RAC-Southwest Region
Meeting #2
October 12, 2023

- [Bekka] The meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southwest Region. My name is Bekka Meyer, and I am the designated federal official from the U.S. Department of Education. I'd just like to remind everybody that this meeting is open to members of the public, and will be recorded for the public record. We are going to start the meeting by conducting roll call. So when I call your name, please come off mute, and indicate that you are present.

Margo Kickingbird DeLaune. Danielle Mitchell? Jane Nell Guyer Luster? Elisa Begueria.

- [Elisa] Here.

- Thank you. Richard Bowman? Stephanie Thompson?

- [Stephanie T.] Present.

- Thank you. Anya Dozier Enos?

- [Anya] Present.

- Thank you. Dudley Darrow?

- Stephanie Hinton?

- Jennifer Chidsey?

- [Jen C.] Present.

- Thank you. Nilam Agrawal?

- [Nilam] Yes, Nilam Agrawal, present.

- Thank you. Dr. Sylvia Leal?

- [Dr. Leal] Present.

- And Dr. Lesley Casarez?

- [Dr. Casarez] Present.

- Okay. I'm going to check really quickly to see if we have any members who are in the public link. I don't see anyone. For my colleagues, we have 13 members and 7 are present. Is that...does that constitute a quorum?

Or should we technically have 8? Okay, we will go ahead and proceed, then, with this meeting. Thank you all for making time to be here.

We really appreciate it. All right, you'll see that we have the agenda listed here. We've already done the call to order and the roll call, we're going to go over the objectives for the meeting. We'll review the assessment report outline, provide an overview of the needs-sensing activities that occurred, deliberate on priorities and recommendations, vote on those priorities, discuss the assessment, assignments, and timeline, vote to establish subcommittees, and then adjourn.

Also, just a reminder that to engage, you can use the chat feature, and you can also raise your hand, and be called on to speak. So here are the meeting objectives. First of all, we will review the additional input received from any stakeholders, and the public comments that were received.

Number two, based on the information that was received, we will finalize the assessment of the critical educational needs of this region. Number three, we'll deliberate on the education needs assessment for the region, and finalize recommendations to be included in the final report. And number four, establish subcommittees to complete the final report. Let's see, the assessment report outline, I believe this is you, Jen.

- [Jen] Yep. All right, so just an overview of what we'll be doing, or what you all will be doing soon. The assessment will begin with a discussion of the information that has been collected, and it will provide a general summary of the committee's findings.

That's the first part. And then next, the reports will review the committee's proposed priorities and recommendations, and the agreed-upon recommendations must address the following questions, why is it a priority? How will you explain to the Department that this is a priority? And what technical assistance can the Department provide to address this priority?

Also, 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 that's also something that could be considered during this report drafting, yep. And what we have here is just the report assessment outline.

So you can see that generally speaking, this is what it will look like. We'll have the cover page introduction, there'll be an executive summary, the introduction, as we noted before, which is basically what you did to collect the information. Then you have...or why you did

that. Then the data collection itself, what were your methods, who did you outreach to, public comments, right?

We have a ton of that. Regional educational leadership, perhaps people reached out to the different roles. You also have summary of findings. So that's the overall summary that the data leads you to, and then that's the next in the discussion of priorities. After you go over your findings, then you have an opportunity to talk about and write about the recommendations.

So a couple components that should be included in this aspect of the report would be supporting strong instruction in academic achievement, supporting teachers, supporting student educator well-being, effective technical assistance, and other priorities, if that is applicable. And then you've got the remainder, conclusion, and appendix.

- Okay. Thank you, Jen, for providing that brief overview. I'm Stephanie Thompson, and what I'd like to say, first of all, is I want to express my gratitude for your participation in this committee.

Your efforts in engaging with stakeholders, and analyzing the data is appreciated. So thank you for investing your time and energy in this important committee activity. And so we'll begin with a review of the needs-sensing activities that were completed. We actually had committee feedback that was synthesized to identify priorities.

An online survey was created, and priorities from the survey data were identified, and with that, the needs-sensing matrix was completed. Knowledge or data in existence regard to the ranked priorities were collected and linked, and the data for priorities with lower levels of knowledge or information were also collected.

Now, we had nine needs that were identified and were part of the online survey, and those needs were broadband access rates and issues, teacher hiring and teacher retention challenges and successes, issues related to social, emotional, and mental well-being, opportunity gaps among groups of learners, issues related to identification of students with disability, teacher preparation, challenges, and successes, career technical education, CTE, and post-secondary opportunities, non-academic outcomes, such as discipline and

[inaudible 00:08:22] and creation and implementation of curriculum aligned with standards. So out of the nine needs, there were actually five that were top priorities, and those five are broadband access rates and issues, teacher preparation and retention, opportunity gaps among different groups of learners, career technical education, CTE, and post-secondary opportunities, and creation and implementation of curriculum outlined with standards.

So that covered the overview of the needs-sensing matrix. Now, next we'll discuss each of the top five priorities, and we will allow 10 minutes for each priority. As mentioned earlier, our liaison, Jen, will be taking notes, and I believe sharing the screen. And then with that,

we'll finish discussing each priorities in which we will vote as to whether to include that priority or not.

So with that, we'll begin with priority one. Priority one is broadband access rates and issues. The three questions that are going to be discussed is why it should and shouldn't be a priority, explanation of why this is a priority, and ideas on types of supports that can be provided to the Department, and how they can support the priority.

And with that, it is now open to the floor for discussion.

- I'll go ahead and get started. At least for rural students, which we have so many rural students, not only here in Texas and across the Southwest, but I'm sure across the country, who we found out during the pandemic were really at a huge disadvantage for educational needs when they did not have broadband to continue their education at the same opportunity that students in more well-connected broadband areas were.

And so for that reason, I anticipate that this will not be the first time...or the last time that we will have this situation in our country, but rather that we should prepare and be ready to assist our rural students the best we can by finding ways to close that digital divide. And the second thing is that that lack of broadband also deters their preparation in the digital landscape today of the 21st century.

And so for those reasons, I strongly advocate that this should still be a priority across our country, in light of what we just went through, though the pandemic. Thank you.

- Thank you.

- This is Nilam. I'm here. I wanted to give a second perspective on that. I think the concern that many families have faced is that sometimes the curriculum and lesson plans are limited only on the computer. And at that time, it is not always the best and most accessible method, especially for children with disabilities.

So while we definitely need broadband access, we also have to look into the accessibility aspect of that, and we have to make sure that that is not one catch-all basket for every student. Because all said and done, the school district, along with the parents, should have the opportunity to combine the lesson plans and the instructions that best meets that child's need. So I think that part should be included while we are discussing that.

- Elsa?

- Yes, ma'am. Elisa, thank you.

- Elisa, I'm sorry.

- No, you're fine, Stephanie. Nilam, may I ask for a clarification? Because my understanding of this priority, it was more like the access. I didn't think that we were talking about full

teaching and learning through, you know, the internet, or any kind of like, virtual learning. So are we talking about providing access to broadband?

Or are we talking about teaching and learning through the internet?

- Okay. So thank you, Elisa, for asking that, because in that case, my understanding could have been not complete.

- Yes. And I don't know, so...

- Yes, even I don't know. Because if we are talking about everything, and we are talking about digital access, and like Dr. Sylvia was mentioning, COVID did present a unique learning environment and need for our students. And at that time, there were many school districts here in Texas who totally suspended IEP, and they were not catering.

So while we are addressing the broadband access and issues, I feel that if we are making a comment, we should be encompassing all the different attributes and the variables which will make broadband access truly accessible for every child. That's what I thought, you know? So maybe we are just talking about the need for broadband access. Yes, definitely, because we are in a digital world right now, and the kind of knowledge and information that the students can tap into is huge, and every school district should be providing that opportunity.

But then, do the school districts provide those one-on-one computers to the students? How do we establish the internet access? Those are all the other questions that we also have to think about.

- Yes. Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Thank you, Nilam.

- Thank you.

- And I thought that we were just talking about broadband access. One point that I wanted to bring, and thank you, Dr. Leal, I'm in a rural area here in New Mexico, so I totally understand what you're saying, and I'm completely in favor of adopting this priority. I also want us to think about the amount of time that our students spend on the bus, because sometimes it can be like an hour and a half.

And having some wireless points on the bus for them to start working on their homework, or so... I mean, it's important. So just a consideration, for us to think about transportation, and how that looks like for our students in rural areas that spend a lot of time on the bus. Thank you.

- Thank you for sharing that. Dr. Enos?

- Thank you. And I'm in agreement that this should remain a priority, for many of the reasons that were stated. And I do appreciate the clarification, because I am thinking of broadband access very broadly, in addition to the points that were already raised in support of it.

Good broadband access is necessary for communications and safety, and as mentioned earlier, in New Mexico, so many rural areas do not have that kind of access, and it makes it difficult for schools to communicate with families, families to communicate with schools, as well as families having access to safety, you know, emergency response, and things like that.

So I think in terms of not just the support for the academic learning, but also for the support of the whole child, the broadband access is a very important priority.

- And I just want to follow up with that, the points that I was making earlier about rural... I want to clarify that this was not an issue of lack of devices for the students, nor the lack of the will of educators to get information to the students.

When everybody flipped over to virtual learning in an area, a remote area of where I live in East Texas, there are still many areas that simply do not have broadband at all. I mean, anyone. It's regardless of class, or regardless of access to a device, there really isn't broadband.

Hard to believe in the 21st century, but a mere fact that we have many areas in our rural settings that simply do not have access to any kind of broadband at all, regardless of what background you're coming from, it's just not there. So that put our students, during this educational situation, at a very huge disadvantage.

So anyway, I just wanted to share that.

- Again, this is Stephanie Thompson. I am in agreement that broadband is a priority. I mean, when I think about the rural community, I think about the students within those communities, which I see as untapped talent. And knowing that we're headed towards a digital world, why not tap into those resources that the talent of the students have to sort of leverage what it looks like going forward.

I think just kind of giving them that opportunity to, you know, utilize the talents that they have within them.

- Yeah. I just wanted to add a couple points. I agree with everything that people are saying. I think it's, for some of the small rural communities in Texas that we've been talking about, and I'm sure other states as well that have those, there's a community, like, enhancement issue of broadband as well, where people have different work opportunities when they're there for that, and when the broadband is fulfilling them, the community is more supported, and people are more likely to stay in that community.

So that's one piece of a kind of sidebar benefit. But also, I think we should put some kind of note in here also about cybersecurity related to broadband. Because just having broadband access and improving that also then raises the need for making sure that there's not, you know, additional threat being introduced because of the cybersecurity.

So just to call out that. Thank you. I'm off camera a lot because I'm actually very sick today. So I want to be in this meeting, but I don't really want you all to see me, so I kind of got back off camera.

- Thank you. And just for a clarification here, were we supposed to add ideas on types of support that we're needing the Department to provide for this priority? I know we have a minute, or less than a minute left... Am I correct in saying that?

- Yeah. Let's see...yes.

- Yes. Oh...

- Go ahead.

- Yeah, maybe you could talk about some technical assistance that could be offered for each priority, too.

- I'm going to cut and paste some stuff in the chat. We can see if this is where it goes. I don't know if they are Department supports, but it looks like they are ideas that folks are suggesting. Go ahead, while I do that.

- Okay. So with that, does anyone have any other ideas on the types of support the Department could provide for this?

- I'll go ahead and just share... Oh, sorry. My perspective is that this is probably not isolated to the Department of Education, but rather that the Department of Education needs to advocate for the opportunity to get federal assistance to close that gap across rural settings so that students have proper access.

So I don't know if it's any specific technical assistance from the Department, other than advocating, in my opinion, strongly advocating for us. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

- Elisa?

- Sorry, I'll just... Oh, go ahead, Elisa.

- No, no, no, you've been waiting. Go ahead.

- Oh.

- Thank you. So I think technical assistance in the form of education for school personnel to understand the depths of needs related to broadband access, and some of those were mentioned earlier, such as the, you know, the cybersecurity.

In addition to that, I know that during the pandemic, many schools thought the solution was providing hotspots. Many of our rural communities are not able to access hotspots. It's not

just that they can't get to the hotspots, but for example in my own home, my cell and internet access is such that I can't use a hotspot.

I can't... And so for the school personnel to understand that broadband access has these complexities, I think that would be wonderful technical assistance.

- Good point. Thank you. I just wanted to just highlight the need for funding with this. I know that it's not always the answer, but you know, we have been using in ESSER funds during all this time, and those are going away. So, you know, it just leaves the school districts a little bit just like, hanging in there, you know, to cover these expenses.

- Okay. Thank you for sharing that. So with that, I believe we are at a 10-minute time here for this discussion on this priority? Okay.

So with that, are we ready to vote? So... So members, as I call the vote, please use your Raise Hand function so that we can accurately call the vote and take a screenshot for record.

I call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to include broadband access rate and issues as a priority.

- [Anne] Screenshot taken.

- Thank you. So broadband access rate and issues is a priority determined by the Southwest RAC.

So with that, we've got our final count, we will move on over to priority two, which is teacher preparation and retention. Again, we've got 10 minutes to discuss why it should be a priority, an explanation of why it is a priority, and ideas on types of support that can be provided to the Department on how they can support this teacher preparation and retention.

So, open to the floor for discussion. All right, Jennifer?

- Sorry, if my hand is still up, it's unintended. I don't know how to put it down.

- I can begin the conversation. I think that this should be a priority. I mean, we need our teachers, we need them prepared, we need to retain them. I mean, they are the key, because we know how research shows that a teacher can make a whole difference, right?

This is like, the main factor on student achievement and learning. So to me, some of the things that we can work on is kind of like a little bit of help with licensure, right? I mean, like, we get a lot of teachers that come from alternative pathways, and we need some support with licensure. So let's just be creative.

Let's just think a little bit differently and see what we can do about that. In my dreams, I would love to have these teachers come into my schools, and have, like, a full year that they can be, you know, with a mentor teacher, and observing and learning and absorbing, but you

know, I know that that is very difficult. So how can we provide these opportunities? And then the coaching, the coaching part is what I believe that it makes a big difference.

So I think every new teacher should have a coach for a minimum of three years. And I'm not talking about a mentor. A mentor is a person that can help them with content. I'm talking about a coach, you know, an instructional coach, that can help them with the practice. And I think that if we do those things, we would retain them. And of course, salaries, right? We want our teachers to have a quality of life.

So with that, I will stop.

- I'll chime in. I completely agree with Elisa. We need to really take a critical look at teacher preparation. I think teacher preparation is very important, especially in areas such as early literacy, helping students learning to read.

The early years are very important. We just went through... I think, I was reading somewhere that we're just now coming to the third year, coming out of this whole disruptive educational situation that we had with the pandemic, and we have young children that are struggling to read, missed out on some critical instruction. It's important that the teachers that are in our classrooms, and that are coming out of our teacher preparation programs fully understand how to help students learn to read, lest we lose a whole generation of students to struggle with reading in the forthcoming years, if not already.

So I strongly believe teacher preparation should be a critical point that we look at, and I think the Department can step in closer to look at teacher preparation programs. What are they including?

How are teachers being prepared to help students, especially students in young grades, learn how to read? Is it aligned to evidence-based learning and such? Thank you.

- Thank you.

- This is Nilam. I agree with what Dr. Sylvia, and Elisa has been saying. It is very critical for us to invest in our teachers and support them. And it is important for them to have access to quality, evidence-based instructional practices at the college prep level when they are in the teacher's prep universities.

We all know [inaudible 00:29:34] and the controversies surrounded with balanced literacy, and the new data supports that our students are not reading at grade level. When 67% of the graduating class in high school are graduating reading below fourth-grade level, that's a huge concern for us.

So I just wanted to expand the scope of this, because special education teachers do not even get that basic teaching literacy skills that general education teachers receive. And our

experiences have been that they struggle a lot because they want to help our children, but they do not have the required training and support needed to do that.

So while we are talking about teacher investment in literacy, let's not forget our special education teachers, and let's make sure that they are equipped and supported equally. I do not know if this is the time, and we can also talk about expanding the scope of our education to make sure that each and every general education teacher also receives some credit and exposure in special education, because all special education children are general education students first.

So that would make sure that everyone is working in sync. Specially designed instruction is another area that keeps coming up. So maybe if there is a way to include that during teacher training, and...that would be great. Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Those were excellent points. If I can add to that, the bilingual emerging students, like our bilingual teachers, I think it's just making the same points that Nilam was highlighting, we have the same needs for our bilingual students and teachers.

- And I would like to share that teacher preparation and retention I say is a priority. And the rationale for it is that, you know, if we don't have that, it'll negatively impact student education achievement. And so I have some ideas that, you know, we may provide the Department is, you know, looking at, you know, investigating staff, or manage workloads, or the classroom size, or, you know, the need to support more students, and even engaging family support programs in which, you know, there's access to counselors or mental health professionals.

Those are just ideas out there.

- This is Nilam again. I just wanted to add to that, saying that maybe the Department should also look into what is the best instructional method for literacy, given our acute illiteracy facing our students.

- I also think one of the things maybe the Department of Education can do is to think about student...what is it, allocations that are given out from the federal government to assist students in need needs to be rethought.

It may not be aligned with what the real cost is today to educate children in our schools today. And that might be a way to also alleviate some of the stress that school districts are having, to try to address all of these issues. Formula funding I guess is the thing I was thinking of.

- So are there any more discussions around teacher preparation and retention?

- Pardon my ignorance, but does teacher preparation also include practicum for all teachers, in all teaching environments? And if not, maybe if we could emphasize that, that could be a part of the teacher training...

...the practicum.

- Okay. With that, we are again approaching 10 minutes, so are we ready to vote?

So members, as I call the vote, please use the Raise Hand teacher function so that we can accurately call the vote, and take a screenshot for a record. I call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to include teacher preparation and retention as a priority.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you.

So teacher preparation and retention is a priority determined by the Southwest RAC. And with that, we'll move on over to priority three, which is opportunity gaps among different groups of learners. Again, we will have a discussion around why it should be a priority, an explanation of why it is a priority, and ideas on types of support that can be provided to the Department on how to support this priority.

So with that, it's open to the floor for discussion.

- This is Nilam. I will go first. I think it is an absolute requirement, and very much a priority for us, because when we mean literacy for all and education for all, it means all students. And I was poring over the report that we have received from different states, and I have been very concerned, particularly when I was looking at special education, and the low rate of graduation of students with disabilities, with a regular diploma, compared to general education students, and the dropout rate among them, the low literacy scores.

And this then gets even more complicated when we start looking into further demographics, like children who are African American, children who are Hispanic, children who are multiracial, or immigrants, what if they also have an additional disability? And this becomes very complicated, and this is something that has been shared by parents and educators during the public comments, where in the state of Texas, deafblindness, dyslexia, the comorbidity of dyslexia and deafblind and sensory-impaired students, their identification, their literacy scores, etc., kept coming up.

So I definitely believe that we need further investigation. There was one particular request that I made, which I was not able to find, and it was the literacy scores as per each category of disability. So there is a huge discrepancy in the numbers that can be looked at from the general presumed understanding for certain categories.

I can speak for deafblindness because I'm a national leader for the deafblind community, and I see an under-identification of the number of students under this eligibility, and that for me is a child [inaudible 00:37:35] failure, plain and simple. So what are we doing? And if we are not identifying the children, are we appropriately meeting all their needs? And if we are not meeting all their needs, is it that is what is causing the low literacy scores?

Along with that, the responsibility of the school district does not just end there. There also has to be very strong post-secondary transition, and I think that area should also be covered here.

- Dr. Sylvia Leal? You're on mute.

- Thank you. I just wanted a little more clarification, if you can, Stephanie, if you have any information as to what is this category? What is that about, the opportunity gap of different groups of learners? Are we looking at collecting data? Are we talking about curriculum? Or everything involved?

I'm not sure where this title is kind of leaning towards.

- That title is...I guess when I went... And I don't know if there's anybody else on the call that could provide clarification to that?

- Well... Okay, go ahead.

- Was someone speaking? I didn't want to speak over.

- Jen, go ahead, and then I'll make my comments after, - All right. So this collapses a few of your priorities, because for example, as Nilam mentioned, special...students with disabilities may have different opportunities to receive instruction in the way that they need it compared to students who don't have disabilities.

We also may see that some different groups of learners may have higher rates of suspension, and that could obviously impact their academic performance, their non-academic performance as well. Students who are bilingual, for example, may have different opportunities, or not have opportunities that other learners may have.

So that's capturing all of your different types of learners, as well as their academic needs, as well as "non-academic needs," I guess.

- Thank you. Thank you for that clarification. I just wanted to share that I completely agree that we, as an educational community, must continue to look at a disaggregated approach to data. And that means looking at as many of these student populations as possible to understand the disparities and the gaps between student populations, so that we as educators can continue to diagnose and provide support services to students most in need.

And we won't be able to do that unless we continue to explore that data disaggregation. So I don't know if that's where that was going for, but I strongly believe that we must continue to collect data in as many different ways as we can, including as many student populations as possible, to be able to understand what we need to do as educators.

Thank you.

- All right. Dr. Enos?

- Yeah, I agree that this should continue to be a priority. In New Mexico, a few years ago, in the Yazzie/Martinez court case in New Mexico, the finding was that New Mexico was underserving Native American, Hispanic, and special education students.

And work has been done to propose providing equity in education, but there are still huge problems, and so it continues to be a priority.

- Thank you.

- This is Nilam again. I wanted to add access to learning materials also under this. Because a lot of the subgroup of student learners, they need adaptive learning materials, especially middle school and high school, and there are no options available. Especially for children who want to do large print. Not everyone is a great learner. Children who are doing ASL, they do not get it.

Children who are native Spanish speakers, and they are bilingual, they do not get those materials. So large print also, we do not have large print resources.

- [crosstalk 00:42:51.340] if I may, I would like to add also, because I agree, and I think this is a priority, and I'm in New Mexico, with Jesse Martinez, and I mean, we're still observing a lot of inequalities. And I think that we need to improve the way that we do professional development.

After we look at that data, you know, and by different populations, I agree with Dr. Leal, we need to be training our teachers on how to educate all our special needs students, and English language learners.

And what we do is we just provide that training for the special ed teachers and for the bilingual teachers, and they are the ones that they don't need it the most, right? It's the regular ed teachers, the teachers that have the students in the class most of the time, right, that they need that support. So I think that we need to once again rethink how are we doing things. We're doing really good things, but we're not reaching everybody that needs it.

I agree with Nilam about the materials, and also the assessment. I think that we need to be thinking about assessment. We differentiate for a lot of things, but we don't differentiate for assessments. So just wanted to make those points.

- Ms. Elisa, thank you so much for bringing up assessment. Because I know how assessment tools have been misused and unethically interpreted for our community of students. One of the things that has frequently come up for the deaf, deafblind, and blind students are that even when they have dyslexia and SLD, the way the IDA has been written, the school district uses their visual and auditory loss impairment to say that they do not have SLD, and it is expected.

And I think we definitely need to have some guidance on what are the normed assessment data, and for our student population which does not have normed assessment data, what would be the ethical way of interpreting those results? To build further on that, I think one of the challenges that we see in the state of Texas is that the school districts are allowed to choose between patterns of strength and weaknesses and RTI when it comes to reading remediation for students who are struggling with literacy.

And this really hurts our students with disabilities, because they have so many challenges coming up, and the assessment data is not normed to measure their intelligence. So I think it should also touch upon why is RTI not used universally across all states so that every student has an opportunity to receive evidence-based instruction?

- Thank you for sharing that. So we are approaching the 10-minute timeline, so I believe that we are ready to vote. So members, as I call the vote, please use the Hand Raise function feature so that we can accurately call the vote, and take a screenshot for the record.

I call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to include opportunities gap among different groups of learners as a priority.

- Screenshot has been taken.

- Thank you.

So opportunity gaps among different groups of learner is a priority determined by the Southwest RAC. So moving on to the next priority is the career technical education, CTE, and post-secondary opportunities. We, again, will have to ask, you know, why this should be a priority, and explanation of why it is a priority, and the ideas on types of support that can be provided to the Department on how to support that priority.

So discussions are now open to the floor. Nilam?

- Yes, I think this is very much a priority, because every child should have the option to choose whether they want to go to college or have a vocational career. And the vocational career should be able to cater to each and every child's unique needs and give them enough opportunities. My only concern is that in the present model, it does not offer enough opportunities, again, to students with disabilities.

And I keep bringing it up because I work extensively with this population, and it really breaks my heart that most of the time, the only expectation for our students with disabilities life skills are like, folding napkins or vacuuming. And these are required life skills, but can we do better than that? So I think when we are talking about CTE, and post-secondary opportunities, let's have an honest conversation of having enough opportunities and vocational choices for every student and every learner.

- Thank you. Dr. Leal?

- Yes, thank you. This is one area that I really also feel very strongly about. I think the data clearly shows here, at least in the state of Texas, 63% of jobs that are available right now, that pay a livable wage job, require a post-secondary training of some kind.

And when I say post-secondary, it's not necessarily just a four-year degree plan, we also have sub-baccalaureate credentials that provide the training and the skills needed for our young people to get good livable-wage jobs. It's essential that we understand that whole process.

We have a skills gap in many of our economic opportunity areas, where we have jobs available, but the students or young people do not have the appropriate skills training to enter into those jobs. These are not always four-year degrees, but they do pay very, very well.

So it's important to understand the role of not only career and technical pathways, but also that these are part of...sorry. Let me just clarify that, that CTE pathways are post-secondary, and they are college-driven credentials that are necessary to provide the skills students need to get these livable-wage jobs.

So I think we need to clarify a myth that college means four years, and that everything else is not college. But in fact, our career and technical courses are college, and we need to help our students get that. Sorry. Thank you.

- Beautifully said, Dr. Sylvia. Beautifully said, that.

- [crosstalk 00:50:08.141] - What was that, Nilam?

- No, I said beautifully said, that. And yes, I agree.

- Okay. Thank you. I think I got myself all tongue twisted, but hopefully you got the gist of what I wanted to say, basically.

- Lesley?

- I think we also need to tie this back to the teacher training, because a lot of our CTE teachers, the pay to get them into the classroom to teach the CTE courses is a lot higher sometimes than a normal teacher salary. Because you're bringing people in, for instance in the medical field, to teach the medical pathways, and to get a nurse to come in and teach

those classes, if they're not making what they're making in the medical field, to get them to come in and teach the CTE pathways, it's going to be a lot more difficult.

So you're already struggling with teacher training, teacher retention, and then trying to get people to come in and teach the CTE pathways... Which I agree, it's a great way to get our kids into these fields, but it's hard to get teachers to come in and teach them. And we're struggling in a lot of areas, especially rural areas, where they may only have an Ag teacher, or they may only have one pathway for these kids to take, and trying to get them into multiple pathways is really, really hard.

And then trying to get more people to come in and teach those courses is even more difficult because we can't pay them what they expect to be paid.

- Thank you for sharing that, and well said. Doctor... ...jumped around. Dr. Enos...go ahead.

- So I agree with what's been said, and just to emphasize the salary differential, even for... So the medical pathway, yes, but also for some of the pathways such as welding and automotive, those folks that teach those classes and teach them well make so much more money not teaching that it is hard to find them to come in to teach CTE.

And I also wanted to add a point that the CTE course is being offered through high school. So it is a post-secondary experience within the high school.

I think that's extremely important. I think the population of students that I work with, they have two years of Head Start, and then they have kindergarten, and then they graduate at 12th grade. That means that they have 15 years of school under their belt.

If they don't want to keep going to school, they shouldn't have to. They should be able to go into the workforce directly, and earn a living wage, a true living wage. And with the career technical opportunities being offered in high schools, that's a possibility. Again, I think the U.S.

Department of Ed could help school personnel by providing some additional education on these areas, and how to do it, how to hire people who usually command much higher salaries, how to incorporate it into the high school academic day, and how to understand, as Dr.

Leal pointed out, that this is truly higher education, secondary...post-secondary. Thanks.

- Thank you. I didn't know...it was between Nilam or Dr. [inaudible 00:54:29] there, but...

- Stephanie, I couldn't hear what you said.

- Oh, I don't know whose hand was raised... Oh, somebody's not on mute.

- Well, I'll go. I mean, I agree with everything, that has been said. I just wanted to bring a couple of points. I think that we are at risk of making CTE like a buzzword in education. It

seems like everybody is just, like, talking about it, and we need to be very careful on what we mean.

And it means that it has to be aligned to an outcome, right? We have to prepare our kids to get that job, so they have to get out of our junior and senior year with a two-year certificate, right, from a college institution, as Dr. Sylvia was saying. So it is just not offering a class here, and we call it a CTE, it has to be a true pathway. So that's kind of like the conversation.

It has to be aligned to a higher, you know, degree or certificate. And then, you know, in small districts, I'm in a small district, it's rural, you know, it's really difficult to offer different pathways. So we are taking the approach of collaboration, right? We have like a region, we have four different school districts, and our students travel eight miles to go to a welding class.

And then we have somebody from the medical field that, you know, goes to four different schools, so they see our students as well, and they get credit for that. So once again, thinking differently, it can be done so we can offer more opportunities for our students in small districts.

So that collaborative approach, I think it's important for CTE.

- Thank you. Dr. Leal?

- I completely agree with you, Elisa. I think you're right on target with what I was trying to say. Thank you for helping me clarify. And one other thing that I want to add is that I think the Department of Education can demystify this concept that college comes after high school. College needs to be part of the high school, and it has to be, especially for our rural students, who live 90 miles away or 100 miles away from the closest institution of higher education, if we're going to really develop our young people to have a livable wage job, and to have the credentials, we must think about ways to do that within the four years of high school.

And I agree completely with Elisa that if we're going to offer a career technical education, it has to be with ends in mind. Students should be leaving our schools with the credentials, the skills development they need to get into a good job, or to go to a four-year university, either way. But it shouldn't be everything has to happen after 12th grade.

I think those days are gone, and I think the Department of Education can help to bring us into the 21st century, and understand the close connection between education and economic development, economic growth, and economic opportunity for our young people and our families.

Thank you.

- I agree with you. I think we can also add associate degree, like the dual-enrollment. So much of the CDE Center, when we are talking about they have to start looking into CDE Center as college readiness...

- I think that's what we're talking about.

- Yes.

- Thank you, Nilam. We're talking about dual-credit credentialing, post-secondary credentialing by the end of high school. Yes, thank you.

- Yes.

- So we're at the 10 minutes, but I'll let Margo, you have a comment?

- [Margo] I was going to say I agree with both of the previous speakers [inaudible 00:58:23] Bureau, we're trying to concentrate on those high schools who have low grad rates, and part of it is not everyone goes to a four-year college, or even a two-year college after high school. We want them to be prepared to be certified, and so some of the CTE programs do need to have a goal in mind by the time they get through high school.

And hopefully, those students will have a licensure to begin working immediately after they get out of high school, particularly because they come from very small communities a lot of times. And those communities do need those workers who will work in the air conditioning, or you know, building, or whatever, the culinary arts, whatever the CTE program has.

And we've begun trying to coordinate with the Pathways program here that the BIA has so that we can try and see if we can increase, you know, those students' opportunities to, if they don't want to...or don't see themselves going to a four-year or two-year institution, that they have another way to be able to be employed after high school, and give back to their community.

- Thank you, Margo. So we are ready for a vote. So members, as I call the vote, please use the Raise Hand function feature so that we can accurately call the vote and take a screenshot for the record. I call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to include CTE, career technical education, and post-secondary opportunities as a priority.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you. So career technical education, CTE, and post-secondary opportunities is a priority determined by the Southwest RAC.

So now we're moving on to priority five, which is creation and implementation of curriculum aligned with standards. We've got 10 minutes to discuss this, but the questions are why it should be a priority, explanation of why this is a priority, and ideas on types of support that can be provided to the Department on how to support that priority.

Discussion is open to the floor.

- I hate to say this, but this is one area that BIE really tried to focus on this year, because we were finding through monitoring that a lot of the schools did not have a curriculum that aligned with standards. And you can see it in the fact that their staff, the whole entire school staff, wasn't really coordinated together in teaching.

And a lot of the schools were using what is programs, calling it curriculum, but we know that programs are not curriculum. And again, they weren't aligned to standards. And unless you have that, you don't have that consistency in schools, and with the teaching staff knowing what each grade is focusing on, and being able to, you know, work with the students as they, you know, move up to another grade.

So I think this is a very important part of what needs to happen with the schools, especially with our BIE schools.

- Thank you. I didn't get who was next to raise your hand, but I'm going to just... Elisa?

- I'll go. Thank you, Margo. I agree. I think that it is, it's sad that this is still a priority, right? Because we have been doing so much with standards, but it's obviously a challenge, and therefore it needs to be a priority, right? I think that teachers need time to work together, to understand the basic skills of the standards, to differentiate, you know, that standard for all of our students, and to find resources that align to that standard.

Because as Margo was saying, you know, because they don't have time, they pull whatever it is easier, if it is teachers [inaudible 01:02:46] teachers or the textbook, right? And that's not rigorous enough for our students. So our teachers need time to work together. They need time to work on pacing guides, you know, for their work. So I wish that we see one day when our teachers really, really can have that time together, and understand what is it that they need to teach.

And states at the federal level, but the state should be really, really supporting this kind of work. Thank you. Jennifer? Sorry, bad hand.

- Oh. Nilam?

- Hi. Yeah, I totally agree this needs to be a priority area, and I think it goes with the previous goals and the priority areas that we have chosen. I just want to thank Margo and Elisa for saying it so beautifully. The biggest challenge that we have is that teachers are designing the curriculum, which they should not be doing.

There has to be a standard, and the grade level standards are decided after a lot of research. Each and every child, irrespective of whether they have a disability or not, should be expected to meet those grade level standards. Along with the implementation, I think reporting of those achievements, whether it is happening or not, is very important.

So vertical alignment of a student during the beginning of the year, middle of the year, end of the year, to the grade level standards would help teachers know, and parents know where the child is doing, and what are the areas where we can differentiate the lessons and help the child. So I think it has recondensed with vertical alignment of the child's performance to grade level standards. And one of the things that my student population have struggled with is low expectations.

Our children are told, and parents are told point blank that we do not expect you to do that, and I think that message needs to be challenged. Presumed competence should be explicitly stated by Department of Education for every child, and I cannot reemphasize that strongly enough. And if we are able to cater to this one, I think this for me is right there with the differential learning needs for all students.

If we can do this, we can definitely see a huge improvement in the literacy scores and academic performance, and career readiness for our students.

- Thank you. Sylvia?

- Yes. I think I want to frame; I agree with everything that's being said, and I want to frame a little bit more about high-quality instructional materials are essential, and that I know the Department of Education has clearinghouses to talk about research-based instructional materials, but I'm not necessarily sure that we get that information out to our teachers.

So maybe the Department of Ed can do a better job of sharing what has been vetted through research, what approaches are vetted approaches for instruction, what are high quality instructional materials? And the last thing is I completely agree with Margo, we need to help our educators understand that programs are not curriculum, and they don't seem to distinguish the two.

So we need a lot of help in understanding how to do that, I think, across our country. So I'll share that. Thank you.

- Thank you. Margo, did you have your hand raised again? No? Okay. Who had their hand raised next? Oh, go.... Okay.

Go ahead.

- Yeah. I think my hand is kind of like, blending into the background of my screen. But the point of the high-quality instructional materials, while I agree that's extremely important, of course, I do want to note that many materials, either for Native American students or about Native American people, do not meet the evidence-based criteria set by U.S.

Department of Ed. At one point, U.S. Department of Ed was looking at promising practices to recognize some of the materials that were promising sometimes even, sometimes those

materials are even, because of the small population, because of the uniqueness of various tribes, that those materials might not ever meet the evidence-based criteria.

And so making sure that there's high-quality resources vetted by Native folks for the education for and about Native peoples.

- And it's true, our schools that have tried to do Wattsburg Clearinghouse, or any of the other clearinghouses, and there's very, very few, if any, you know, research-based programs on those sites. We've got over [inaudible 01:08:52] over 500 tribes in the United States. And so people think that, you know, one curriculum, or one, you know, program will talk about Native Americans in general, and that's sort of in general, but it's not specific a lot of times to specific Tribal areas.

So, you know, when our schools used the Wattsburg Clearinghouse, for example, we tried to tell them you're going to have to find something that's similar to your area. For example if you're rural, maybe you can look at the rurals, because you're just going to have to find something that sort of fits your community, and maybe find something that's going to actually work for you that way. Because you're not going to find anything specific to American Indian, Native American, or Alaska Native cultures.

- Thank you for sharing that, Margo. Nilam, did you have another comment?

- Yes. I just wanted to expand accessible and representative curriculum for the students with sensory impairment. American Sign Language is a bona fide language, and so many times, families who have ASL learners do not get adequate literacy support and curriculum support for their students. So while we are designing standards-based curriculum, we cannot ignore the differential learning needs of different student populations, and I will come back to the VIDB and ASL learners who definitely need representation here.

- Thank you. Sylvia? Okay. So we are approaching our 10 minutes, and so I believe we have enough information shared here that we are ready to vote.

So with that, members, as I call the vote, please use the Raise Hand function feature so that we can accurately vote, call the vote, and take a screenshot for the record. I call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to include creation and implementation of curriculum aligned with standards as a priority.

- Screenshot taken.

- Thank you. So the creation and implementation of curriculum aligned with standard is a priority determined by the Southwest RAC.

So with that, we move on to I believe it's slide 13. And before we start with that, you know, if there's any discussions concerning the items or needs that emerge during the needs-

assessing, but were not established as priorities, that you want to include, and that you want to make the Department aware of and may not be able to address at this time.

So with that, the formation of the subcommittees will need to be formed to lead the writing of the report. Multiple people may work on sections together in the subcommittee to summarize the committee's analysis and the report, and how to present to the Department.

So with that, I move that we establish a subcommittee to write the reports. And I believe... Is there a second that needs to occur here?

- I can second.

- [inaudible 01:13:00] - I can second.

- Okay. So with that, I believe we move on to... Does anyone want to self-nominate as a member to join the writing subcommittee? By show of Hand Raise in the team feature function, we'll visually identify yourself as self-nomination to...and participate as a member of the writing subcommittee.

- Can I ask a question before I...

- A clarification? Sure.

- Yes. If you work on the committee...if you do not work on the committee at this point right now, will the group have an opportunity to review and provide feedback before it goes to being published?

- The answer is yes, right...right, Rebekka?

- Yes, that will be the third meeting that we had emailed about, will be the committee will have to approve the report. So you will get the chance to review it prior to that approval meeting.

- I'm just trying to be honest; I don't know that I would have the time to write. Although I love to write. And so I don't want to put myself in a position to compromise and slow down the process, but I definitely would be willing to review and provide feedback.

- Thank you for sharing that.

- I have a question. In the writing of the report, so now we provided information... Yeah, how does the process work? I guess that is the... The information comes from where, and then... You know, like, kind of walk me through the process of writing the report.

- There is a template, and Jen, I don't know if you want to say anything more about that. So you're not creating something from nothing. Like, there will be sort of a structure that you can follow. Go ahead, Jen.

- Yeah, exactly. So you've got a template, and you also have all that data. So if you go to the needs-sensing matrix, there are federal, you know, secondary sources at work, culled and curated for y'all. There's also all of the comments, public comments, so that's data as well that you can use to support, and also NAGB comments as well.

Not as many for this group as some other groups, but they are there. And so you'll use all of that information, plus what we just took in terms of our notes. We've got why this is a priority, we explained it, we talked about technical assistance. So basically, you've got your information, you just have to synthesize it.

- So with that clarification to this portion now, again by showing the raise of hands here, you'll visually identify your self-nomination to and participate as a member of the writing subcommittee.

- And I'll just add, the subcommittee can meet. So you are able to...we've had a lot of discussions about this, I know, in terms of how often you can gather, the subcommittee can meet.

You can also, you could, if you desire, create multiple subcommittees. The subcommittees cannot be larger than quorum for the committee, so that is a consideration. If that helps.

- There was a suggestion. I don't know, Anne, if you want to bring up the PowerPoint to look at the slides on the subcommittee details and schedule. Maybe that will help folks look at what they are able to do. Cool.

All right, so you'll be reviewing the accepted priorities that we just discussed. We need our committee members to lead writing of these. It obviously doesn't have to be every single priority. You may find one that you're like, yes, this is the one I want to champion, and so that's just your section, right? And then you'll need to determine how to complete that section with your subcommittee.

And again, you can also include educational issues that are not considered, but maybe they warrant consideration in the future. We only had five, but if something emerges for the group that they want to add, you know, maybe we didn't collect data on it, but hey, this is something we can consider for future, that would also be appropriate there.

I definitely will support writing this report with you, like in terms of one voicing it, and final production, but the ideas have to come from you all, because these are yours. So you'll want to put them in your words. And then what we're doing at the back end is making it look and read, you know, nicely.

- We can also request that members who weren't able to attend this meeting...you know, ask for their interest in writing the report, too. So I think, you know, just echoing everything Jen just shared, we're not asking you to...a single person to shoulder the load here.

We want to figure out how to make it manageable for everybody. And we know that you all have many things that you're doing in your personal and professional lives right now, so you know, just think about...we can think creatively about how to make this a manageable process. And again, Jen, so we have a lot right now.

It's just a matter of...

- Yeah, you have a lot of content. It's really just a matter of putting it together where it belongs in the report, and giving it the oomph and the, you know, the experience that you all have. And again, you've got a ton of data, you've got data that you all had, you've got data from the RAC, from the public comments, you have data from federal sources, so... And I would, you know, because if you can see, here's our timeline, it's super tight, so we, by design, need to be super tight in our writing.

So we don't need to go on and on, right? Like, you can just say this is a priority because A, B, C, this is what we should do, X, Y, Z, and then just move on to the next one. We don't need to be, I guess, super verbose about it, because we don't have time to be.

- And let me just share that that's the part that scares me the most, is the timeline. So heart and will don't necessarily match opportunity that I have. But I will raise my hand, and try to be a good participant, and do my best.

- And Nilam, did you have a question? Or were you wanting to be part of the writing committee, subcommittee?

- I wanted to be a part of the writing committee.

- Okay. So, okay, so I believe right now, we've got four raised hands.

- Got it. Wonderful.

- [inaudible 01:21:08] I wanted to help do this, but that timeline is very [inaudible 01:21:13] so that's why I'm not committing myself right now.

- Okay, so with that, thank you for those that are going to be part of the writing committee. So with that, are we at slide 15?

- Yes.

- Okay.

- Just going to... Sorry to interrupt, Stephanie. It sounds like maybe it would be helpful to remind folks that really, each priority should be no longer than three pages. So that might help you kind of temper your writing expectations.

- Great. Okay. So now that we know that the writing is no longer than three pages each, we can move on as what's shared here on the slide 15, the assessment timeline.

We have now through November 2nd to have the subcommittee meet to draft the assessment report. And on November 3rd, the subcommittee is going to submit the assessment to the Liaison, and this is Jen, and by November 13th, we're going to release the assessment to the full committee for review, and after that, we're going to have a full committee review and vote.

That is to be scheduled around November 14th through the 16th, and then the submission assessment will be submitted to Secretary on November 17th. And I believe we've got some questions here.

Sylvia?

- No. Do I have a question? No, I'm sorry.

- Okay.

- Do I lower my hand now?

- Yes.

- Okay.

- I captured everyone. Thank you.

- Okay.

- Okay.

- Stephanie, I believe we need to vote on the committee, though.

- Okay. Okay. So...

- So yeah, right now we have the writing committee subcommittee as Nilam, Stephanie, Sylvia, and Anya. Is that...did I get everyone?

- Yes. So the four names mentioned, that Jen reiterated, I am going to...nominate those four individuals to...lead...the identified report writing, the report writing, the writing report on behalf of the Southwest RAC.

Members, please Raise Your Hand feature function if you approve that these listed members are nominated to write the report, and be part of the writing subcommittee.

- Screenshot captured.

- Okay.

And so, the mentioned members are approved to lead the writing of the report for the Southwest RAC writing subcommittee. Is there anything else I need to cover?

- No, I don't think so. I think it's just adjoining the meeting, right?

- Well, Stephanie and Jen and I will meet, and we will reach out about scheduling the subcommittee meeting. So that will be a follow-up activity here in the near future.

- Are there any questions before we adjourn? Nilam, do you have a question? Okay. Well, thank you all again for your time.

Thank you for your flexibility, as this meeting was rescheduled a few different times, and as we, you know, at one point wondered if we'd have a shutdown even interfering with this. It's been all sorts of fun behind the scenes here. So thank you for your time today. We really appreciate it. We will be reaching out about the subcommittee scheduling, and then also about the third meeting that will happen in November.

So with that, I move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southwest Region. And if you could all say aye, if you are in agreement of adjourning...

- Aye.

- All right. So thank you. The meeting is adjourned as of 3:28 Eastern time on October 12, 2013, and we will see you at our final meeting in November. Thank you, again.