

RAC – Appalachia Region
Meeting #3
November 14, 2023

- [Muhammad] Good morning, everybody. My name is Muhammad Kara. I'm the Designated Federal Official for the Appalachia region. This meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. Next slide. The meeting will come to order for the Appalachia region, for the Regional Advisory Committee meeting. I'm going to conduct a roll call.

When I read your name aloud, please take yourself off of mute, say "present," and then put yourself back on mute. And I apologize for the external noise, if you all are hearing that. First on my list is Andrea Trio? Next on my list is Amber Nichols?

- [Amber] Present.

- Thank you. Next on my list is Adam Cheeseman?

- [Adam] Present.

- Thank you. Next on my list is Andi Webb?

- [Dr. Webb] Present.

- Thank you. Next on my list is Shannon Grimsley?

- [Dr. Grimsley] Present.

- Thank you. Next on my list is Cora Coefield? Next is Brittany Oman. Next is Shanae Mosley?

- [Shanae] Present.

- Thank you. Next is Angela Hargrave?

- [Dr. Hargrave] Present.

- Next is Rachel White? Next is Aimee McDonald?

- [Aimee] Present.

- Next is Sabrina McElroy? Next is Robbie Fletcher.
- [Dr. Fletcher] Present.
- Next is Brandi Hitzelberger? Next is Mike Hogg? Next is Rebecca Roach? And last is Heather Crabbe?
- [Heather] Present.
- Okay. Thank you so much. Did I call, have I... Did I miss anybody? Or if you just recently joined, if I called your name, please let me know if I haven't marked you present. With that...
- Mr. Kara, we do have Andrea Trio that's showing up as a member, but she did not say present earlier, I do not believe.
- I'll make a note of that. Thank you so much.
- Thank you.
- With that, we have met quorum, which means that we can continue with voting privileges for this meeting. At this time, you know, I would like to acknowledge how I would like members to engage in this meeting. If you would like to raise...if you have a question, or would like to make a comment, please use the Raise Hand function, and our chair, Dr. Fletcher, will call on you, and acknowledge you that way.

We'll move on to the next slide. So for today's agenda, we're going to review the recommended priorities identified in the draft report. We'll review the data collection section of the report. We'll review each identified priority, and any emerging needs. We will deliberate on the draft report.

And then we will conduct a final vote to approve the report and submit it to the Secretary of Education. Next slide. For our meeting objectives during this meeting, the subcommittee members will review the report of the assessment of the educational needs of the region and committee regions. Subcommittee members will review the data collection section, and recommended priority section.

After sections are reviewed, the full committee can discuss the report, propose specific changes, or accept the report as written. And if changes are approved or proposed, the committee will vote to accept the section with revisions. And then

lastly, finally, the full committee will conduct a final vote to approve the report and submit it to the Secretary of Education.

At this time, I will pass it on to Dr. Fletcher.

- Thank you, Mr. Kara. The first item on our agenda here is to talk about the summarize...to summarize our needs-sensing activities. So to start, there were, initial public comments were gathered concerning the top educational needs, the rationale for each of the needs, information that would provide a better understanding of the needs, and additional comments about educational needs, and methods for addressing these needs.

A review of these described profile data and the public comments served as the foundation in our needs-sensing process to determine the region's highest priorities. After this initial phase, RAC members developed an action plan which included surveys of superintendents, executive directors, the REL governing board, governors, and state school officials, administrators, teachers, parents, and other educators.

They were asked questions similar to...there was a variety of questions, but for the most part, these were the questions that were asked. What are the highest priority needs, educational needs in your region? Which student groups demonstrate the greatest needs? What are the barriers?

How can a federal technical assistance provider support your region? Also articles, as well as secondary publicly available data involving student voice, parental involvement, teacher shortage and recruitment, employers, and attendance and truancy were reviewed, and findings were summarized.

Is there anything that any of the group would like to add to that? Hearing none, let's move on to the next slide, please. During Meeting 2, the committee voted to approve the following recommended priorities, and they were... This was done on October 13th, with chronic absenteeism being the first, employer workforce preparation and needs next, family engagement, teacher shortage and recruitment, student and teacher mental health.

Then, for each priority, the committee summarized the needs, and generated strategies to meet the needs through technical assistance. Next slide, please. The writing subcommittee members and assignments were as follows. Dr. Rebecca

Roach took the lead on family engagement, Dr. Andi Webb was the lead on teacher recruitment and retention, and I, Dr.

Robbie Fletcher helped with recruitment and retention. I also helped with the final review. Dr. Angela Hargrave handled chronic absenteeism, Dr. Sabrina McElroy also assisted with chronic absenteeism. Dr. Rachel White handled student and teacher mental health, and she was the lead, and Dr.

Shannon Grimsley handled employer workforce preparation and needs lead. So at this point, we're going to summarize each of the areas, talk about the data collection, and recommend priorities. And to start, if we could go back one slide, please... I'm sorry, could we see the slides one more time, please?

Well, as you're getting the slides back up, Dr. Roach was unable to attend today, so I'm going to summarize the family engagement portion. First, she tackled, with what was the input from the RAC, teacher preparation, and the Appalachian RAC identified engaging teacher preparation in the area of family engagement as a need.

Regardless of decades of research documenting the positive impacts of family engagement, a recent study conducted by the National Association of Families, Schools, and Community Engagement reported only 14% of department heads believe their education candidates are as prepared for family engagement as they are in other areas of teaching, and only one-third believed family engagement was a high priority for their teacher education programs.

The study identified the following potential deficits in teacher preparation. Only half offered a course in family and community engagement, and most of those were courses focused on special needs rather than content. Two, families as leaders in utilizing family knowledge in school curriculum were rarely taught in courses for future teachers.

Three, practical experience or simulations to practice family engagement was lacking in the curriculum. And four, programs lacked opportunities for future teachers to facilitate family workshops or engage in home visits. The survey also reported a lack of resources for, and knowledge among faculty to teach this topic. This may be due to the many other course requirements that programs must offer...or I'm sorry, must cover.

The Appalachian RAC also identified engaging grand-families in schools as a current need due to the increase in grand-families over the last five decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2018, approximately 1.3 million U.S. children under the age of 18 lived with and received care from a grandparent, a demographic that only accounted for 3% of all American children in 1970.

When grandparents assume kinship care for their grandchildren, they also assume responsibility for those grandchildren's education within their legal relationship status as caregivers. Although the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act protects students' rights to privacy of their educational records, FERPA also allows access to these records to families who provide care for students under the age of 18.

FERPA includes in its definition of parent an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. Regardless, access to records research indicates grandparents who provide informal care may be less likely to ask school staff for assistance than grandparents who have established a legal relationship with their grandchildren.

Regardless of their legal caregiving status...I'm sorry, regardless of their legal caregiving status, many grandparents are still unsure of their role in supporting their grandchildren's education. So as it relates to family engagement, is there any other input from our RAC members? Hearing none, let's move on to our second.

Was teacher prep-...

I'm sorry, our second one dealt with recruitment, teacher recruitment and retention. It was teacher shortage in recruitment. So I think Dr. Webb, if you could, please.

- Yes, thank you, Dr. Fletcher. So for this priority, teacher shortage and recruitment, our outcomes and findings, we discussed and agreed upon the results of the need assessment activities that were conducted by members. We agreed that this indicated teacher shortment and recruitment...teacher shortage and recruitment as a high priority for our region.

Different survey responses indicated that stakeholders repeatedly referenced teacher shortage and recruitment as one of the top educational needs for Appalachia. Also, data collected from the U.S. Department of Education

website shows that teacher shortage areas have increased dramatically since the early 1990s.

From a state and regional perspective, representatives from the REL Governing Board and the Kentucky Governor's Office staff listed teacher recruitment and retention as one of the highest priority needs. Sorry, just pausing a moment. I won't read it all, I'm just trying to get some of the highlights. So you can see for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, the number of designated teacher shortage areas for the Appalachia region for these selected years, and then some of the priority needs that were agreed upon.

You can go ahead and scroll down. So, superintendents throughout the region have cited teacher recruitment and retention as the most common educational challenge and need, with over 90% of superintendents surveyed citing this as a challenge. It's a priority issue definitely for K-12.

Also within higher education this was a concern, with committees citing a marked decrease in college and university students pursuing a career in education continuing to contribute to the teacher shortage. It was noted by a committee member from West Virginia that all 55 districts were experiencing a teacher shortage not only with just teachers, certified teachers, but also with substitute personnel to cover teachers when they need to be out, including even bus drivers.

If we can then scroll down. Thank you. The teacher shortage is definitely a real concern in education, and drastic efforts need to be made to not only recruit, but to retain teachers. Plus, the problem just continues to worsen.

Some of our data was submitted by research through the Economic Policy Institute, as well as LPI. The shortage is even more acute than estimated, and high poverty schools suffer the most from the teacher shortage, and this has only worsened after the COVID-19 global pandemic. High teacher attrition consumes economic resources that are better used elsewhere, and unfortunately, teaching is often not viewed as a valued profession, and the teacher shortage increases the devalued view of teachers.

And ultimately, as we all know, the teacher shortage hurts students, and it disproportionately hurts students in low socioeconomic areas, as well as minority students. To raise the bar, and to lead the world, we must begin by

boldly improving our efforts for teacher recruitment, retention, and respect for the teaching profession.

- Thank you, Dr. Webb.

- Thank you.

- Any other comments about the teacher shortage, and recruitment? All right. I believe Dr. Hargrave is driving, so I'm going to take some time to go over the chronic absenteeism. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, chronic absenteeism occurs when a student has missed at least 10% of the school year, regardless of the number of excused versus unexcused absences.

The Kids Count data center division of the Annie E. Casey Foundation provides percentages of 4th grade students who are chronically absent every two years, beginning in 2003. While the percentages fluctuate in the Appalachia region from 2003 to 2015, from a low of 16% in Kentucky in 2009, to a high in West Virginia at 26% in 2009, the percentage of chronically absent students has steadily risen since 2015, with a more dramatic increase since the COVID pandemic.

And if you'll scroll up, you can see the chart, just a little bit. If you'll see that West Virginia went from a low of 22% to 39% in 2022, Virginia, a low of 19%, to a high of 32% in 2022, and Tennessee, again, a low of 19%, up to 35%, and in Kentucky, a low of 19%, and a high of 35% in 2022.

Based on this research, the RAC members experiences within the education field in the region, chronic absenteeism has been identified as a priority for us. The needs related to this priority include supports for families experiencing economic, social, or emotional barriers to regular attendance, parent and student engagement, restorative practices, community engagement and sponsorship, funding, expanded curriculum to include more opportunities for industry certifications.

So that deals with chronic absenteeism. Do we have any comments?

- If not, Dr. White again I think is on a layover, I will handle also the student and teacher mental health talking points. And according to Dr. White, and the research that we've put together, one in three superintendents that responded to our needs assessment survey noted an increased need in mental health resources since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, a majority of educators voiced concerns about student depression, anxiety, and trauma, and research data shows a large increase in the numbers of students seeking mental health services. Many districts continue to add staff positions such as counselors, social workers, mental health coordinators, and behavior interventionists to address student and staff mental health. But stakeholders listed additional funding and training for teachers as the highest priority need in the area of mental health and wellness.

In particular, there is a critical need for funding, and capacity for more nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists. Additionally, we recommend supports to help LEAs identify the impact of ESSER funds ending, and the sustainability of mental health and well-being programs that were launched using those funds. Next, we recommend training for professional development for teachers, bus drivers, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, principals, and district administrators, and other supports for the provision of such training related to mental health and social-emotional well-being.

We also recommend supporting LEAs by sharing best practices on how to reduce counselor-to-student ratios. Finally, we recommend support for schools and districts to integrate trauma-informed instruction into their day-to-day work, and for educator and leader preparation programs to incorporate training on trauma-informed instruction into their curriculum, as well as guidance for educator preparation programs on how to incorporate training and support for aspiring educators and education leaders in the area of mental health, both for themselves and for their students.

So that leaves us with Dr. Grimsley, and you have about two minutes for our employer workforce and preparation needs. So Dr. Grimsley, if you could, please.

- Yes, Dr. Chairman. Thank you very much. Really quickly, employer workforce preparation was identified as a priority. Much of the data from needs-sensing activities came from the Appalachia Regional Commission reports and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that really outlined the unique nature of the Appalachian region, both coal counties and non-coal counties. So there is some supporting data in the report about that, but basically, there are key considerations that we recommend be looked at, especially for economic competitiveness, bridging skills gaps in K-12, reduced unemployment rates,

addressing income inequality, future-proofing, and reduced reliance on social services.

There has been a lot of support in Kentucky using a model of private-public partnerships that provide apprenticeships in K-12. So there are suggestions for technical assistance there, as well as establishing place-based educational opportunities to exemplify community assets that bolster the regional workforce.

So that sums up that section.

- Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Dr. Grimsley. Okay, if we can move on to the next slide, please, if we could go to slide 11? So at this point, everyone in the group has had the opportunity to review this report. It's been in our SharePoint for the past few days.

And a question to ask, does the report accurately represent this RAC's deliberation and needs-sensing around priorities? And is anything inaccurate, or is there anything missing, such as data, needs-sensing activities, etc? So at this point, I'll open it to the group.

Do you have any, again, concerns about the accuracy, or anything that was missing?

- Dr. Fletcher, I think it accurately represents all of our deliberations and needs-sensing around our priorities.

- Thank you, Dr. Webb.

- You're welcome.

- Are there any recommended edits from anyone? Any specific changes? I have great wait time, I used to be a math teacher. Okay, I will take it that everyone has had the opportunity to review prior to this meeting, and as also with our activities during this meeting.

So at this point, members, as I call the vote, please use the Raise Hand function so we can accurately call a vote and take a screenshot for the record. I call for a vote for the Appalachia RAC to accept or propose as its edits for the report as revised during this meeting. Do I have a motion?

- So motion.

- Motion by Dr. Webb. Do I have a second?

- Second.

- I'll second.

- Second by Dr. Grimsley. Any further discussion? If not, please show that you're in favor by using the Raise Hand function. So what I have on my screen is Andi Webb, Heather Crabbe, Shannon Grimsley, Shanae Mosley, Adam Cheeseman, Robbie Fletcher, Amber Nichols, Angela Hargrave, Andrea Trio, Aimee McDonald are all in favor.

Is there anyone that I've missed? Have we taken a screenshot? That's 10 votes. Mr. Kara, is that enough to pass? I believe it is.

- It is. I'm waiting for our tech folks to let us know when the screenshot has been taken. So just keep your hands up.

- Thank you, sir. Yes, sir.

- [Dave] The screenshot has been taken.

- Okay.

- So I will take it back at this time. So now that the vote has been taken, everybody can lower their hands. Well, that concludes our meeting. Now that the vote has been passed, the report itself has been confirmed, and is going to be set in stone, in a sense.

So at this time, unless there are any questions before I adjourn the meeting, I just want to make note of that before I adjourn...

- Mr. Kara, I do have one question.

- Yes?

- How much longer will the RAC have access to the SharePoint with all the information?

- That is a great question. I will have to defer to my other colleagues who may know. I will say, Michelle or Danielle, if you all have any feedback on that, I'm not 100% sure. I don't want to give you a wrong date.

But I can get back to you with an official date as well.

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- Okay. Thank you very much.

- Of course. So...

- And if I may, I want to also take an opportunity to thank everyone. All those that did the upfront work, thank you so much. Also those of you that took extra time to write this report, and also Ms. Beisel, you were excellent. You were a great help in all this process. And also Mr. Kara, thank you so much, sir.

We really appreciate this. And again, we hope that this moves on, and our Secretary will take our recommendations, and we'll move forward. And very thankful for the work and appreciate everyone's time.

- Thank you. With that, I move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee meeting for the Appalachia Region. I ask all committee members to come off mute, to say aye if they're in agreeance.

- Aye.

- Okay. Thank you. So the meeting is adjourned at 9:27, November 14th, for the Appalachia Region. Thank you all so much.