

**RAC – Central Region**  
**Meeting #3**  
**November 14, 2023**

- [Bekka] The meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Central Region. My name is Bekka Meyer, the Designated Federal official from the U.S. Department of Education, and I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. For those of you who have been waiting, thank you for your patience. We had a slight delay in our start time. Our first task is to conduct roll call.

So I'm going to read the names louder the committee members, and please respond with "present." Michele Williers?

- [Michele] Present.

- Mark Miller?

- [Mark] Present.

- Glenn Hancock?

- [Glenn] Present.

- Matt Good? Dr. Allison Fleetwood? Dr. Larianne Polk? Scott SchmidtBonne?

- [Scott] Present.

- Monica Waltman? Paige Fenton Hughes? Dr. Socorro Herrera?

- [Dr. Herrera] Present.

- Cat Palmer?

- [Cat] Present.

- And Dr. Jacque Eidson?

- [Dr. Eidson] Present.

- And with that, I'm confirming that we have met quorum, so we can move forward with the committee work and voting today. And for engaging in today's meeting, you can come off mute, you can raise your hand to participate, and the chair will call on you. Quickly you'll see here our agenda today is the call to order and the roll call, we'll review the meeting agenda and the objectives, we will review the recommended priorities of the committee and the draft report by section, we'll deliberate on the report draft, and then finally, vote to approve the report and the recommendations before we adjourn.

The objectives for this meeting are first to review the report draft and the recommended priorities. Second, the full committee will deliberate and comment on the draft. And finally, a vote on the approval of the report, which will be submitted to the Secretary of Education. To summarize the RAC needs-sensing activities, I'm going to turn it over to the chairperson, Cat Palmer.

- Thank you, Bekka. During our needs-sensing activities, the Central RAC relied on previous research studies, committee members' background knowledge and experiences, public comments. We received input from different state chief executive officers, the REL governing board, and other educational stakeholders.

We also had access to regional profile reports that we reviewed during Meeting 1. Those reports were created by the Manhattan Strategy Group. The reports included data from the National Center for Education Statistics. That public comment survey had a total of 169, about 169 responses, and the respondents of that survey were very wide-ranged.

We had school administrators, district staff, librarians, parents, more State Department of Education staff...yep, that looks like it for the needs-sensing. Bekka, Marbella, did I leave anything out?

- No, I think you're good.

- Okay. All right. So for our Central RAC priorities, during Meeting 2, the committee voted to approve five priorities for the Central Region. Okay, thank you.

So our first priority, educators in the pipeline, and meeting demand for educators. Our second priority, staff shortages, recruitment, and retention. Third priority, student achievement and growth. Fourth priority, students and staff

mental health and well-being. And the fifth priority, building culturally diverse and equitable two-way partnerships for schools and families.

For each priority, the committee summarized the needs, and generated strategies to meet the needs through recommended technical assistance. All right, during Meeting 2, we also voted on creating subcommittees to write the draft report.

So our Central RAC members voted for five subcommittee leads, and you can see the names of the RAC members that volunteered to either lead or support the writing of the draft reports for each priority. I'll just say it so it's also on the recording.

So for priority number one, we had Mark Miller lead, and Paige support. Priority number two, Cat Palmer, myself led, and Allison supported. Priority number three, Scott led, Mark supported. Priority number four, Dr. Polk led, Jacque and Monica supported. And priority number five, Dr.

Herrera led, Michele and Monica supported. Okay. So for this section, knowing that we do have a set amount of minutes, I'm just going to ask that each subcommittee chair quickly give us a two-minute summary of their priority, and maybe just pick out high-level, or summarize the technical assistance that we are requesting in the report.

If we have a chair that is not available today, I can read something off of the report, just as a high level here's the summary. And so, let's start with priority number one. Mark, you're here, so could you give us just a quick rundown of priority one?

- Absolutely. Thank you, Cat, and Paige, who's not here, for her work on this as well. We looked at priority one, educators in the pipeline, and meeting the demands for educators. The lack of qualified educators has a direct impact on the quality of education that students receive and can exasperate the learning and opportunity gaps that already exist.

Some ways that a comprehensive center can support local education agencies in addressing the priority need of meeting the increasing demand for educators are exploring different pathways to teacher certification, helping to strengthen alternative pathways to licensure, developing targeted recruitment strategies and initiatives to increase the diversity of the teaching workforce, collaborating

with local colleges and universities, and providing competency-based professional learning opportunities.

Done.

- Thanks, Mark. Our next priority is titled staff shortages, staff recruitment and Retention, and Allison supported writing this section. For this priority, during our needs-sensing activity, we really relied on our member experiences, the survey responses.

And then looking at past research that really highlighted the need in this area, that stakeholder survey, out of those responses, it was highlighted at least 27 times that this is a critical area for the Central Region, really focusing on qualified staff, and then just being able to retain the staff that currently works in the education sphere.

We looked at different studies that show, one study showed that 10% of educators are completely leaving the field. Where typically you would see educators maybe moved into administration roles, this study highlighted that not only are they not moving into admin roles, but they're leaving education entirely.

Another study showed that some of the fixes may not be implemented with fidelity, showing some inconsistencies in implementing these. And so one of the studies, we were looking at our mentorship programs, where I think that anyone in education understands the importance of mentorship, but we still haven't found a model that can successfully implement that, and show results that can be then scaled, right, for wider use.

And so looking at all of these data points in past research studies, we just felt that we're recommending that we investigate more into why people are leaving the field. And not just educators, but why are all staff, right, in the education sphere leaving? Why do staff decide to stay?

Why are teachers going on strike, right? So diving more into those investigations. And then we're requesting technical assistance on, okay, well, what are the best practices? Can you create something for us that we can then share, right, from the state level, down to our local school districts? So for priority number three, Scott.

- Hello. So priority number three is focused on student achievement as a mixed method type analysis, using both qualitative and quantitative metrics for consideration. We looked at both between and within, which is to say looking at within the Central Region, and variable performance across the various states comprising the Central Region, and then moving more broadly to see how the Central Region, relative to other regions within the country fared at two time frames, both pre and post-pandemic, and across two subject area tests, as associated with the NAEP assessment, those being English or ELA, and mathematics.

Findings include noting that there were...obviously, not having to justify student achievement as a needed priority, noting that it will be a perennial priority, and is an area of our great focus, we find that in both mathematics, and to perhaps a greater extent with ELA, declines were noted from before the pandemic to after the pandemic, with some significant variability within the states making up the Central Region.

Typically, we find that performance in the mathematic assessment was better than the ELA assessment, and looking within the grade levels we find more challenges for states at the 8th grade level than necessarily at the 4th grade level, though opportunities exist in both. So declines were noted in both the percent of students who are being identified as, you know, above a basic level, or above proficiency.

Additionally, we noted that those declines were also associated with the average scale score. So you see some distribution changes in performance, as well as the central tendency changing as well. If we take a step back and look at different student group performances, we find that certainly, many of the gaps we would look for between different racial groups or socioeconomic groups did in fact grow, but there were some positive movement in the right direction and closing of gaps between different socioeconomic groups.

However, we did note that some of the racial gaps did continue to grow, suggesting that there was an additional effect from the pandemic, potentially based on race, that supersedure continues to explain some variance beyond what we saw from a socioeconomic perspective. If we compare the performance of the Central Region to other regions within the United States and beyond outlying areas included in NAEP assessments, we find, again, some

variability, but generally, the Central Region performed admirably in comparison to the other regions.

When we focus on math changes in particular, we find that the Central Region ended up third amongst regions as it relates to average scores, maximum/minimums, etc. Some of our recommendations were to consider educational models that do not rely on staff to move us forward into higher achievement levels, continuing to investigate variability we identify in the data, and conducted between and within analyses of the regions to determine replicable success efforts occurring in each area.

This is a summarization of our recommendations and concludes my summary of priority three.

- Thank you. Our subcommittee chair for priority number four is not on the call today, so I will just read an excerpt from our report for students' mental health and well-being. Mental health and well-being in the educational system has emerged as a pressing concern, with profound implications for students, teachers, and communities.

To ensure that students receive the necessary support, it is crucial for the comprehensive centers to address these important issues, such as alternative pathways for certifications and professions, professional development for teachers, cautious review of AI-based tools, integration with positive behavioral interventions and supports, facilitating health insurance billing, public awareness campaigns, and destigmatization in strengthening community/school/home collaborations.

So we'll jump to priority number five. Dr. Herrera? You are muted, Dr. Herrera.

- I said that won't be good, if I'm muted. So it has been a longstanding conversation across educational context that families and caregiver partnerships are essential to the success of all students.

Our team found, and I'm just going to read from the needs-sensing information that was gathered for the Central Region, it says that public comment surveys conducted among stakeholders in the Central Region, including parents, educators, state-level educational leaders, and community members consistently emphasize the pressing need for culturally diverse and equitable two-way partnerships between schools and families.

These surveys clearly reflect the ground-level demand for improved school-family partnerships. Of the responses to the public comment for the Central Region, 21 out of 54 responses identified support for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and students with disability as a needed priority. Current research and attention to needs-sensing materials reveal the pressing needs faced by our schools, communities, and the barriers they face, and aspirations they are inspired by.

So building culturally and linguistically diverse and equitable two-way partnerships is not just a moral duty, but also a strategic imperative for educational excellence and social progress. It is the commitment to nurturing an inclusive educational environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive, and is in the path forward towards a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Consequently, our report urges decisive action. Some of the technical assistance that was identified included a focus on re-envisioning and restructuring school-centric perspectives that expand upon the definition of parental engagement and partnership, funding research that explores and models for mutual accommodation that draw from the funds of knowledge and assets of community and home, preparing all educators, pre-service, in-service administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals for the utilization of effective models of parental engagement and partnership, and work with policymakers to create state and national guidelines that promote more meaningful levels of family engagement and partnership in schools and classrooms.

All of this is grounded in the current research that has decades...you know, foundations for decades, and the needs-sensing surveys and conversations that were had across the Midwest. So, thank you.

- Perfect. Thank you. Okay. So this is the portion of our time together where we will discuss the accuracy of the report, and then deliberate on any suggested revisions from the central RAC members. Edits related to the writing style, grammar, or formatting preferences will not be discussed at this time, so our revisions should address the accuracy of the report.

So when you are ready, please type the requested change into the Zoom chat feature, cite the page number or page numbers, paragraph, and then proposed

alternate language. Then we will, as a committee, review the requested revision and then vote to approve the revision.

Are there any questions? You can take yourself off mute, raise your hand, or put a question in the chat. Okay. So let's go ahead and just take a second, and if you have any suggested revisions, place the information in the chat.

Okay. So for my requested revision, it's in the chat, I just noticed that we reference two different numbers when talking about the responses for our public comment survey.

And so if we could first determine what the accurate number is, and then revise those two pages to reflect that so it's consistent throughout the document. As far as voting on this, I don't know if this is...Bekka, let me know, is this something that we need to vote on?

- I don't know if that would be considered just sort of, like, a consistency edit?

- Oh, okay.

- I'm not sure. I don't know, Marbella, if that's something we can confirm right now, in terms of which number is accurate?

- I'm looking at... The correct number that I have is 169. So I can go into the draft, not the PDF, the draft that's on our SharePoint, and make those changes with Track Changes.

- And Danielle did put a note that because this is, like, a factual correction, it doesn't need to be voted on.

- Thank you.

- It does not. Okay, thank you.

- Okay. So Central RAC, if there are any other accuracy revisions from your review, if you could please summarize them in the chat, with the page number and paragraph. Okay. My wait time, you know, I'm out of practice being in the classroom, but I feel like I've given you all a good amount of wait time.

I'm going to go ahead and call...I'll give you one more minute, and then I'm going to call for a vote. Just one more minute. Okay, so I'm going to go ahead and ask if we can move forward. Yes, thank you.



So I'm going to call for a vote. So members, as I call the vote, please use the Raise Hand function so we can accurately call the vote and take a screenshot for the record. I call for a vote for the Central RAC to approve the report to be submitted to the Secretary of Education. I count seven.

- [Tech] The screenshot has been taken.
- The report has been accepted by the RAC. You all can lower your hands.
- Thank you, Cat, and thank you to all of the committee members. That concludes the official business that we had. Are there any final questions or comments?

Yes, Mark?

- What is the disclosure agreement? At what point is this a public document that can be broadly shared beyond just sharing with the Secretary? What's the timeline of that piece?

- That's a great question. It will be something that will be available to the public, and that you will be able to share. I don't know the exact timeline. It's something that we can inform you of. I don't know if there's any of my colleagues who would like to share any additional information. But it's something that you will be able to share, after it has been shared with the Secretary.

- [Danielle] Thank you for your question, Mark. We anticipate publishing all of the RAC reports on the Department's website for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the website for the Regional Advisory Committees, where we've been posting all the information and minutes from our meetings.

So all 10 committee reports will be posted on the Department's website once they are received and finalized and made accessible for the public. So we'll be sure to send that information to you all once they've been posted so you can share the links broadly with your stakeholders.

- Perfect. That's what I was just going to request, that just let us know so we don't have to check the website every day to see when it's live. Just send it out to everybody that's put time in. So I appreciate everybody's time, but it would be nice to...

- We will let you know.

- That would be great. Thank you so much.
- Thank you for that question, and thank you, Danielle. Are there any additional questions or comments?
- I would like to just say that I'm very proud of our RAC getting this done in the timeframe, and working with you all, and having such great conversations in the whole group and in the writing subcommittees. It's always good to be able to bounce ideas off of other practitioners in the field, and so I just want to say thank you.
- I think many people echo those thanks and echo the hard work that you all did in a very short amount of time. So much appreciation to everyone for your participation. With that, I'm going to go ahead and move to adjourn the meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee for the Central Region.

If all the committee members could please come off mute and say aye...if you concur.

- Aye.
- All right. Thank you, all. This meeting is adjourned on November 14th, at 3:55 p.m. Eastern time. And you'll be hearing from us when that report is ready, and thank you, again, for all of your efforts. We really appreciate it.