attainment rates in each of the states.

- Thank you. Dr. Thompson? Ms. Averett? Dr.

Rush.

- I believe this is...I would definitely agree with Dr. Rios, this is a priority. Even though we're looking at the public ed spectrum, but past that 12th grade, we need to know what that higher ed is doing to be able to keep a balance of what we're producing as productive citizens in the multiple fields.

So we need to be able to have a focus to look at what our end is to be able to continue to have that starting point. Public ed K-12 is important, but it's also very important to know what the post-secondary and higher ed is doing as well to be able to cultivate and make it a well-balanced system.

- Thank you. Dr. Katsiyannis? Dr. Katsiyannis, you're on mute.

- My concern on this one is that we have graduation rates across the states in the 80s, and yet when it comes to students being college-ready and career, that goes down for some states to 18%. So, much needs to be done K through 12 to allow for that post-high school transition to college.

I mean, 18% versus 88%, that is truly, truly, truly depressing.

- ...for sharing. Dr. Rush, did you have your hand raised? No, okay. And Dr. Thompson, I appreciate you typing into the chat with your comments, and we'll make sure we add it to our notes.

Dr. Rios, you have your hand raised?

- Yes. Regarding my first statement, I think that I want to qualify it's educational attainment. We need to increase educational attainment. And, also, I will add that we need to address academic persistence.

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- And now we will move on to the third portion of the deliberation, which is ideas for how this priority may be addressed through technical assistance activities by the Department. Dr. Rush.

- I think putting in place policies and processes that would allow public ed, especially at the secondary level, to have a process of following up through that portion. So for instance, if you have a requirement for your 12th-grade counselors to be able to follow up with those students as they matriculate through the higher area.

And put a timeline with it. Whether it's a three to five-year process, and you have to go back and check in those domains to see what those students are doing. If they're still attending college, how well is it going, to keep that data going.

- Okay, thank you. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- I just have a clarifying question. So are we only looking at tracking post-secondary success? Or is there any college and career readiness as far as getting kids prepared in K through 12? Or is this only tracking after graduation?

- That's a good question. The data that was included in the needs-sensing folder was only after graduation, but if you feel it's important, we can add it to either the rationale or the first question that is part of this deliberation process. So you're referencing college readiness.

- College and career readiness. You know, I believe that's one of our duties and responsibilities, is to get kids ready for post-secondary success. So there's definitely a critical alignment needed between K-12 and post-secondary options, whatever that is, whether it's two-year, four-year college, university, technical colleges, even military and workforce.

So looking at that readiness component and that alignment between K-12 and what comes afterwards.

- Okay. Thank you for the comment. So we will bring this priority to a vote. As a reminder, we're going to continue using the Raise Hand function. So I call for a vote for the Southeastern RAC to include post-secondary data and achievement as a priority.

So please raise your hand to vote.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you.

Okay, we are moving on to our fourth priority. Our fourth priority was discipline.

And as a reminder, discipline disparities data was provided as a link within our needs-sensing folder.

So we'll begin the deliberation and the discussion as to why it should or should not be a priority. Dr.

Rios.

- Sorry. Sorry, I remain...my hand was up from before.

- Oh, no worries. Dr. Rush.

- I do believe that this is a priority, that we're going to have to keep looking at what we're facing in the mental health world behavior overall. As the students are coming back after COVID, we've seen a huge increase in those needs where we've had to add those services in. So I do think that is something that is critical for the success because this is going to work hand-in-hand.

If the behavior is out of control in the classrooms, you're gonna have teacher burnout, less teacher retention, it's going to be a fallout of multiple things that we've discussed prior. So I think it is a huge need.

- Thank you. Dr. Katsiyannis?

- Yes. The disproportionate effect that disciplinary exclusions have on minority students, particularly African Americans and Native Americans.

- Thank you. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- I agree, especially with that focus on mental health. So it's not just discipline, it is mental health, it is dysregulation of students, it is their inability to be able to regulate their emotions, and all of that goes into their behavior, which, of course, turns into discipline.

So I definitely think it's all connected, and I know that teachers are seeing more and more extreme behaviors. I know in Georgia, we get requests from counselors for support, different needs that they need to support teachers in the classroom.

So all of this, as Dr. Rush said, goes on to the teacher as far as teacher burnout, their inability to deal with certain behaviors in the classroom. So I definitely think this needs to be a priority.

- Thank you. Mr. Collier?

- Yes, I agree with my colleagues, discipline is always going to be an issue in our school settings. One of the things that's still prevalent is bullying behavior. We haven't really got our grips around bullying, which ultimately impacts suicide rates and mental health.

I was speaking to a parent the other day where there was a middle school student had been bullied, was a victim, and he was harmed so much so that the kid brought a sledgehammer to school that he was going to use to retaliate against the perpetrator. So bullying behavior is still prevalent.

- Okay, thank you. Now we'll ask for some ideas on how the priority can be addressed through technical assistance activities by the Department.

Dr. Rush.

- I think we need to have policies around the mental health area for our individual schools. I think we need to have a huge policy that is pushed down, that gives structure, funding, all of the above to be able to do that.

Right now you have individual school districts that are doing it, individual states that are doing it, but I think it needs to be an overall umbrella that encompass everything from those areas, because I think it's going to be a growing problem, and the more we don't give that funding or that support to it, the bigger the problem is going to be.

- Ms. Sweazey?

- Professional development that addresses de-escalation for administrators and educators so that we can reduce the suspension and expulsion rates.

- Mr. Collier, is your hand raised?

- No, but I can make one comment about providing support for a school-wide discipline framework that, you know, is consistent and uniform across the school and school district.

- Thank you. Dr. Ragan-Martin.

- I agree with my colleagues, really looking at the policies around mental health, the funding, the professional learning, not only for teachers, but for counselors and for administrators, so they know how to handle situations, definitely de-escalation. Just looking at supports for students and for families as they navigate mental health, trying to help them connect to resources in their communities.

So any sort of support we can provide for those local schools would be greatly appreciated.

- Dr. Rios?

- Yes, training on psychological first aid for students and teachers, particularly after major incidents, for example, shootings, or other events that cause trauma.

- And, Dr. Katsiyannis?

- Yes, MTSS, like positive behavioral intervention supports, where we have evidence-based practices implemented and data-driven decisions.

- Okay, thank you. Dr. Rush?

- I was just also going to say to look at the mere fact of wraparound services for school districts. That would encompass, simply, like some of my colleagues were saying, those services of having social workers in the building, counselors in the building that have that traumatic background, that they'll be able to have that support.

So having a wraparound service that may service a school district or individual schools or within its own...that calls for funding, but that would be a great help to the public ed area.

- Thank you. And, Ms. Averett?

- Yes, I just wanna piggyback off of Dr. Rush. My thinking is that a lot of times we make plans within the school system or in the school, but we don't include the people that we need to support us. So any trainings that we have as a district or a school, we need to involve the community that we expect to help us get the discipline or the mental health in place.

So if we're going to ask the police officers to come to the school and maybe remove a student, we need to include them in our processes so they know how to address the students, and how to handle that situation so that it's not like you're handling a criminal on the street, so it looks different.

- Thank you for the comment. Okay, we're going to bring this... Oh, I'm sorry, we have one more comment. Dr. Rios.

- Yes, just to add psychological first aid as a training for in the schools, specifically psychological first aid. Thank you.

- Thank you. Okay, we're going to be bringing this one to a vote. So we're bringing the priority of discipline to a vote. I call for a vote for the Southeast Region RAC to include discipline as a priority. Please raise your hand, and leave it raised for the screenshot, please.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you.

If you would kindly lower your hand, and we'll begin the deliberation with our last priority, which is attendance. The data that was provided for attendance were links that were provided within the needs-sensing folder, and they included data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress on the KIDS COUNT Data Center, which is Attendance Works.

There was also information regarding the spike in absenteeism recorded during the pandemic, and then national trends from the National Center for Education Statistics. So we'll begin with our deliberation process about why or why not this should be a priority. Yes, Dr. Rush?

- I think this is a priority as well. If the students are not there, then they cannot be educated. I do think with this attendance, we need to look at the adult attendance as well, to have them running simultaneously, so accountability for teachers and accountability for students.

And I think that accountability also needs to have a link to the parents because there are no elementary students that can drive themselves there, so we're going to have to have accountability in every area, adults and students. But we need to look at those policies and procedures to encompass that, but at the same time not look at that punitive effect when it comes to attendance.

The first thing we do when they miss so many days is truancy and things of that nature, don't have them in school, suspension. Well, they've not been there, so that defeats the purpose. So looking at things, how you can be able to have that accountability process in place, but not a punitive way that is still going to stack those days where they're not there to be educated.

- Thank you. Ms. Sweazey?

- I think definitely addressing that punitive piece, because some of these students who are having these attendance issues are school refusal students. So they don't want to go to school, their parents have burnt out, and providing those punishments is not going to get them there any easier. Parents need support to deal with these issues.

- Thank you. Dr. Rios?

- If parents or caregivers didn't have a positive experience, it presents challenges for the children they're responsible for. And also, there's an issue of trust in the school system, particularly in some communities that are underserved.

- Thank you. And now we'll continue the deliberation with ideas that the Department can address through technical assistance activities. Dr. Rush?

- I think looking at personnel that is devoted to attendance, this could be attendance officers within the schools, but having someone that makes this as a priority.

It's difficult for the principal or the office staff to do it with everything else that is going on, but having that devoted person that looks at the attendance, local, school based, and also district based. This will require funding, but I think this needs to be a part of a policy or procedure. The more we can have direct expectations put in place by an individual, the more effective it will be for the students and the adults.

- Thank you. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- So I think this is really climate and culture. So if we're looking at training for especially administrators, school leaders, how to develop positive climate and culture to make schools a welcoming place, not only for students, but for families.

Some of my colleagues said, you know, if parents had a bad experience in schools, it's more difficult for them to encourage their children to go to school. So I think really looking at the

training about how to establish that positive climate and culture would be really important. I also think this ties in to mental health, making sure that not only students and families but also teachers are in a good place mentally to be able to provide that positive atmosphere in their classrooms.

So I definitely think there's some overlap with the discipline and the mental health component as we're talking about environment and atmosphere.

- Thank you. Ms. Sweazey.

- Addressing the healthcare needs of both the students and the school staff. Since COVID, there's been many illnesses floating around, and that's definitely preventing attendance as well as all the other issues involved.

- Thank you for that comment. Mr. Collier?

- Yes, I agree with the comment that Dr. Ragan spoke about. I think relationship-building between teachers and students is paramount, because when students are coming to classroom and they don't feel welcome, do not feel invited, they don't feel like they're included in part of the learning, it's going to impact attendance.

And so I think we have to make that a priority between development and what type of relationship is being built between teachers and students in the classroom.

- Thank you. Ms. Averett?

- Yes, I just want to add, I think somehow we need to figure out or have a conversation with the students to see why the students do not want to come to school or what's their reasoning for not attending. So I think if we start there and then build upon that, we may have a better result.

- Thank you. Dr. Rios?

- I'm on mute, yeah. I have three. Number one, how to...basic needs, how to address basic needs, such as food, you know, shelter.

Mental health was already mentioned. How we really create true communities of learners that engage parents and caregivers more and also that focus on learning outside the classroom.

- Thank you. Dr. Rush.

- I also think we need to look at the culture and climate professional development for all involved for the adults. It goes back to where Ms. Averett was saying, having those conversations. In order for us to be able to help the students and know their background, and be able to support them when they're not wanting to come to school, we have to have a conducive culture and climate within our own school buildings.

So being able to have that professional development for each of those schools, that would in turn being able to give them the keys to get in and see what is going on with those students and being able to determine what is the best fit for those students. But, again, building that trust, you won't have those relationships or that trust if you don't have that type of climate.

So that professional development will be huge.

- Thank you. Ms. Sweazey, do you have your hand raised? No, okay. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- I just wanted to agree with Ms. Averett and Dr. Rush, and also Mr. Collier, definitely, relationships are important, and also, that cultural awareness. Because sometimes teachers, if they're not familiar with a student's culture, it's like they speak a different language sometimes.

And not only literally, but sometimes metaphorically, like, they're speaking a different language if they're using words that students are not familiar with, just words that they're not hearing in their household. So definitely looking at that professional development, how to connect with students who are different or who have different cultures or just different backgrounds, I think, is really important.

- Okay, thank you. Next, we're going to call this priority to a vote. So I call for a vote for the Southeast Region RAC to include attendance as a priority. Please raise your hand if you vote for this as a priority.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you.

Okay, so next we're going to transition to our report assignments. I believe we're going back to the slide deck. So as we mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, the committee, we will establish subcommittees that...or multiple subcommittees that will help summarize the committee's findings and recommendations that were provided through the needs-sensing assessment report.

We can have multiple committees that address the different priorities that we've voted on today. So as a reminder, we have five priorities that we have identified. One of the recommendations would be that if you are an individual that provided data into the needs-sensing folder, that you might consider serving on the committee for that priority when it comes to writing the assessment report.

So at this time, I'll ask if anyone wants to self-nominate a member to join the writing subcommittee. Ms. Sweazey, I see your hand is raised. Oh, no.

Dr. Rush, is your hand raised? You're on mute.

- Yes.

- Okay, so you're nominating yourself for the writing for a particular priority?

- No. I'm sorry, I'm hearing two different conversations. I do apologize. I thought we was answering if that was something that we needed.

- Okay. We're trying to nominate individuals for the writing subcommittee. Dr. Ragan-Martin?

- I'm happy to help with any of the subcommittees. I'm particularly interested in the teacher recruitment and retention, but I can help with any of them.

- Okay. So we can put you down for teacher recruitment and retention. Dr. Rios?

- Yes, I want to collaborate with the post-secondary recommendation report.

- Thank you. Dr. Katsiyannis?

- Discipline.

- Ms. Gedward?

- I would love to work on teacher retention.

- Ms. Sweazey?

- Discipline.

- Ms. Rush?

- Do we have anyone for lit and maths thus far?

- I don't believe so.

- I'll take it.

- Okay. And I realize that I should have asked for a second for the nominations. I'm sorry, that was my fault. So we'll start, and just recap. We'll start with the...working backwards. So do I hear a second for Ms. Rush for literacy and mathematics achievement?

If you could just raise your hand. Okay, so we have that second. Thank you. For discipline, we have Ms. Sweazey. If you could please raise your hand for a second. Thank you.

For Dr. Katsiyannis...I'm sorry, I can't understand what I wrote. Dr. Katsiyannis, you nominated yourself for?

- Discipline.

- Discipline.

- Discipline. Okay. So if I could have a second, please? Thank you. Okay, so Dr. Rios, I have her nominated for post-secondary.

- Yes.

- If I could have a second? Thank you. And for Dr. Ragan-Martin, I have you nominated for teacher retention and recruitment. If I could have a second? And we also have Ms. Gedward, if I could have a second for her as well, please.

Thank you. Okay, so we've just reviewed our accepted priorities. As a reminder, the committee members will lead the priorities that we've just reviewed, and the subcommittees will meet to determine how these needs will...how to complete the needs of the assessment writing.

As a reminder, the subcommittee may include additional educational issues that were not considered, but during the time of writing the report may be considered for the Department. And then we will review the timelines in a minute, but our Manhattan Strategy Group liaison will support writing the assessment and conduct the one-voicing of the final product.

This is the assessment timeline for the report. So our liaison will facilitate the subcommittee meetings to create the draft for the assessment report, and the timeline for that is by November 2nd.

The subcommittee will draft an assessment, the assessment report, to the liaison by November 3rd, and then the full committee will have an opportunity to review the assessment by November 13th. A third meeting will be scheduled by this committee, and that's tentative, and it has not been scheduled. It will be scheduled between November 14th and 16th for a final vote on the report, and the report is scheduled to be delivered to the Secretary on November 17th.

- Thank you so much, Dr. Riaz, for leading that discussion. Thank you, all, for your time and for your engagement.

Does anyone have any questions or comments before we adjourn the meeting?

- Just one quick question. Is there a particular format that you would like that drafted in? Will there be an example that's sent? Or can we just formulate it as we see fit, according to the data that was in our files?

- Thanks, Dr. Rush. Tara, do you have any thoughts on that?

- Yes, there is a template that follows the outline that we went over, and it's in your folder. Because everybody will be working on one document at one time, we will just leave it as a Word document right now, but that will give everybody the opportunity to kind of see what everybody else is writing, so you can...they'll be easy to pull up during your meetings, you can write comments on it that way, and then, you know, we'll pull it into a nice template once everything gets cleaned up after that writing process.

And I just want to quickly note, I put who I had captured as the writers for each of the sections, if we want to just double-check that. Did we have somebody nominated for attendance?

- I was going to say if I need to pick that up, I can, if you need me to.

- Okay, thank you. Yeah, I wanted to make sure I hadn't missed that, but I did not have that listed in my notes. So I guess I'll turn it over to Dr. Riaz, then, for the nomination process, then, for the attendance.

- Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Ragan-Martin. So we have a nomination for Dr. Ragan-Martin for attendance. Do we have a second to that nomination? Thank you, Ms.

Sweazey, and Mr. Collier, and Dr. Rush.

- Thank you. Any more questions or comments?

- So, one more time about the writing groups, I mean, when do we start? I mean, how do we start?

All that stuff. Can you go over that process one more time, please?

- Sure. So the subcommittees will be able to meet... So within the next 24 hours, we'll be contacting you for schedules, so look for times when you can come together and begin that process. I know it looks like there's a couple people that will be writing on their own, so I would just, you know, recommend getting started working with the chair to make sure that your thoughts, your processes all make sense, it's in agreement with the committee.

The notes I took, I will do some cleaning up, but those also are available in the folder, so you'll have the bullet points from...the highlights today from the data. So, again, you know, that first section of the report for each priority really focuses on that justification of why this is important for your region, so you can go with, you know, the data that you collected, the discussion we had today.

It might be the statistics from the reports that have been uploaded. I know with the teacher retention, there's a focus group, so you can pull on all of that information. And then you had, you know, a great discussion today about those technical assistance recommendations that you want to pull together, and so that would just, again, be writing out why you think that those are good recommendations or why you need those.

So go back to the... Again, you know, you just want to make a clear rationale justification for why this is a priority for your region, and, again, the discussion you had today is the starting point for that, and then what recommendations you would make to the report. And I can see...yeah, so you can structure this as one writing subcommittee or multiple, as long as each of your subcommittees has less than a quorum of the members.

So each of your subcommittees needs to be half of the members, because a quorum is half plus one, so you need to fall under that, but then you can have multiple people working on these sections. So even though you were nominated for these sections today, do feel free to reach out and support one another as you're putting the sections together.

I mean, this is coming from you, so this is your interpretation of the data, your rationale, you know, for why you want this. So we're here to support and can provide the questions, but we want to make sure that this is coming from your voice and your interpretation of why this is a priority for your region.

Dr. Rios, do you have your hand up with a question?

- Yes, I have a question. So just clarification, so there's going to be a report done by each region? Or they recompile all of the ones for all the regions?

- Each region will be submitting a report.

- Thank you.

- Thank you, Tara. Are there any other questions or comments? All right. Well, thank you, all, so much again for your time this morning.

It's greatly, greatly appreciated. I will now move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southeast Region, so may all committee members concur by stating, "Aye."

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- [Together] Aye.

- Aye.

- Thank you.

- Aye. Thank you so much. All right, this meeting is adjourned. On Wednesday, October 11th, 2023, the meeting from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Eastern time is adjourned at 10:30 a.m. Eastern. Thank you all very much, and hope you have a wonderful day.

- Thank you. Bye-bye.