

RAC – Mid-Atlantic Region
Meeting #3
November 16, 2023

- [Esley] Good afternoon, all. Just a reminder that this meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. At this time, the meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Mid-Atlantic Region. Welcome, everyone. My name is Esley Newton, and I am the Designated Federal Official for the Mid-Atlantic RAC.

I will conduct roll call at this time, and will read names aloud, and ask members to unmute and state "present," and go back on mute. Amaya Garcia?

- [Amaya] Present.

- Thank you. Cassandra Johnson? Deborah Lynam?

- [Deborah] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Megan Gierka?

- [Dr. Gierka] Present.

- Thank you. Elizabeth Raff?

- [Elizabeth] Present.

- Thank you. Jahsha Tabron? Liz Cohen?

- [Liz] Present.

- Thanks. Nora Durant?

- [Nora] Present.

- Thank you, Nora. Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas?

- [Rochanda] Present.

- Thank you. Tamiaka Thomasson?

- [Tamiaka] Present.

- And Theodore Dwyer?

- [Theodore] Present.

- Thank you. Let's see here. Just to be sure that no one else came on, if I missed anyone, please unmute yourself, and let me know at this time. Okay. So, I am happy to report that we do have a quorum, so we can go ahead and proceed with our committee's business for today.

Before we move further into our agenda, just a reminder of how members should engage in this meeting. The same as how we've done previously, to comment please click the Raise Hand button, and wait to be called on. To lower your hand, click the same Raise Hand button, and you can also utilize the meeting chat. Here's a high-level outline for today's agenda.

We will review recommended priorities identified in the draft report, we will review data collection section of the report, we will review identified priorities, and any needs. We will deliberate on the draft report, and then finally, we will conduct a final vote to approve the report and submit to the Secretary of Education.

Next slide, please. During this meeting, subcommittee members will review the report of the assessment of the educational needs of the Mid-Atlantic Region. Subcommittee members will review the data collection, and the recommended priority sections. After sections are reviewed, the full committee can discuss the report, and propose specific changes, or accept the report as written.

If changes are proposed, the committee will vote to accept the section with revisions. And you know, we really want to utilize the chat for this. If we do have proposed changes to the report, we're asking that committee members are really specific, providing page numbers and revised proposed text, we'll ask that you enter that in the chat.

Let's see here... 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 turn things over to Chairperson Cohen, who will provide a summary of the needs-sensing activities. Liz, over to you.

- Great. Good afternoon, everyone. So, the needs-sensing activities that were conducted included several focus groups conducted by different individuals on the committee, as well as an informal survey that was given individually to a handful of people.

In addition, there was the large amounts of data that were pulled together for the committee to review, along with feedback gathered from several governors or executive offices from states represented here. I believe we had three focus groups, ranging in number of participants from probably three to eight.

And the survey, I believe there were three or four respondents. I think we had 28 public comments as well. The additional research was, as mentioned, the data that was gathered by the Manhattan Strategy Group, and that is what we used for our needs-sensing data. And okay, so during Meeting 2, our committee voted to approve the following recommended priorities priority one, academic performance of the region's students, priority two, services to English learners, priority three, the educator workforce.

For each priority, the committee summarized the needs, and generated strategies to meet the needs through technical assistance. This is what is in the body of our report that we will now review. Wonderful.

So at our last meeting, we nominated members, and voted on members serving on subcommittees. Our region decided to establish three subcommittees, one for each of the priorities. The members who were nominated and voted on are listed on this slide. We will now have the subcommittee members briefly review the data collection activities and recommended priorities, including identifying the emerging needs, or giving us a summary of what you wrote in the wonderful report that we have put together.

We'll start with subcommittee one, Academic Performance.

- Thank you so much, Liz. Hi, everybody. I was the chair of the Academic Performance subcommittee for our region. We collected basically every single needs-sensing activity contributed to this area of the report. We found in conversations with focus groups, as well as public comment that academic performance was a huge need.

We also did some further data collection, looking into United States-level NAEP progress, as well as state-specific data, and found that reading and math instruction are lagging through the states in our region, as well as across the country. So right now, we propose that a priority need in the area is academic supports aligned to the science of learning principles.

We recommend that the Secretary provides professional development for teachers, basically translating what we know works, the evidence-based practices that have been collected through the Institute for Educational Sciences and translate that into effective tools for teachers. We also highlighted family engagement, as this came up frequently in our focus groups, and the need to better serve our special populations and English learners with these evidence-based principles.

Would you like me to [crosstalk]

- Thank you so much. No, I think that is perfect for our needs. I'm now going to call on Amaya Garcia, who is the chair for subcommittee two.

- Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. So for our priority area, we highlighted the growing demographics. That was data that was supplied to us as a committee, and we also used the public comments and needs-sensing activities to inform the areas that we focused on in this. So English learners represent a growing population within the schools in the Mid-Atlantic region, but yet we know that there's insufficient teacher training, uneven achievement and supports that are offered to students, and an uneven approach to even supporting their home languages.

These are all aspects of their education that really matter and can support their academic and linguistic growth. And so for us, the priority needs that we identified are to make sure that teachers do get sufficient training and professional development to support the full range of ELs' academic needs. We want to make sure that data sources are up to date, but also disaggregated to really show the different populations within the EL subgroup.

And we want to have a focus on making sure that home language is supported, and that there is bilingual instruction offered. And so our technical assistance recommendations really focus around those areas, and kind of translating research to help people better understand what kinds of actionable resources and activities they can engage in to support ELs, data disaggregation, really thinking about the terms that we use to describe ELs, and currently trying to add some kind of definitions to the different subpopulations, such as newcomers, looking at successful approaches to help people learn from what's working elsewhere in the Mid-Atlantic region, helping people better understand the way the accountability system works for English learners, and again

thinking about bilingual education models, and how those can be leveraged to support the needs of these students.

- Thank you so much, Amaya. For priority three, I think it's either Nora or Elizabeth?

- I'll just hop in. To begin, our needs-sensing activities based off of our state profile data, based off of looking at specifically the amount of people that are going into the teaching profession in universities, seeing that that type of data really informed some of our need-sensing activities, including some of our focus groups, one specifically that I conducted with all of the state Teachers of the Year of every state of our Mid-Atlantic region.

And so that was a really beneficial conversation for each of those to be represented in our conversation. And based off of those ideas and priorities, we crafted together some of our essential pieces to take. So I'll pass it over to Nora for that.

- Thank you. So we looked at three areas. We discussed findings related to teacher recruitment, teacher retention, and teacher training, and they're interrelated. We looked specifically at data that suggests that we need to be mindful of the diversity of our teacher workforce, the training that we're providing to teachers, both pre-service and in-service, needs to be targeted and relevant.

And we need to make sure that we're looking at how we can affect the fact that staffing shortages can have impacts on class size. We looked at... We made some recommendations for technical assistance based on the findings, including continuing to use "grow your own" programs, and alternative pathways to the teaching profession, making sure that we're evaluating the effectiveness of those programs, and that those programs are bringing the kinds of people that our stakeholders and our students deserve from teachers.

We looked at evaluating... We're requesting technical assistance to evaluate teacher preparation programs, to make sure that teacher training and learning is focused on pedagogy, data-driven decision-making, and classroom management. Our professional learning opportunities need to be grounded in adult learning theory, and need to be really based in best practices, especially with regard to the needs of educators and students of color.

We're hoping that the regional educational labs will contribute to the growing...continue contributing to the growing body of research on how experiences within our education systems are different based on context and student groups. We want to make sure that we're providing better and beneficial support and coaching for novice and in-service teachers, without overburdening the teachers who are experienced within those schools.

And we want to gather more data to support teacher retention, looking at ways that we can support teachers with adequate time to prepare for and reflect upon their work with students.

- Thank you so much, Nora and Elizabeth, for [crosstalk]

- And I'm sure there might be people in my group who might want to add to that.

- Well, that's a perfect segue. So clearly, we've covered a lot of ground... Yes, so now is our discussion. I just, I do want to say, first of all, I want to thank everyone for all of the hard work, and like, really deep thought, trying to grapple with big issues in a relatively compressed timeline that we have.

Just to be clear, the purpose of our discussion here is to really try to focus on clarification and accuracy. Those are the things that we are able to change in this meeting in the report. But clarifying is broad. Accuracy, also broad, especially if you ask my children. So with that, I'd like to open the floor.

I believe there are some committee members who already have some thoughts or suggestions to clarify and increase the accuracy of our report. So I will call on Deborah.

- [Deborah] Thank you. So I noticed on page nine, which is the technical assistance recommendations for priority one, there was just a use of the terminology "science of reading" that I think is not as accurate as it could be, particularly in a landscape where we have publishers and different marketers that are mislabeling products, curricular resources as science of reading instruction.

I just think it would be helpful to be a little bit more precise in the way we use that term within the report. So particularly looking at the bullets, I would suggest under the professional development for teachers, and the family

engagement that we add terminology that makes it evident that the evidence-based practices are grounded in or aligned to the science of reading.

And I just heard Dr. Gierka mention, "and learning." I would add that additionally, that these practices are aligned to the science of reading and learning. So I will put those into the chat box. And then when it comes to the special populations, or English learners, I'm suggesting some rephrasing to call attention to the emphasis on language and literacy connection.

That would be the research that is aligned with the science of reading and learning, and I'm just kind of making a recommendation that we move the reference to the science of reading down to that sentence. So I'll put these into the chat box now.

- Okay. So to clarify, it sounds like you have one suggestion around... Okay, that our...okay, professional development for teachers, translate evidence-based practices such as those aligned to the science of reading and learning into educator-friendly tools, resources, and training, provide the same translation for research-based practices in math.

Before we get to the moving part, I just want to separate them, because we have to vote on the things to change them So does anyone have any questions or comments, thoughts before we vote on this, whether or not to make this change?

- I would put "such as." Let's see... "Evidence-based practices such as those aligned to the science of reading," and take out the duplicate of the science of reading.

- Okay.

- Or yeah, you can do "students aligned to the science of reading." I see what you did there. In the first... In the first iteration of that, in red.

- Rochanda?

- Hi. Thanks, Deborah, for those comments. I would just say for consistency, even though it may be seen, that's also language in the summary on page two that would need to be...an edit would need to be made there as well.

- Excellent.

- For the translation of evidence-based practices.
- Okay. Yes, that's a good catch. Esley, do we need to vote on each page separately?
- I think that would probably be easiest, just for keeping track.
- Okay. Let's just start with the body, because that was where we were all just looking. Okay, so members, as I call the vote... Oh, wait [inaudible 00:17:55.712] Does anyone else have any thoughts or comments or questions before I call for the vote?

I don't want anyone to feel like I forgot them. Okay. 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. So I call for a vote for the Mid-Atlantic RAC to accept... And I need to do those separately? Because this just says "the proposed edit."

This proposed edit around in section one, clarifying evidence-based practices such as those aligned to the science of reading.

- Do we want to add "and learning?" Does that broaden it in any way, Dr. Gierka?
 - I like the idea of adding "and learning," since we talk about math in the next sentence, yeah.
 - Great.
 - Okay. Great. Raise your hand. Oh, right. Okay, one...sorry, I forgot the part where I have to count.
- One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine...all right, I think we have nine yes votes. I think that it's unanimous.
- And keep them raised for a screenshot, and then you can lower them.
 - [Tech] A screenshot has been taken.
 - Great. Okay, great. These edits have, for the Mid-Atlantic Region, have been approved. Now I'm going to call for a vote to essentially use the same edits in the summary where we had essentially taken the body and put it in the summary.

So wherever we talk about the priority around evidence-based practices, we're going to use the language "such as those aligned to the science of reading and learning." We have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine votes. Great.

These edits for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Report have also been approved. Deborah, can you explain the...can you now go back to the special populations piece so we can make sure we understand what that recommendation is around?

- Yes. In the second sentence, my suggestion would be to delete the phrase "applying the science of reading to."

- This is still on page nine?

- Page nine, the third bullet, special populations. There would be another instance of that "aligned to" in the family engagement paragraph also. Okay.

So delete that, and then down in the last sentence, where it says, "placed on language literacy connection," the suggestion is to say, "In alignment with the science of reading and learning."

- Okay. Anyone have any comments or questions on this page? I'm assuming your hands up are because you're voting on it already, and not because you all have pressing questions on this?

Okay, so raise your hand, we're going to take a screenshot, we're going to call for a vote to change this under the special population section for the Mid-Atlantic Region. And then we'll take a screenshot. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine.

- Screenshot taken.

- The whole Brady Bunch votes yes. The edits for the report for the Mid-Atlantic Region have been approved.

- And just hopping in real quick before we move on, I just want to confirm that the change was made, I believe it was mentioned on page two, the same edit for evidence-based practice? Sorry, I might be lagging a bit behind here, but I just wanted to make sure that change was also made.

And I think someone had mentioned...

- Yeah, it's in the last paragraph before priority two...
- Exactly, "Science of reading and learning."
- Great.
- And back in the family engagement bullet, I'm not sure the "and learning" part got attached.
- [inaudible 00:24:15.601] Great. Thank you, Deborah, for thoughtful, and specific, and easy to implement recommendations.

Does anyone else have any clarifying questions, or areas of the report that you believe need to be refined for accuracy purposes? Tamioka?

- I just had a question in terms of within the document, we utilize "educator" and "teacher" interchangeably, and so I just want to make sure that if...well ask, and clarify if that was intentional, or did we want to choose one over the other? Or are we okay with the interchanging?

- That's a great question. The interchange doesn't bother me. I usually think of those terms as interchangeable. I also think it's fine if we want to pick one, for consistency. Does anyone else and does any have [inaudible 00:25:22.199] Educator.

Okay, we have one suggestion to just replace the word "teacher" with the word "educator" anywhere the word "teacher" is used. Is there any reason we could think of not to do that? Is this why they invented find and replace? Probably.

All right, cool. I like consistency. I probably am partly why we have this problem, because I probably just get bored writing the same word, and I like to mix it up. But I think that's a good call. 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 a vote for the Mid-Atlantic to approve that anywhere the word "teacher" is used, we're going to replace it with the word "educator," so we consistently use "educator" in this report.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight votes. Great.

Oh, nine votes. Okay...

- The screenshot has been taken.

- Thank you. So that change has been accepted. Any other clarifications? Oops, sorry...okay. I don't think we have to vote on that one because that's probably just a typo.

Janice or Alison, if you can see if Amaya's comment...which is just to make sure that the L in EL is capitalized in where that acronym is used. Amaya, did you have something else?

- Yeah, I wasn't sure see if... Let's see, what page is it, where we talk about "grow your own", if we want to maybe define... I think this is page 15, if we want to define the term "grow your own" maybe in a footnote, or in the text, just to make sure that we're clear about what we're talking about there?

It's on... I think it got passed. It's on page 15, at sort of the top of the page. And I can offer a definition in the chat.

- I think that is probably a smart thing to do. And Megan or Deborah...I mean, Deborah, I know you've had your hand up before. Do you want to comment on this, or do you have a different thing?

- Sorry, it was just lingering up there.

- Oh, okay. Great. So Amaya, do you want to drop a proposed definition in the chat?

- Yep, I can do that.

- All right, well, while we're waiting on bated breath for Amaya's brilliance here, Megan, what do you... Okay, never mind.

Pausing, Megan. You don't have anything now. You were still just excited about our previous vote. Great. Me, too. "Grow your own" programs that recruit and prepare community members to teach in their local schools." Great.

So I think if we go to page 15... Okay. Yeah, I would say...

So we would just insert the parts, we would insert that "recruit and prepare community members to teach in their local schools" after the word "programs," "grow your own programs?" Is that what we're thinking, Amaya?

- Yeah, I mean, that makes sentence kind of long, but yeah.

- Right. I thought that too, but...

- I don't know if we can do it like as a footnote, but...whatever (crosstalk 00:29:50.377) - We can put it...

- O if we can break up the sentence?

- Okay, where did it go? There it is. Okay.

- Because you could put a period...yeah.

- Yeah. Great. I was thinking...yeah, parentheses work, too.

- Okay.

- Okay. Does anyone have any comments, thoughts, alternate suggestions around adding a definition for "grow your own" programs? Great. Let's call a vote. Use the Raise Your Hand function so we can take a screenshot, we're going to vote for the Mid-Atlantic region to add this definition of what a "grow your own" is.

We have nine yes votes.

- The screenshot has been taken.

- Great. The report has been accepted. I mean this edit has been accepted. Sorry, I keep jumping in my cheat sheet to the next thing. Great. Any other comments? Megan, do you have something, or you're still excited?

No. Guys, Megan has more excitement than anyone else here. I don't know, you might have to fight her for that title if you were trying for it. Okay, suggested edit from Nora on page 14, "The final sentence before the first bullet on that page, insert or replace 'apathy' with 'overwhelmed.'" All right, can we go to where...

Sentence before the first bullet. I think keep going up?

- Sorry, I'm not helping you, am I? Maybe I'm looking at an older version. So, if you go...yeah, it's...keep going up, above that first bullet. There's a sentence [crosstalk]

- Oh, I see it, I see it, I see it. Can you go back down a little bit? It's at the top of page 14.

- In my focus group, in my discussion with other educators, I really feel like...

- Yeah. It says that...

- ...overwhelmed is certainly more prevalent than apathy. I don't know that [crosstalk]

- Yeah, I think I probably agree, that I feel like apathy feels a bit probably pejorative in this context. Does anyone else have a thought on that? You get a thumbs up from Elizabeth. Thumbs up from Tamieka. Thumbs up...okay, cool. Let's do our thing.

Guys, we are so good at this, this Mid-Atlantic RAC. Let's call for a vote to change "apathy" to "overwhelm," because that's really what's happening. We don't believe people are apathetic, we think they care deeply, but there's a lot happening. Okay. I called for the vote; we've got nine votes.

- The screenshot has been taken.

- So great, we've taken out the apathy. Guys, we fixed it, there's no more apathy, anywhere. At least in this report. Okay, anyone else? I love the fine-toothed comb that you all are applying to this. Rochanda or Deborah, do you have something to add, or were you still voting?

- Nope...yes? Okay.

- Nothing else to add.

- Thank you. All right, any further points of clarification, refinement for accuracy? Great. I think report deliberation is finished, and we can...I'm going to call for a vote to approve the final report.

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 Mid-Atlantic RAC to approve the report to be submitted to the Secretary of Education. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. The report has been accepted by the RAC.

Please...

- And the screenshot has been taken.

- Great. Yeah, our screenshot guy is killing it today. You're doing great. We made you take a lot of screenshots. Okay. As a reminder, the duration of the

committee is from the day we were established until the report is submitted to the Secretary.

Wait, I have a question, Esley. Because this says I'm supposed to say that we are supposed to meet again to conclude our work, but isn't this concluding our work?

- Yes. However, you know, the Secretary does have a right, because there still is, you know...

- Got it.

- ...some editing that needs to be done, it could be reconvened. But at this time, you all are proposing it's been edited to, hey, this is the final product here, everyone's in agreement that this is what should be submitted to the Secretary of Education, it's just that caveat there.

- Great. So we're probably done, unless we're not. Deborah, do you have a question? Oh, no, just hands up. Okay. Okay, I think... Is my part done

[inaudible 00:36:14.054] I think it's back to you, Esley.

- It's back to me. Well, congratulations, Mid-Atlantic RAC. I just want to thank you all for just your engagement, some really great discussions, just your commitment to the work. It has been a great privilege to serve as your DFO, and to work with you all. As Liz said, you know, your work has been concluded until further notice.

You know, the Secretary can, at his discretion...it could be reconvened, but you know, this is pretty much it. So congratulations. Before we adjourn, are there any final questions or comments from you all?

All right, not hearing any, if nothing else, I move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee meeting for the Mid-Atlantic RAC region. If in agreement, could committee members please concur by stating "aye?"

- Aye.

- Thank you so much. So the meeting is adjourned on November 16th, at 3:38 p.m. Eastern time. Thank you again, committee members. Appreciate your service. Take care, everyone. And we will be in touch.

Once that report is finalized, you all will be notified. It will be available to the public on the OESE RAC webpage, where all of the meeting information has been uploaded. But you will hear from us when that is available to you all. So, thank you.