



U.S. Department of Education

Identifying and Addressing Priority Education Needs

Southwest

Regional Advisory Committee

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities and results of the Southwest Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), authorized under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ETAA) (Pub. L. 107-279; 20 U.S.C. § 9605). The 10 RACs were established to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Education (Secretary) regarding the educational needs of one of the 10 regions served by the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) for input regarding technical assistance activities described in Section 203 of the ETAA and how those needs would be most effectively addressed. The Secretary sought recommendations for nominations to serve on the RAC from the Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, and education stakeholders within each region and appointed members to the RAC in August 2023. The activities discussed in this report took place from August to November 2023.

Members reviewed a regional profile that summarized relevant state and federal education and demographic data to inform their individual assessments of the challenges and educational needs in the region. The Southwest RAC members sought additional information by reviewing relevant websites such as the state education agencies (SEAs), Perkins Web Portal, and state level workforce sites, and additional input from Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, REL Governing Boards, and other education stakeholders through processes including online surveys, focus groups, and public comment solicitations. The goal of these processes was to solicit the views and needs of schools (including public charter schools), educators, parents, teachers, administrators, local education agencies (LEAs), librarians, businesses, state education agencies (SEAs), and other stakeholders within the region regarding the need for the activities described in 20 U.S.C. sections 9564 and 9602 and how those needs would be most effectively addressed. In total, the RAC received 196 public comments as further described in the Data Collection section of this report.

The Southwest RAC held three virtual meetings to discuss regional profile data, introduce other sources of information, conduct its needs assessment, align on priorities, and review and approve the final report. During the first meeting, held on September 7, 2023, the RAC reviewed educational data and public comments, deliberated, and made recommendations to address the needs of the region. During the second meeting, held on October 12, 2023, the RAC reviewed additional data, deliberated on the educational needs of their region, and voted on the top five recommended priorities to be included in a final needs assessment report. A final meeting was held on November 16, 2023, to review the subcommittees' written recommendations and to vote to approve the final needs assessment report for submission to the Secretary.

The five priorities identified by committee members and discussed in further detail in this report are:

- **Issues Related to Broadband Access:** As evidenced by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools struggled to provide virtual education due to lack of access to high-speed broadband in many communities or, when locally available, still not accessible for many low-income students due to cost. Lack of access to broadband is not a new issue, but the high-consequence disparities that exist in many rural communities and among low-income students across the Southwest region clarify that it is a priority to ensure virtual education options and resources are accessible to all students in all communities and classrooms. Recommended

technical assistance includes supporting states to develop broadband plans that address availability and access issues for all communities, advocate for federal funding to mitigate cost of access for individuals and LEAs, and to support identification and sharing quality virtual education curricula and resources.

- **Teacher Preparation and Retention:** Teacher preparation and retention has been a persistent concern in the Southwest region exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several related issues contribute to heightening the importance of this issue: fewer college graduates selecting education as a career and fewer completing a teacher preparation program, state teacher licensure requirements allow for alternative or emergency certification, and teachers leave the profession due to lack of support, long hours, and low salaries. Technical assistance should develop programs that incentivize students to enter the education profession and support new teachers through practicums, mentoring, and other on-the-job learning; address issues that challenge teacher retention; and highlight and share examples of teacher preparation and retention that are working.
- **Academic Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners:** Identifying academic opportunity gaps for all groups of students to determine the best ways to increase opportunities for all learners, specifically to improve rates of literacy and college and career readiness across all groups of learners is a priority. Technical assistance recommendations include systemically collecting and reporting data for groups of students included in IDEA disability categories and language learner groups, as well as other demographic groups; analyzing disaggregated data to determine the nature of academic opportunity gaps; and supporting the development of solutions to address these gaps and improve opportunities for all learners in the Southwest region.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Prioritizing improving the quality of CTE is supported by Federal, state, and local sources. CTE provides valuable post-secondary opportunities for students who do not pursue higher education. To be valuable, CTE courses must be aligned to outcomes such as certification attainment to provide students with a true pathway to a livable-wage career. Public comments noted the importance of CTE in local communities, describing the direct service to the community and local businesses, as well as students, when a young, well-trained workforce is available to meet current needs. Technical assistance is necessary to address identifying and developing instructors who are qualified to teach CTE; developing aligned pathways and courses that meet local need, including for at-risk and special needs students, and federal definition of CTE; and supporting the development of funding models to design and continually update to industry-standard specialized training facilities for high-cost industries.
- **Creation and Implementation of Curriculum Aligned with Standards:** Identifying and incentivizing access to high-quality, structured, evidence-based curriculum in all content areas, but especially in literacy and math, is a priority to improve student opportunities and outcomes as well as support teacher preparation and retention. Technical assistance should support analyzing available curricula for alignment to a set of criteria that reflect high-quality,

structured, evidence-based practices to support LEA informed selection, develop ways to promote embedding training with identified high-quality instructional material in practicum experiences in teacher preparation programs, and provide parents information about how students are progressing to master state standards.

Introduction

The Secretary of Education (Secretary) established ten Regional Advisory Committees (RACs), authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ETAA) (20 U.S.C. sections 9601 et. seq.) and governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (Public Law 92-463). The purpose of the RACs is to collect information on the education needs of each region and how those needs may be addressed through technical assistance activities provided by the Comprehensive Centers Program described in section 203 of the ETAA and other Department technical assistance activities.

RAC members are appointed by the Secretary based on recommendations from Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, and education stakeholders within each region. Southwest RAC membership is comprised of both Special Government Employees (SGEs) and representatives of organizations or recognizable groups of persons including state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), including rural and urban LEAs, institutions of higher education, parents, practicing educators, including classroom teachers, principals, other school administrators, researchers, and individuals from the business community. For a complete list of Southwest RAC members, please see Appendix B.

Each RAC sought input on regional educational needs from Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Governing Boards, and other education stakeholders in the region and the public. The Southwest RAC conducted outreach activities such as public comment surveys and focus groups to obtain input from various constituencies on regional needs and how to address those needs, used statistical data from the Southwest Regional Profile (Appendix C), and deliberated during public meetings on September 7 and October 12, 2023. The RAC established one subcommittee to draft a report summarizing the results of the needs assessment and their recommendations. A final public meeting was held on November 16, 2023, to review the subcommittee's recommendations and vote to submit the final educational needs assessment report to the Secretary.

This report is based on the assessment of educational needs within the Southwest region, which includes the following states: Arkansas, Bureau of Indian Education, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The analysis and recommendations herein represent the findings of this assessment and the advice of the Southwest RAC to the Secretary.

Data Collection

The data collection process that informed the Southwest RAC’s recommendations included regional profiles that summarized district, school, teacher, and student-level data obtained from SEA websites and from Federal data sets such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), and the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). The committee also analyzed information collected from public comments, reviewed feedback provided by the Chief State School Officers (CCSO) Governing Board, and examined Federal and state reports.

The Southwest RAC gathered data from various sources such as data dashboards, webpages, data tables, surveys, reports, and digital tools. The data was collected from different stakeholder groups including schools, teachers, administrators, parents, local and state educational agencies, Federal educational agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Methods and Outreach

Please see the table below for examples of data collected.

Data Samples Collected

Data sources	Platform	Information provided
2022 NAEP	Data dashboard	4 th and 8 th reading and math achievement for all students and students disaggregated by different learner group status like English learners and students with disabilities
State Educational Agency Websites	Webpages	Number of teachers, students, districts, schools (including charter), ethnicity of learners
2019-2020 Digest of Education Statistics	Data tables	Graduation rates of different learner groups, English learner numbers, languages spoken by English learners, number of students served by IDEA part B, ethnicity of learners
2020 Home Pulse Survey	Data dashboard	Student access to broadband
2017-2018 Civil Rights Data Collection	Data dashboard	Student absences, expulsions/suspensions, bullying, firearms
2021 Common Core Data	Data dashboard	Expenditures per student FY 2021
2019-2020 National Teacher and Principal Survey	Survey	Teacher-student ratio, teacher qualifications, teacher preparation
2022 Teacher Poll	Survey	Information on why teachers in Texas leave the profession
Special Education Teacher Workforce 2023 Report (IES)	Report	Supply and preparation of special education teachers
2020-2021 EdFacts	Data dashboard	Achievement of English learners and students with disabilities, number of teachers who work with English learners and projected need in five years, exiting of English learners

Data sources	Platform	Information provided
IDEA Section 618 Data Products: State Level Data Files	Data dashboard	Child counts, educational environment, and exiting status for students with disabilities
IES Data Story - Career and Technical Education 2019	Digital media	CTE concentrators, completers, job opportunities
Perkins Web Portal	Data dashboard	CTE concentrators, completers, graduation rates
Public comments - 196 comments from Southwest region; members of public invited to submit	Survey	Educational priorities for each region
CCSO Governing Board - 1 comment submitted from Southwest region	Survey	Educational priorities for each region

Regional Education Leadership (REL)

One comment collected identified high-quality instructional materials and quality teacher preparation as a top need.

Public Comments

The Southwest RAC collected 196 public comments from August 18 to October 15, 2023.

Based on the feedback received from the public, common themes were identified. The most prominent topic among the respondents was the recruitment and preparation of teachers. School funding was another issue educators and teachers highlighted. Respondents also expressed their concerns about the social and emotional wellbeing of students. The feedback pertaining to career and technical education (CTE) was consistent across the groups. Parents also raised concerns about teacher training as well as students with disabilities. The “Other” category of comments emerged as the second most prevalent theme.

Summary of Findings

Southwest RAC members synthesized information from various RAC members, their constituencies, and public comments (see Appendix D) to determine the highest-priority educational need areas within the Southwest region and recommend strategies to address the needs.

The priority needs, voted on by committee members during a public meeting on October 12, 2023, presented below, are:

- **Priority 1:** Issues Related to Broadband Access
- **Priority 2:** Teacher Preparation and Retention
- **Priority 3:** Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners
- **Priority 4:** Career and Technical Education
- **Priority 5:** Creation and Implementation of Curriculum Aligned to Standards

For each need presented below, the committee summarized the needs, their analysis, and generated strategies to meet the needs through technical assistance.

Recommendations

Priority 1: Issues Related to Broadband Access

Outcomes/Findings

It is well established that the COVID-19 pandemic was a huge disruptor to education across the country. Schools were forced to move to virtual classrooms almost overnight. While some schools were able to transition to virtual classrooms quickly, many rural schools struggled to assist students in continuing their education virtually. The disparity of access to high-speed broadband was a critical disruptor to continued access to education for many rural, urban, and low-income students.

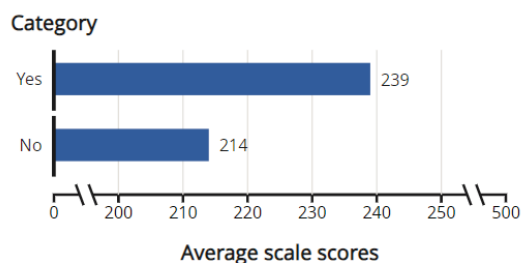
The lack of broadband issue is not new but was amplified by the pandemic. The pandemic highlighted the educational disparities that exist among rural students and low-income students due to the lack of broadband. These issues have yet to be adequately addressed.

Connected Nation reports that across the country, 16.9 million school-aged children and 13.23% of tribal residents do not have access to broadband. The 2022 report on education indicates only two-thirds of school districts across the country (67%) are meeting the FCC's bandwidth goal of 1 Mbps per student. This is up from 47% just two years ago. While this is a significant improvement, there are still 23.5 million students who attend schools that lack adequate bandwidth to support digital learning in every classroom, every day.

It is not clear if connectivity impacts overall student learning, but the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2022 scores for 4th grade mathematics indicate a gap between students who have internet at home and those who do not. Students who had internet at home scored an average of 25 points higher than students who did not.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2022 Scores for 4th Grade Mathematics

Average scale scores for grade 4 mathematics, by At home have access to Internet [B034401] for jurisdiction: 2022
2022, National



NOTE: The NAEP Mathematics scale ranges from 0 to 500. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2022 Mathematics Assessment.

NAEP 4th grade mathematics scores across the five Southwest states reveal similar trends with Arkansas indicating a 16-point gap, Louisiana indicating a 21-point gap, New Mexico indicating a 23-point gap, Oklahoma indicating a 16-point gap, and Texas indicating a 20-point gap. Whether causative or correlative, students with home access to the internet scored significantly higher than students without home access to the internet.

Beyond access to broadband connectivity, another issue is cost. The median cost per megabit for districts meeting the FCC's bandwidth goal of 1 Mbps per student significantly decreased from \$4.90 per megabit in 2017 and \$11.73 per megabit in 2015 to below \$1 for the first time in 2022. Furthermore, the Connected Nation report indicates E-rate funding for more than 4,300 districts nationwide have internet service contracts that will expire soon.

Priority Needs

RAC members indicate the need to ensure that digital teaching and learning are made possible for every student in every classroom, every day.

RAC members shared the difficulties rural schools encountered during the pandemic in providing virtual learning due to the lack of broadband services in their area. This kept students from primary instruction and widened the learning gap for a generation of students. Many small communities across the Southwest region and the country simply do not have adequate infrastructure to provide broadband services across low-populated rural areas leaving many students and their families with no access to high-speed broadband. Members clarified this was not only an issue of devices but rather the lack of broadband infrastructure across the vast rural regions of the Southwest.

Another issue addressed by the RAC members was the cost of broadband, which prohibits many low-income families from accessing high-quality educational materials and learning opportunities readily accessible through high-speed broadband for their children. High-speed broadband access is also necessary for the communication and safety of students. Many schools today offer school-to-parent and teacher-to-parent communication via internet options. Poor access hinders family-to-school engagement and lessens opportunities to foster the whole child's development.

The RAC members of the Southwest region indicated lack of access to broadband presents a huge gap and disadvantage to rural students across the Southwest and the country. They advocated that access to high-speed broadband is a necessity for 21st-century learning and essential to assist at-risk students in developing the education and digital competencies needed for future job opportunities in today's economy.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

- Provide technical assistance to ensure state authorities have well-defined broadband plans to address broadband gaps across all areas of the state including low-populated rural areas. The Department can advocate ensuring today's educational needs are included in all state broadband plans.

- Advocate for Federal funding to close the gap and ensure all students and schools have affordable access to high-speed internet. The affordability of broadband is a gatekeeper for many students and schools to access high-quality learning and curriculum.
- Advocate for Federal funding to incentivize schools and providers to implement creative short-term solutions such as internet on buses, cost waivers for low-income families, and access in public places (i.e., library parking lots) to ensure all students have affordable access to high-speed internet. The cost of last-mile fiber to provide broadband to rural families is beyond what small schools and communities can afford. Providers can also be more creative in finding affordable solutions to connect everyone across the entire Southwest region regardless of location.
- Provide technical assistance to school districts (especially small rural schools) to negotiate more affordable, faster service, to meet (or exceed) the FCC's bandwidth goal of 1 Mbps per student. Small schools sometimes do not have the capacity to negotiate with big corporate providers.
- Provide technical assistance to educators and community leaders in understanding the breadth and depth of the complexity of broadband issues. Not all students need devices or hot spots to participate in the digital world. These issues are very complex and cannot be addressed by one community or one school. The issue of infrastructure requires large-scale planning and engineering.
- Provide technical assistance to support educators in recognizing high-quality curriculum and digital learning to advance student learning needs in school and at home. The market is inundated with digital platforms and curriculums. It is hard for educators to keep up with the research needed to effectively address the educational needs of all students including students with special needs.
- Provide technical assistance to ensure digital learning is part of today's educational curriculum for all students including students from urban, rural, and low-income families to ensure the future workforce is prepared for a global economy.

Priority 2: Teacher Preparation and Retention

Outcomes/Findings

Teacher preparation and retention has been a consistent concern in the Southwest region which has been exasperated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reality is there are fewer and fewer college graduates choosing the education field as a career and even fewer completing a teacher preparation program. Many states and districts have loosened licensure requirements to enable providing an adult in the classroom to fill a vacancy; lack of candidates also leads to increases in classroom sizes in certain fields. Forms of alternative or emergency licensing are now used frequently throughout the region. The data below is from the regional profile located in Appendix C.

Teacher Information

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Public School Teachers (Fall 2019)	Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Fall 2020)	Teachers in Private Schools
Arkansas	38,629	12.9	2,660
Louisiana	38,589	18.4	11,050
New Mexico	21,850	15.2	1,960
Oklahoma	43,315	16.2	3,420
Texas	364,478	15.1	28,560

The following table includes the highest degree earned and years of full-time teaching experience by state and United States. Data from 2011-2012 was the latest data reported at the national level.

Teacher Qualifications

Jurisdiction	Degree Levels, Percentage - Less than Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Master's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Education Specialist or Doctor's (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - Less than 3 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - 3 to 9 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - 10 to 20 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - Over 20 (2011-2012)
United States	3.8%	39.9%	47.7%	8.7%	9.0%	33.3%	36.4%	21.3%
Arkansas	3.7%!	54.7%	35.0%	6.6%	11.5%	28.9%	32.3%	27.3%
Louisiana	3.5%!	61.9%	27.0%	7.6%	8.6%	31.2%	33.4%	26.8%
New Mexico	4.3%!	43.3%	42.1%	10.3%	8.0%!	30.9%	40.3%	20.8%
Oklahoma	4.3%	65.6%	26.9%	3.2%!	9.8%	30.1%	36.9%	23.3%
Texas	3.3%	66.4%	25.8%	4.6%	8.9%	40.4%	31.1%	19.7%

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

Number and Percentage Distribution of Teachers Who Completed Traditional and Alternative Programs

Jurisdiction	Number of Completers in Teacher Preparation Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in Traditional Program-(IHE based) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in an Alternative Program-(IHE based) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in an Alternative Program-(Not IHE based) (2019-2020)
United States	151,138	76.8%	11.4%	11.8%
Arkansas	1,787	69.1%	19.9%	11.0%
Louisiana	1,759	47.1%	20.8%	32.1%
New Mexico	775	49.8%	42.8%	7.4%
Oklahoma	1,178	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Texas	19,968	45.9%	4.2%	50.0%

Many teacher preparation programs are also not fully equipping future educators with the experiences and information they need to be a successful teacher in today’s classroom. A chasm exists between what schools need and how universities and colleges are preparing the workforce. Survey data collected from stakeholders shared this common theme across the field with a particular emphasis on the need to improve the quality of preparation that our future educators receive.

The teacher preparation difficulties deeply impact school districts’ retention of teachers. If teachers are poorly prepared for the demands of the position or have not completed a teacher preparation program at all, and then placed in a classroom, greater resources are then used within the district to get the teacher the support needed if it is available. However, this leads to greater burnout among all teachers and staff within the school and creates turnover.

Priority Needs

Higher education needs resources and structure to update their practices to further align with the needs of school districts. This includes classroom management, understanding of childhood trauma, Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives, and the Science of Reading. Teacher candidates need practicum and reflection opportunities with highly qualified, experienced teachers. Higher education and public-school partnerships would strengthen this. Further, funding a teacher mentoring program once the teacher begins their career can ensure that new teachers are paired with expert teachers to help support their professional growth and development in the first few years of teaching; this would further support retention of teachers as well.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

- States need assistance on how to implement programs that support development of highly qualified teachers such as supporting licensing of teachers through traditional teacher preparation programs, paid practicums, and mentorship.
- States need support in providing a more robust preparation program that should include special education pedagogy and instruction on how to support English learning students and families as well as teach evidence-based approaches to teaching literacy.
- Providing new teachers with a 3-year coaching cycle and a teacher mentorship program once the teacher candidate starts their career will give the new teacher qualified mentors to help them support and develop their practice.
- Lastly, states need assistance on how to implement lower classroom sizes and access to mental health professionals to ensure our teachers can meet the needs of the students and avoid burnout. Salaries for higher education professors and certified PK-12th grade teachers are important for the recruitment and retention of teachers; increases would further support highly qualified teachers entering the profession and support retention of them.

Priority 3: Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners

Outcomes/Findings

Based on data that we received from states, NAEP, and issues highlighted by public comments, it is evident there is a serious opportunity gap between students representative of different groups of learners, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Academic opportunity gaps exist between all students and students who are identified as English learners. Per the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), EL students represented 10% or more of public school students in 12 states, including Texas and New Mexico and there is a huge deficit in the academic performance of EL vs non-ELL students both in mathematics and reading scores.

Tables 1A & 1B: NAEP Reading Scores of English Learners Compared to Non-English Learners

Table 1A: NAEP Reading Scores of English Learners

Grade	2019	2022
Reading 4th Grade	191 (0.7)	190 (0.9)
Reading 8th Grade	221 (0.9)	225 (0.9)
Reading 12th Grade	240 (2.0)	235 (1.3)

Table 1B: NAEP Reading Scores of Non-English Learners

Grade	2019	2022
Reading 4th Grade	224 (0.2)	222 (0.3)
Reading 8th Grade	266 (0.3)	264 (0.3)
Reading 12th Grade	289 (0.5)	288 (0.6)

Tables 2A & 2B: NAEP Math Scores of English Learners Compared to Non-English Learners

Table 2A: NAEP Math Scores of English Learners

Grade	2019	2022
Math 4th Grade	220 (0.6)	216 (0.6)
Math 8th Grade	243 (0.9)	241 (0.8)
Math 12th Grade	111 (1.5)	Not Available

Table 2B: NAEP Math Scores of Non-English Learners

Grade	2019	2022
Math 4th Grade	243 (0.2)	239 (0.3)
Math 8th Grade	285 (0.3)	277 (0.3)
Math 12th Grade	152 (0.4)	Not Available

Further concern on opportunity gaps in our region comes from a New Mexico court case, *Yazzie vs. State of New Mexico*, which found that New Mexico violated the rights of “at-risk” students -- specifically ELLs, Native American students, and economically disadvantaged students -- by failing to provide them with a statewide system of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) with insufficient funding for districts to provide required services, and failure to supervise and audit the appropriate expenditure of the funding on the educational needs of the EL, Native American, and economically disadvantaged “at risk” students.

The risk ratio for students ages 5 (school age) through 21 served under IDEA, Part B, within Asians for identification with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and Other Health Impairment (OHI) is at 0.3, meaning that Asian students do not get identified and serviced with SLD and OHI, leading to Child Find failure. For all disabilities, Asians have a risk score of 0.5 which shows that in general Asian students do not get identified with disabilities in a timely and appropriate manner. This is consistent in the data showing Asians have the lowest representation as a race/ethnic group as documented in page 131 and page 132, Exhibit 58 for states in the Southwest region.

A disproportionately higher percentage of Black students (9%) are getting identified with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). Based on NAEP 2019, a higher percentage of students with ID are spending less than 40% of their time in a general education classroom. Functional learning classrooms/life skills classrooms do not have high-expectation grade-aligned academic goals, and these students graduate high school with alternative certification.

Academic opportunity gaps exist between all students and students identified as having a disability. NAEP data showed a significant difference in the performance of children with disabilities (CWD) compared with children without a disability (Non-CWD), with the gap increasing from 4th to 8th grade across all the states in the Southwest region; this is consistent for both reading/language arts and mathematics. Further, the lack of disaggregation among the 13 categories of disabilities does not allow states to target areas of opportunity gap. This lack of disaggregated data was raised as a concern in parent comments on multiple occasions, especially for the Deaf/Blind and DeafBlind communities.

Table 3: 2019 NAEP Scores of Children with Disabilities (CWD) Compared with Non-CWD

Grades and Subjects Assessed	At or Above (%) Basic (CWD)	At or Above (%) Basic (Non-CWD)	At or Above (%) Proficient (CWD)	At or Above (%) Proficient (Non-CWD)
4th Grade Reading/Language Arts	23	58	8	28
8th Grade Reading/Language Arts	27	72	5	29
4th Grade Math	45	77	11	31
8th Grade Math	18	65	5	25

There is a disconnect in the high school graduation rate and NAEP scores in reading/language and math for CWD. The rates of graduation for the region are Arkansas -- 90.3%, BIE -- 74.8%, Louisiana -- 75.8%, New Mexico -- 86.4%, and Texas -- 44.6%. The high school literacy rate for CWD is very low in the Southwest region, and the gap between CWD and non-CWD is wide. Further, the high school graduation rates with a certification rather than a diploma are higher for children with disabilities compared to non-disabled peers. Texas had a 44.6% high school graduation rate with a regular diploma in 2019-20 and negative growth for students who graduated with a regular high school diploma (-17.4%) ages 14 through 21 exiting IDEA, Part B, and school between 2011–12 and 2019–20. This data is further supported in Exhibit 67, page 161, where in Texas 36.0% of students under IDEA graduate with a regular high school diploma and 33.3% graduate with a certificate. This is the lowest in the Southwest region. (IDEA Congress, 2022)

The Southwest region is reporting lower rates of inclusion than the national average, however, disaggregated data is only available for EL, ED, and ID categories. Without access to disaggregated data for each of the disability categories, it is difficult to tell the true percentages or amounts of times children with a disability are getting access to inclusion practices or the general education classroom. In 2020, New Mexico, at 52.5%, had the lowest percentage of students served under IDEA Part B spending

80% or more time inside regular general education classrooms, followed by Arizona at 68%, Texas at 71.8% and BIE at 77.3%. The national average is 66.2 %. (IDEA Congress, 2022). It is a huge concern, since the percentage of students identified with ID in New Mexico (65.7%) and Texas (52%) are spending less than 40% of instructional time in general education classrooms (Exhibit 65, page 154). The Southwest RAC has received public comments raising concerns about Texas having a high percentage of students identified under Intellectual Disability.

Priority Needs

The Southwest RAC is prioritizing a focus on opportunities for all learners to increase their literacy scores and college readiness and see this as an area of need based on the data and public comments we have received. Opportunity gaps exist for low-income students, rural students, children with disabilities, and English Learners according to national and state data. There are concerns with lack of identification of comorbidity of dyslexia in children with disabilities, low literacy, and discrepancy in graduation rates compared to literacy scores for students with disabilities, and overall literacy and academic success for ELs, at-risk students, children with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.

The Southwest RAC has chosen opportunity gaps among different groups of learners as one of the five priorities areas. The Southwest RAC would like to 1) identify academic opportunity gaps between all students and students who are English learners; 2) identify academic opportunity gaps between all students and students with disabilities with specific attention to opportunity gaps that exist within each of the different disability categories; and 3) identify rates of receiving instruction in inclusionary learning environments.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

- We recommend the Department support the Regional Centers by building a system at the state level for collecting disaggregated data for each category of disabilities under IDEA to identify which groups specifically are experiencing inequitable access to education or have lower academic performance compared to other disabilities. The challenges with cumulative data collection on special education are:
 - It does not recognize the differential learning need within each of the 13 categories of disabilities under IDEA.
 - It does not share literacy data (reading, math, science, social studies, writing) of students within each of the 13 categories of disabilities in meeting grade-level readiness, in alignment with Every Student Succeeds Act.
 - It does not share the need for investment in teacher training, curriculum development, related services needs, and parental training and support needed to bring students to grade level proficiency.
 - It does not support presumed competence discussions for all students, especially since public comments received by Southwest RAC raised concerns around literacy outcomes and college readiness of students with disabilities, students who are Deaf/Blind/DeafBlind and economically disadvantaged, rural areas and Native Americans, and LEAs not

recognizing comorbidity of SLD/Dyslexia in students with existing disabilities such as DeafBlind.

- Identifying academic opportunity gaps between all students and students who are English learners, students with disabilities, and CWD based on disaggregated data on different disability categories.
- Identifying why this academic gap exists.
- Identifying comorbidity of dyslexia in children with disabilities.
- Literacy Scores (reading, writing, math, science, and social studies) and college readiness scores for each of the 13 categories of disabilities under IDEA.
- Offering Response to Intervention (RTI) universally to all students with disabilities and who are EL when they are one grade level behind, and not choosing between either Patterns of Strengths & Weaknesses (PSW) or RTI for identifying SLD/Dyslexia. PSW is not normed for children with sensory and other disabilities. It relies exclusively on cognitive intelligence to find eligibility making it not aligned to current research.

Priority 4: Career and Technical Education

Outcomes/Findings

A Fordham Institute report notes (Dougherty, 2016):

Done right, secondary Career Technical Education (CTE) provides preparation and skill building for careers in fields such as information technology, health services, and advanced manufacturing, in which many positions require a postsecondary education. While some high school CTE students do enter the workforce without additional training, many secondary CTE programs feed participants into professional certification or associate degree programs at two- or four-year colleges. The goal of today's CTE is simple: to connect students with growing industries in the American economy and to give them the skills and training required for long-term success.

CTE encompasses postsecondary education offered at high schools that leads to industry certification, success in the workforce, and pathways to college degrees and certification. Data in Texas show that 63% of livable wage jobs require post-secondary training, sub-baccalaureate certificates and associate degrees, and traditional four-year bachelor's degrees (Beaumont-Port Arthur Region Economic and Labor Market Profile, 2022). CTE pathways lead to college driven credentials necessary for livable wage jobs. Every child should have the option to go to college or pursue vocational choices based upon their interests, and these options must start in secondary schools. The states in the Southwest region encompass many rural areas, which have a high need for credentialed health care workers, experts in information technology, pre-K-secondary educators, and other fields; likewise, these areas also have capacity challenges regarding the ability to offer these pathways.

At-risk and rural student populations in Oregon are less likely to have the opportunity to participate in robust, local CTE opportunities (Arneson, Hodara, & Klein, 2020). Within the Southwest region, the New Mexico Comprehensive College and Career Pathway Assessment found CTE strategies are "most effective when implemented in coordination with one another and not as separate initiatives," but noted "only

16% (N = 15,433) of the high school population in New Mexico took more than two or more [CTE] courses in a sequence” (Surova, Francis, & Heredia-Griego, 2022). Additionally, the assessment considered the implications for robust approaches to CTE to positively address the Martinez/Yazzie concerns:

In 2018, New Mexico First Judicial District Court ruled on Martinez and Yazzie vs. State of New Mexico (Martinez/Yazzie), declaring that the state “violated the rights of at-risk students by failing to provide them with a uniform statewide system of free public schools sufficient for their education.”

A CTE concentrator is defined by the U.S. Department of Education, National Perkins Reporting System (2020) as a high school student completing two or more courses in an approved program of study assessment (Surova, Francis, & Heredia-Griego, 2022). To do CTE “right,” as the reports above articulate, courses must be aligned to an outcome, such as certification obtainment. The Southwest RAC noted there is a risk of CTE turning into a “buzzword.” It is vital that CTE courses are aligned to an outcome such as certification obtainment; courses must be a true pathway to a livable wage-earning career.

Priority Needs

The public comments noted the importance of CTE, which provides “direct service to the community and local businesses plus creates a young, trained skilled work force.” Commenters urged continued financial support of CTE, calling out particular needs for non-competitive, recurring funding for transportation and salaries for CTE faculty. Additional comments were representative of support for both CTE in general and suggestive of refinements going forward:

“We have thousands of good jobs in our rural region that require some education beyond high school, but not a baccalaureate, but then our schools typically offer legacy CTE programs or programs popular with students even if there are no jobs in those areas or the jobs in those areas pay minimum wage.”

“Post secondary opportunities for students who are not university bound students. There is a lack of pathway through the education system that directly connects students to adequate paying jobs and careers. There are many students disconnecting from education since I have been teaching in Arizona. They are ill prepared for post-secondary life and are not on a trajectory to become productive citizens.”

Not everyone goes to college, but everyone does need work opportunities, and livable wage opportunities require post-secondary training, some of which can be provided concurrently as part of a strong high school program. While CTE has the potential to prepare high school graduates to enter the workforce and earn a livable wage, thus providing needed economic opportunities, the present model needs more attention. For example, it does not offer enough opportunities for students with disabilities, who are often only provided life-skills training. Better understanding of employment and job preparation needs of rural and Native American communities is vital to prepare the future workforce and allow those who want to remain in their home communities a chance to match their interests with a local career. High schools and their partner colleges struggle to provide high-cost, cutting edge medical simulation labs; automotive, welding, and electronic shops; and other high-cost, industry standard learning spaces that also meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements. In

addition, these educational institutions struggle to find instructors willing to teach for an educator salary because they command much higher pay and benefits in their own field.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

The Department can help address some of the current challenges with providing CTE programs in high schools with funding and technical assistance.

- **Consistent, Non-Competitive Funding:** Public comments encourage, “funding for up-to-date training facilities, equipment, and supplies” and to “incentivize community businesses that support CTE work-based learning.”
- **CTE Teacher Pay:** Guidance and funds to acquire CTE teachers, particularly in rural areas, when the pay and benefits in many CTE fields exceed education wages. The Department could provide both funding and technical assistance on how to hire staff who command higher salaries outside of education. As one idea, “CTE certifications can be from retired or current employees of mechanic or medical [fields]”.
- **Development of CTE Pathways:** One public comment suggested, “secondary school re-envisioning, including CTE, work-based learning, innovative curriculum and space, and moving toward mastery learning rather than Carnegie units”. The Department can help LEAs/SEAs think outside the box on how to offer these courses, particularly in rural areas (i.e., as part of the normal academic day; advocacy for post-secondary opportunities; help LEAs/SEAs design pathways with end in mind; and ensure that college becomes part of high school, especially for students in rural areas).
- **Beyond Perkins:** CTE means different things to different people and among different populations. Reliance on Perkins definitions may not always be the best fit for a community’s CTE needs.
- **Shore Up Access for At-Risk and Rural Students:** Require CTE pathways to incorporate best practices when working with students with special needs. Work with local communities, local tribes, and tribal governments to identify local career needs and work-based learning opportunities and then advise local schools and the Bureau of Indian Education on ways schools can better serve Native American children. This may include working with tribes and tribal schools to expand the current CTE definition and requirements in Perkins. As noted in the New Mexico Assessment (Surova, Francis, & Heredia-Griego, 2022), a coordinated, locally-informed approach is needed.

Priority 5: Creation and Implementation of Curriculum Aligned with Standards

Outcomes/Findings

The lack of evidence-based curriculum has impacted the literacy scores of all learners in the United States across all subject domains. This is demonstrated in the 2022 NAEP data: 30% percent of 8th grade students performed below *NAEP Basic* in reading, a larger percentage compared to 2019 with only 27% performing at proficient level and 4% at the advanced level. Further, this impact is beyond just literacy scores with 38% percent of 8th grade students performing below *NAEP Basic* in mathematics, a larger

percentage compared to 2019 with 20% in proficient level and 7% in advanced level. In U.S. History, 13% of 8th graders performed at proficient level, 1% at advanced level, and 40% below basic.

There doesn't appear to be very much data on how the district's chosen curriculum is aligned to standards, however, from public comment we can surmise this is a concern of educators and parents across the region. Each state has their own state standards that are to be aligned to the national standards, then state departments and districts can choose from curriculum companies which best match their needs. Curriculum companies purport they are aligned with state and national standards but lack of transparency, data, and actual educators reviewing the full product result in holes and shortcomings. The What Works Clearinghouse can provide educators with a framework of which curriculums hit the mark versus those that do not, however, considerations for diverse populations are scarce and access to curriculum for educators is based on what the school district will put their money towards. For example, Native American tribes have expressed lack of representation in curriculum, and lack of authentic curriculum for their history. Similar concerns have been raised by parents of children with disabilities who commented on the lack of structured, evidence based, cumulative instructions implemented with fidelity. The Southwest RAC received multiple public comments mentioning the long-term impact of lack of evidence and research-based program and academic instructions on Deaf, Blind, Deaf/Blind children, and students with dyslexia.

Since many states have moved away from the Common Core Curriculum Standards and provide their educators with their own standards, a lack of transparency exists on how closely each state is aligning to the standard, leaving teachers to do the guesswork especially when they are deferring to curriculum that focuses largely on providing the national standards in the lesson guides. Plenty of research has been completed on the trajectory of learning and how to scaffold students' academic needs for each of the main subject areas allowing for states to be consistent with standards.

Priority Needs

While curriculum is incredibly important for the classroom it is often lacking what teachers actually need, an ability to reach all learners. It is difficult to find a curriculum aligned to the standards in a progression that is evidence-based, structured, cumulative, is representative of our diverse student population, and can meet the needs of our diverse student population. As one educator commented in the public comments, we need a “curriculum that addresses what to do for students that are struggling with more than just a blurb at the end of the teacher’s guide for a lesson.” Other comments highlighted a similar theme, “I know that students with the most complex needs are not receiving an education that even remotely resembles a FAPE”; “Our region needs more evidence-based college programs for our kids with disabilities to help us with different alternatives for higher education for our kids after high school.”

Curriculum is produced more by companies than experts and while the What Works Clearinghouse is an excellent tool, it is not able to give school districts all the details they need to find the right fit for their district and oftentimes their main point of contact with the company is a sales representative and not an educational expert. For example, many of the large curriculum companies have not begun to update their reading programs to match the evidence-based research on the Science of Reading, the Literacy Ladder, and Scarborough’s Rope. Few of the large publishing companies are producing curriculum that

borrowed from the idea of Science of Reading but are repackaging three cueing methods, Balanced Literacy, or Whole Word Curriculum. The problem with poor reading curriculum goes beyond reading to writing. Educators reported through public comment that many times their curriculum was outdated due to lack of funding or focusing funding of curriculum only on tested subjects.

With the number of teachers going into the education field via emergency or alternative certifications, school districts must have funding available to focus on gaps they need to fill to provide teachers with the tools needed to successfully read and interpret standards and implement the curriculum. School districts need to be able to provide what colleges/universities have done in the past. To further this point many of our colleges/universities have not changed their teacher preparation programs to match the needs of the school districts they are preparing students for; this is especially true for teachers serving economically disadvantaged students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners. The college preparatory programs for teachers do not teach Science of Reading-based instructional programs to teachers.

Curriculum companies do not have the urgency to address diverse populations in the same way our educators do. Lesson guides within the curriculum are supposed to serve as the standard but without background knowledge they do not provide attempts to scaffold to what the student needs. The expectation is that they will get it, with well-meaning teachers not understanding what they are doing wrong. Further, the curriculum purchased often lacks the understanding of what districts need when it comes to true representation of the population of students served. While displaying diverse pictures allows students to see themselves in the text, it often leaves out important cultural knowledge and background. For example, the National Education Information System (NEIS) reports that American Indian and Alaskan Native students who attend public schools know very little about their culture (NEIS, 2019). This is also important for students with disabilities since there is seldom any representation of the spectrum of disabilities in the curriculum being taught.

The training that comes with the programs can often be surface-level and it isn't until a year or more of implementation before educators and school districts begin to understand that something is missing and find themselves trying to supplement. High-quality instructional materials are essential to the success of the students in each classroom and a curriculum that meets the needs of a diverse set of learners to support educators is no longer an acceptable footnote in the work of publishing companies. Having a standards-based curriculum accessible to all learners is critical to their academic growth and college readiness goal. This is critical for students with disabilities, English learners, at-risk students, and economically disadvantaged students and aligns to the other mentioned priorities.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

The Southwest RAC makes the following recommendations to address the need for the creation and implementation of curriculum aligned to standards.

- First, educators need to have access to a curriculum that is structured and research based and is aligned with the standards with evidence-based instructional strategies. The Department can vet curriculum materials and share with the public what is regarded as high-quality instructional materials related to the standard through the What Works Clearinghouse. They could also

include how closely a curriculum aligns with the standards and the quality of differentiated teaching strategies to support the diverse needs of students. Structured and evidence-based reading programs have been shown to benefit all learners, and the Department should try to invest heavily into this to improve the literacy score of the nation. Data should be provided to reveal how closely states have aligned their standards with the national standards. Further, the Department should provide financial support to the SEAs as they transition to an updated evidence-based curriculum and training on instructions.

- Second, teachers need to receive training and a practicum experience that supports their understanding of the standards, how to differentiate for standards, and how to find evidence-based resources related to the standard. Time needs to be allotted for teachers to work through curriculum development aligned with standards, including pacing guides that are sequential and include differentiation. Educators need to develop an understanding of the difference between programs and curriculum with curriculum meeting the expectation of the standards.
- Third, the Department could support school districts in developing ways to provide parents/guardians with information on how their child is progressing towards mastery of the standards; for example, using standard-based reporting systems and requiring districts to report on a child's performance with vertical alignment to the grade-level skills as a continuum. Curriculum should be representative of the students' demographics and this is ensured by developing anti-racist curriculum that represents students and their cultures. Beyond representation, students need the opportunity to learn and experience the rich diversity of our country. Representation in the curriculum would be better supported if materials were vetted more thoroughly, for example, materials being vetted by Native American people for Native American learners.

Emerging Priority: Data disaggregation for key sub-populations and inclusion of Bureau of Indian Education data

Outcomes/Findings

The Southwest RAC noted a need for disaggregated data regarding some of the priority areas for some subgroups, particularly American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) and subgroups within special education. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is a "state" represented within the Southwest region; however, it was not possible to pull out BIE data from "Information about Southwest Region Districts and Schools" (see Appendix C), so it was unclear where – if at all – BIE school data were included.

Priority Needs

Over 10% of the student population is AI/AN in two states within the Southwest region: New Mexico and Oklahoma. In BIE schools, 100% of the student population is AI/AN.

- While Special Education data are mostly readily available, data on each of the 13 categories under IDEA were lacking.
- By not having robust data on AI/AN populations and special education populations, the Southwest RAC was unable to consider more robust findings, unique needs, and possible recommendations within the first five priorities in this report.

Technical Assistance Recommendation

We recommend ensuring data are collected and made easily available. Processes for identification, collection, and reporting data must include AI/AN and special education experts from a variety of perspectives and must be done with particular sensitivities to these two populations of students.

Conclusion

The Southwest region is a diverse community that includes the states of Arkansas, Bureau of Indian Education, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The Southwest RAC collected and reviewed data from a variety of sources, including federal data sets such as the National Assessment Educational Progress (NAEP), National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), public comments, feedback provided by Chief State School Officers, Governor's board, and example Federal and state reports. As such, the priority needs voted on by the RAC committee members during the public meeting on October 12, 2023, were:

- **Priority 1:** Issues Related to Broadband Access
- **Priority 2:** Teacher Preparation and Retention
- **Priority 3:** Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners
- **Priority 4:** Career and Technical Education and Postsecondary Opportunities
- **Priority 5:** Creation and Implementation of Curriculum Aligned to Standards

These were identified as priority needs due to the extent that the data demonstrated each to be areas in which technical assistance from the Department is critical. Broadband access is a significant need, especially for rural and low-income communities. While this issue has always created equity gaps for students, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this issue significantly when students and families were told they would be engaging in learning from home. The reality is if we are to prepare 21st century learners for future job and career opportunities for the future economy, access to broadband is no longer an optional tool for our students.

Teacher preparation and retention is an area that has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools and districts in the Southwest struggle to find highly qualified educators to teach and prepare students for the workforce. In our current climate, more and more states are moving towards loosening up requirements to be able to fully staff classrooms. These two priority needs further impact the next concern for our region, opportunity gaps among different groups of learners. It is clear from the data that the Southwest region has opportunity gaps and needs technical assistance for schools and districts to best serve the needs of the students in this region, especially for students categorized with a disability and English learners.

The area of career and technical education and postsecondary opportunities is a focus area due to the need to further train and develop students for their future, their communities, and the development of the economy in the region. The last priority to be addressed is the creation and implementation of curriculum aligned to standards. It is increasingly important as states in the Southwest region are filling classrooms with less prepared teachers, states are moving away from national standards, and the increasing connectedness of the workforce of our country. To summarize, these problems of practice in the Southwest region can be improved with technical support to the states. The Southwest RAC has outlined in this report detailed ways that technical assistance from the Department can improve the region. The support from technical assistance will further the great work of educators throughout the Southwest region and move our region to further prepare our students for their unique and beautiful futures.

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Appendix A. Chart of Nominated, Recommended, and Serving RAC Members

Number of Individuals Nominated, Recommended, and Serving on the Southwest RAC

Region	Nominated	Recommended by the U.S. Department of Education	Declined	Resigned	Accepted, Serving
Southwest	31	14	0	1	13

Appendix B. List of RAC Members

Southwest RAC members represented local and state education agencies; institutions of higher education; parents; practicing educators, including classroom teachers; and organizations serving youth, educators, or both. Members include:

Regional Chair

- Ms. Stephanie Thompson, President, Farmington Municipal Schools Board

RAC Members

- Ms. Nilam Agrawal, Parent Advocate
- Ms. Elisa Beguería, Superintendent, Lake Arthur Municipal Schools
- Mr. Richard Bowman, Chief Information and Strategy Officer Albuquerque Public Schools
- Dr. Lesley Casarez, Education Specialist, Counseling and Mental Health, ESC Region 15
- Ms. Jennifer L. Chidsey, Associate Commissioner of Organizational Development, Texas Education Agency
- Mr. Dudley Darrow, Superintendent, Chisholm Public Schools
- Ms. Margo Kickingbird DeLaune, Director, Division of Performance & Accountability, Bureau of Indian Education
- Dr. Anya Dozier Enos, Education Development Director, Santa Fe Indian School
- Dr. Stephanie Hinton, Director of Early Childhood, Oklahoma City Public Schools
- Dr. Sylvia Leal, Senior Program Officer for Education and Economic Opportunity, T.L.L. Temple Foundation
- Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Impact Officer, Louisiana Department of Education
- Dr. Jane Nell Guyer Luster, President, Com-Link, LLC

Appendix C. Southwest Profile (Comprehensive)

The following profile shows recent data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education for the Southwest region, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Data for each state is included along with high-level data comparing information across the regions. The following topic areas are included:

- Information about Districts and Schools
- Student Enrollment Information
- Graduation Information
- Student Academic Information
- Student Non-Academic Information
- Teacher Information
- Teacher Qualifications
- Teacher Shortages
- Financial Resources
- Resources

Note that data includes the most recent tables available in July 2023. In some instances, data have not been disaggregated by jurisdiction so national data have been included as a reference point. Where appropriate, Reflection Questions have been provided for consideration.

Overall Reflection Questions

- What is your overall reaction to the data presented?
 - *Is it what you expected?*
 - *If it was not what you expected, what surprised you?*
- What other data do you need to help you better understand the needs in your jurisdiction or region?
- Are the data available at the state level or do you have access to this data through another vehicle?
- How can the needs assessment help you attain this data?
- What do you believe are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction/region?
- Why do you believe these are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction?
- What input would you like to hear from other stakeholders?
- How will you collect that input?

Information about Southwest Region Districts and Schools

Totals by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Operating Districts (2020-21) ¹	Total Number of Operating Public Schools (2020-21) ¹	Total Number of Charter Schools (2020-21) ²	Total Number of Private Schools (Fall 2019)
Arkansas	303	1,080	86	170
Louisiana	193	1,353	146	410
New Mexico	147	886	97	170
Oklahoma	595	1,789	66	180
Texas	1,229	9,002	955	1,740

Note 1: Profiles were prepared using the most recent publicly available data. The most recent set of private school data provided was fall 2019, whereas the tables used for reporting the districts and public/charter school data were updated for the 2020-21 school year.

Note 2: Operating schools/districts include all those providing services at the start of the reported school year.

Student Enrollment Information

Jurisdiction	Total Public School Enrollment (Fall 2019)	Public PreK-8 Enrollment (Fall 2021)	Public Grades 9-12 Enrollment (Fall 2021)	Enrollment in Private Schools
Arkansas	489,565	343,802	145,763	30,800
Louisiana	683,216	482,964	200,252	132,100
New Mexico	316,785	215,561	101,224	21,310
Oklahoma	698,696	498,515	200,181	38,210
Texas	5,428,613	3,791,583	1,637,030	318,130

Note: Public schools include traditional public and charter schools.

3–5-year-old Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (% distribution by race/ethnicity) (2021)

Jurisdiction	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races
Arkansas	47.2%	49.0%	55.2%	36.2%	++	++	++	40.2%
Louisiana	57.7%	59.8%	56.7%	49.6%	++	++	++	63.3%
New Mexico	46.0%	50.4%	++	46.2%	++	++	46.5%	++
Oklahoma	54.0%	55.9%	43.6%	46.0%	53.3%	++	58.0%	59.9%
Texas	51.3%	57.6%	48.7%	47.5%	51.8%	++	++	57.5%

†Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

++Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

Note: Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native did not meet reporting standards. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate, or the CV is 50 percent or greater.

**Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (% distribution by total)
(Fall 2021)**

Jurisdiction	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Two or More Races
Arkansas	59.4%	19.6%	13.9%	1.7%	1.0%	0.6%	3.8%
Louisiana	43.0%	42.1%	9.4%	1.6%	0.1%	0.6%	3.3%
New Mexico	21.2%	1.8%	63.2%	1.2%	0.1%	10.2%	2.3%
Oklahoma	46.3%	7.9%	19.3%	2.1%	0.4%	11.6%	12.4%
Texas	26.3%	12.8%	52.7%	4.8%	0.2%	0.3%	2.9%

Number of Students by School Locale (Fall 2019)

Jurisdiction	City	Suburban	Town	Rural
Arkansas	146,130	65,743	106,441	177,483
Louisiana	209,607	212,997	91,481	196,354
New Mexico	111,767	45,620	89,282	83,712
Oklahoma	179,291	157,125	153,336	212,977
Texas	2,230,877	1,718,922	508,480	1,037,119

English Language Learners (Fall 2020)

Jurisdiction	Total	Percentage of Total Enrollment
United States	4,963,388	10.3%
Arkansas	39,265	8.3%
Louisiana	27,339	4.1%
New Mexico	49,497	16.0%
Oklahoma	60,282	9.2%
Texas	1,034,543	20.1%

Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (2019–2020)^{a,b}

Jurisdiction	Total	Percentage of Total Enrollment
United States	26,000,645a	52.1%a
Arkansas	324,538	65.5%
Louisiana	403,194	56.8%
New Mexico	237,085	71.9%
Oklahoma	415,558	59.1%
Texas	3,310,103	60.2%

^a For the United States data, total includes imputation for nonreporting states.

^b Imputation for survey nonresponse. State-level imputations for 2017-18 through 2019-20 were based on the reported percentages for 2015-16 (the most recent year for which percentages were reported) applied to the 2017-2018 through 2019-20 enrollments.

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Arkansas

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	X	12	190	89	X	629	52
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	X	12	190	89	X	629	52
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	435	532	15,118	7,960	443	39,702	2,354

X: Data suppressed due to small size.

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Louisiana

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	11	50	1,890	288	3	2,229	208
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	42	108	3,464	562	7	3,934	265
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

-- Data not available

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – New Mexico

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	232	X	73	3,172	X	1,021	86
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	319	X	30	1,948	X	1,067	90
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	5,377	242	1,044	32,418	46	10,074	1,110

X: Data suppressed due to small size.

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Oklahoma

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	147	52	193	34	10	1,623	219
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	874	67	196	579	7	2,466	607
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	16,524	1,027	10,371	17,277	241	52,851	12,132

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Texas

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	27	552	2,255	14,433	23	9,513	216
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	104	1,314	3,235	15,483	31	8,803	943
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	2,186	13,261	88,043	298,807	749	73,392	4,281

Student Enrollment Reflection Questions

- Based on the number of students by school locale, where are the majority of your students located?
- Looking at the enrollment distribution by race percentages, how diverse is your student population?
- How does the percentage of students qualifying as ELLs in your jurisdiction compare to the overall percentage of ELLs throughout the United States?
- How does the percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) in your jurisdiction compare to the overall percentage of students qualifying for FRPL throughout the United States?

Graduation Information^{b,c,d,e,f}

Demographic	United States	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
Total ACGR for all Students	87%	89%	83%	77%	81%	-- (90% in 2018-19)
Percent Students with Disabilities (2019-2020)	71%	84%	69%	66%	88%	--
Percent English Learner (2019-2020)	71%	84%	50%	76%	84%	--
Percent Economically Disadvantaged (2019-2020)	81%	86%	78%	72%	87%	--
Homeless Enrolled (2019-2020)	--	78%	67%	59%	66%	--
Foster Care (2019-2020)	--	65%	54%	39%	58%	--
Private High School Graduates (2018-2019)	340,610	1,680	10,200	1,190	2,240	16,790

--Not available

ACGR by Race/Ethnicity % (2019-2020)^g

Jurisdiction	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races
Arkansas	91%	85%	87%	86%	89%	86%
Louisiana	88%	79%	73%	94%	78%	83%
New Mexico	81%	74%	76%	87%	72%	++
Oklahoma	83%	75%	77%	83%	80%	84%
Texas	--	--	--	--	--	--

++Reporting standards not met.

--Not available.

^b Numbers are the public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by selected student characteristics for 2019-2020.

^c The time when students are identified as having certain characteristics varies by state. Depending on the state, a student may be included in a category if the relevant characteristic is reported in 9th-grade data, if the characteristic is reported in 12-grade data, or if it is reported at any point during the student's high school years.

^d Students who met the state criteria for classification as economically disadvantaged.

^e Students who meet the definition of English Learners as outlined in the Department of Education *EDFacts* workbook. For more information, see [EDFacts Workbook](#).

^f Students identified as children with disabilities under the IDEA.

⁸ States either report data for a combined “Asian/Pacific Islander” group or report the “Asian” and “Pacific Islander” groups separately. Total represents either a single value reported by the state for “Asian/Pacific Islander” or an aggregation of separate values reported for “Asian” and “Pacific Islander.” “Asian/Pacific Islander” includes the “Filipino” group. Number represent the Total reported Asian/Pacific Islander.

Graduation Rates Reflection Questions

- Do you collect data on 5-year graduation cohorts? If so, how does it compare to the 4-year cohort ACGR?
- Which, if any, graduation rate would you prioritize to increase over the next 5 years?

Student Academic Information

To compare students nationally, we have provided results from the fourth and eighth grade math and reading National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results. NAEP—a congressionally mandated large-scale assessment administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)—consists of print and digital assessments in various subject areas. Three of these subjects—mathematics, reading, and science—are assessed most frequently and reported at the state and select district level, usually for grades 4 and 8. The Nation’s Report Card provides results on student performance based on gender, race/ethnicity, public or nonpublic school, teacher experience, and hundreds of other factors.

NAEP assessment results are reported as average scores on a 0-500 scale (reading, mathematics at grades 4 and 8, U.S. history, and geography) or on a 0-300 scale (mathematics at grade 12, science, writing, technology and engineering literacy, and civics). These scale scores, derived from student responses to assessment questions, summarize the overall level of performance attained by that student. Scale scores for individual students are not reported, but summary statistics describing scale scores for groups of students (demographic, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.) are reported. More information about NAEP can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

Academic Achievement: NAEP (2022) National and State Averages

Jurisdiction	4th Grade Math	4th Grade Reading	8th Grade Math	8th Grade Reading
United States	235	216	273	259
Arkansas	228	212	267	255
Louisiana	229	212	266	257
New Mexico	221	202	259	248
Oklahoma	229	208	264	251
Texas	239	214	273	255

Student Academic Factors Reflection Questions

- How did students in your jurisdiction compare to the national average of students on the NAEP results?
- Given the national average NAEP score, what goal(s) would you set for your students to achieve on the next NAEP administration? For example, would you like the results to stay stable or would you want to see a 3-point increase on 4th grade math? What do you need to achieve this goal?

Non-Academic Information

Non-academic factors for students include suspension and expulsion rates. Additionally, the most recently reported data regarding students who have carried firearms to schools and have experienced bullying (both on school property and electronically) have been included.

Percentage of Students Suspended or Expelled from Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Gender and Ethnicity (2017–2018)ⁱ

Percent who Received Out-of-School Suspensions^j

Demographic	United States	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
Total	5.0%	7.3%	9.0%	5.5%	5.1%	4.2%
Male	6.8%	9.5%	12.1%	7.5%	7.2%	5.7%
Female	3.0%	5.0%	5.8%	3.5%	2.8%	2.7%
White	3.4%	4.7%	5.1%	4.4%	4.3%	2.3%
Black	12.3%	13.9%	13.2%	9.6%	13.3%	9.8%
Hispanic	4.0%	7.6%	4.9%	6.0%	4.1%	3.4%
Asian	1.0%	4.8%	1.8%	2.0%	1.1%	3.9%
Pacific Islander	4.9%	8.6%	4.7%	4.0%	4.7%	0.7%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	6.9%	8.9%	8.1%	5.4%	4.9%	2.6%
Two or More Races	5.5%	14.9%	6.2%	4.8%	4.1%	3.3%

Percent Expelled^k

Demographic	United States	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
Total	0.2%	0.3%	0.8%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Male	0.3%	0.5%	1.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%
Female	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%
White	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Black	0.5%	0.7%	1.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%
Hispanic	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Asian	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
Two or More Races	0.2%	0.4%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%

ⁱData by race/ethnicity excludes students with disabilities served only under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (i.e., those not receiving services under IDEA).

^jAn out-of-school suspension is an instance in which a student is temporarily removed from his or her regular school (either in person or virtual) for disciplinary purposes for at least half a day (but less than the remainder of

the school year) to another setting (e.g., home or behavior center). Out-of-school suspensions include removals with or without the continuation of educational services.

^kExpulsions are actions taken by a local education agency to remove a student from his or her regular school (either in person or virtual) for disciplinary purposes, with or without the continuation of education services, for the remainder of the school year or longer, in accordance with local education agency policy. Expulsions also include removals resulting from violations of the Gun Free Schools Act that are modified to less than 365 days.

Firearms (2019-2020)

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Students Who Brought Firearms to or Possessed Firearms at School	Number of Students Who did this per 100,000 Students, Enrolled
United States	2,431	4.8
Arkansas	69	13.9
Louisiana	148	20.8
New Mexico	45	13.6
Oklahoma	33	4.7
Texas	150	2.7

Bullying (2017)

Jurisdiction	Percentage of Public School Students Bullied on School Property ^l	Percentage of Public School Students Electronically Bullied ^m
United States	19.0%	14.9%
Arkansas	26.7%	19.7%
Louisiana	23.8%	21.3%
New Mexico	18.7%	14.0%
Oklahoma	21.3%	16.1%
Texas	18.9%	14.7%

^lBullying was defined for respondents as “when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again.” “On school property” was not defined for survey respondents.

^mIncludes “being bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting” for 2011 through 2015, and “being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media” for 2017.

Student Non-Academic Factors Reflection Questions

- What policies are in place to address recent issues of school violence?
- How does your state compare to the national average? Is this a number you would like to change? What other information do you need to make an informed decision about this issue?

Teacher Information

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Public School Teachers (Fall 2019)	Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Fall 2020)	Teachers in Private Schools
Arkansas	38,629	12.9	2,660
Louisiana	38,589	18.4	11,050
New Mexico	21,850	15.2	1,960
Oklahoma	43,315	16.2	3,420
Texas	364,478	15.1	28,560

Teacher Qualifications

The following table includes the highest degree earned and years of full-time teaching experience by state and United States. Data from 2011-2012 was the latest data reported at the national level.

Jurisdiction	Degree Levels, Percentage - Less than Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Master's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage - Education Specialist or Doctor's (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - Less than 3 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - 3 to 9 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - 10 to 20 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience - Over 20 (2011-2012)
United States	3.8%	39.9%	47.7%	8.7%	9.0%	33.3%	36.4%	21.3%
Arkansas	3.7%!	54.7%	35.0%	6.6%	11.5%	28.9%	32.3%	27.3%
Louisiana	3.5%!	61.9%	27.0%	7.6%	8.6%	31.2%	33.4%	26.8%
New Mexico	4.3%!	43.3%	42.1%	10.3%	8.0%!	30.9%	40.3%	20.8%
Oklahoma	4.3%	65.6%	26.9%	3.2%!	9.8%	30.1%	36.9%	23.3%
Texas	3.3%	66.4%	25.8%	4.6%	8.9%	40.4%	31.1%	19.7%

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

Number and Percentage Distribution of Teachers Enrolled in Traditional and Alternative Programs

Jurisdiction	Number Enrolled in a Teacher Preparation Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Traditional Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Alternative Program-(Institute of Higher Education [IHE]) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Enrolled in an Alternative Program-(Not IHE based) (2019-2020)
United States	590,046	69.9%	8.3%	21.9%
Arkansas	5,914	60.1%	22.2%	17.7%
Louisiana	5,432	50.1%	17.5%	32.4%
New Mexico	2,791	42.8%	53.1%	4.2%
Oklahoma	4,100	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Texas	128,156	21.9%	2.7%	75.4%

Number and Percentage Distribution of Teachers Who Completed Traditional and Alternative Programs

Jurisdiction	Number of Completers in a Teacher Preparation Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in by Traditional Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in Alternative Program- (Institute of Higher Education [IHE]) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in an Alternative Program- (Not IHE based) (2019-2020)
United States	151,138	76.8%	11.4%	11.8%
Arkansas	1,787	69.1%	19.9%	11.0%
Louisiana	1,759	47.1%	20.8%	32.1%
New Mexico	775	49.8%	42.8%	7.4%
Oklahoma	1,178	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Texas	19,968	45.9%	4.2%	50.0%

Teacher Information Reflection Questions

- Given national issues of teacher shortages, where are the priority areas in your state?
- What teacher preparation institutions or alternative programs does your state offer? Are these programs going to fulfill your educator needs in the next 5 years?

Financial Resources by State

Description	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – Federal (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$2,191,507	\$1,627,228	\$596,816	\$1,130,566	\$9,057,295
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – State (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$3,044,599	\$4,078,383	\$3,356,381	\$3,618,387	\$27,559,808
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – Local (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$2,292,396	\$4,620,744	\$797,922	\$3,182,458	\$36,356,966
Amounts and percentage changes of inflation-adjusted state, local, and federal revenues per pupil (FY2021)	\$13,115	\$14,898	\$14,995	\$11,427	\$13,582
Percentage change from FY20-21	8.4%	9.5%	1.2%	3.8%	3.3%
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction - Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$5,465,366	\$9,137,829	\$3,774,331	\$6,999,259	\$59,364,375
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction - Instruction (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$3,025,762	\$5,037,219	\$2,202,422	\$4,033,787	\$35,173,858
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction -Support Services (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$2,177,960	\$3,653,564	\$1,440,401	\$2,590,517	\$21,882,372
Current expenditures per pupil - Total (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$11,239	\$13,183	\$11,912	\$10,084	\$11,049
Title I expenditures per pupil - (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$324	\$387	\$445	\$355	\$305
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction - Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$5,465,366	\$9,137,829	\$3,774,331	\$6,999,259	\$59,364,375

Description	Arkansas	Louisiana	New Mexico	Oklahoma	Texas
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction - Instruction and Instruction-related total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$3,518,335	\$5,520,684	\$3,170,100	\$4,325,515	\$38,346,938
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction -Support Services Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$1,685,387	\$2,296,568	\$,1346,255	\$2,298,799	\$18,709,292

Financial Resources Reflection Questions

- Looking at the subfunction allocations, are expenditures allocated proportionately in the correct places?
- How do educator salaries in your state compare to other professional careers?

Appendix D. Summary of Stakeholder Input

Data Source	# of Responses	Time Period	Topics by Category
Public Comments	196	August 18, 2023 – October 15, 2023	Counts from the coding of the public comments. Some comments received multiple codes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Prep and Recruitment – 64 • Funding – 34 • Social Emotional Needs – 14 • CTE/Post Secondary – 11 • Facilities/ Transportation – 10 • Students with Disabilities – 9 • Bilingual/Dual Language Student Needs – 4 • Class Size – 4 • Disadvantaged Students – 4 • Curriculum – 2 • Other – 41
CSSO	1	September 15, 2023 – October 10, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Prep and Recruitment • High-quality Instructional Materials