

RAC – Southeast Region
Meeting #3
November 14, 2023

- [Elisabeth] Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for joining today. My name is Elisabeth Lembo, I'm the Designated Federal Official for Regional Advisory Committee Southeast. This meeting is open to members of the public and will be recorded for the public record. The meeting will come to order for the Regional Advisory Committee Southeast Region. I'll now conduct a roll call.

When I state your name, please come off of mute, and state "present." Dr. Orletta Rush?

- [Dr. Rush] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Larry Collier?

- [Dr. Collier] Present.

- Thank you. Yolanda Everett?

- [Yolanda] Present.

- Thank you. Joanne Sweazey?

- [Dr. Sweazey] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Omar Riaz?

- [Dr. Riaz] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Berta Rios?

- [Dr. Rios] Present.

- Thank you. Ronda Gedward? Shana White? Dr. Bronwyn Ragan-Martin?

- [Dr. Ragan-Martin] Present.

- Thank you. Anna Barrett-Smith?

- [Anna] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Antonis Katsiyannis?

- [Dr. Katsiyannis] Present.

- Thank you. Dr. Lesley Thompson? Dr. Kyle Wagner? All right. Thank you, everyone.

If there's anyone that I missed, or who joined after I began roll call, can you please come off mute to share if you're present? All right, thank you. So with that, we have met quorum, so we're able to continue with voting for this meeting. So as shared before, in order to engage in today's meeting, to make a comment, please come off of mute, and raise your hand, and the chair will call on you.

So I'll just give a brief overview of our agenda for today. So we'll review the recommended priorities identified in the draft report, we'll review data collection section of the report, we'll review each identified priority, and any emerging needs. We'll deliberate on the draft report, and we'll conduct a final vote to approve the report and submit it to our Secretary of Education.

And in terms of our objectives, next slide, please. Thank you. So we'll review the report draft and recommended priorities. The full committee will deliberate and comment on the draft, and then we will vote on approval of the report to be submitted to our Secretary. So with that, I'll turn it over to our Chairperson, Dr.

Omar Riaz, who will summarize our needs-sensing activities. Thanks, Dr. Riaz.

- Thank you, Elisabeth. So just to summarize the activities that were conducted regarding our Southeast RAC needs-sensing, initially we have 146 public comments that range in topics by category from equitable funding to attendance, academic achievement, and teacher recruitment and retention, to name a few. We also held a focus group with six representatives from Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida, and that focus group was with a focus on teacher recruitment and retention.

We also received input from the regional educational leadership, which includes chiefs of state, as well as the governing board. Additional research was also provided by our committee and shared through Microsoft SharePoint. And these resources included data on discipline, student attendance and engagement,

teacher vacancies, and also academic achievement based on the grade 4 and grade 8 NAEP assessments in reading and mathematics that were provided by ethnicity, and also by subgroup.

So next, we're going to review the recommended priorities that were provided by the committee during our second meeting, and these will be listed on the slide. So the first one is discipline, the second one is literacy and mathematics achievement, the third is teacher recruitment and retention, post-secondary education, and attendance.

So as a reminder, we established a writing committee to address each of these priorities, and to provide recommendations regarding technical assistance. And so now we're going to take a few minutes to go over each of the priorities represented within the report, and the recommendations provided by the committee.

So first, we'll begin with discipline, with Dr. Sweazey and Dr. Katsiyannis. So Dr. Katsiyannis and Ms. Sweazey, if you wouldn't mind coming off mute, and just briefly giving us an overview of the recommendations from your portion of the report, as well as the priority and the recommendations within your report.

- I can go through the [inaudible 00:05:37.645] We have [inaudible 00:05:41.097] in some different sections of the report. I'm sorry, let me pull them out right now. We discussed that the consequences of disciplinary exclusions were affecting academic performance, increasing dropout rates, and creating a higher likelihood of engaging in delinquent behavior, both long-term and short-term.

There was a lot of data that was reviewed, that was significant as far as supporting the need for additional interventions. We discussed some of the resources that are available, as well as further considerations, which included some of the absenteeism that is the result of exclusionary discipline, and the effects that that has had, the different effects on different races, as well as disabilities for students.

And then it was also discussed with the rising prevalence of autism spectrum disorder, along with an increasing incidence of mental illness, suicide, homelessness, all within the lingering effects of the pandemic have increased the challenges that are related to discipline in the schools, which creates a need

for additional interventions and support through some of the resources that were identified.

- Thank you, Ms. Sweazey. Does the committee have any clarifying questions or recommendations for this portion of the report? Okay. If not, we will move on to the second portion, which is literacy and mathematics, by Dr. Rush.

- Good morning. Yes, we looked at the areas of the data that was provided through the NAEP, which is our area that covers our 4th and 8th grade testing scores at the reading and mathematical level. What we did was looked at that broken down by the different subgroups, and to be able to make a determination on how well our students overall within the nation has been successful with numeracy, and also with the reading ELA area.

What we found was that even in the earlier ages, if we start at an early age, pre-kindergarten, prior to school, kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade, we needed to build a stronger foundation. We saw that that was a weaker area because the foundational skills were very limited, with the data that was provided, of our summative outcome.

Looking at that data, we see that we have to fill in a large amount of gaps in the early stages, and the recommendations for technical assistance, the recommendations were made for areas to be able to give attention to those particular areas to where we could see more of an increase or a growth in those grade levels of 4th and 8th grade for our NAEP scores. These are the scores they will look at throughout the nation, so we found that that was providing great data input to justify why we needed to start earlier with the numeracy and literacy as far as those foundational skills.

- Thank you, Dr. Rush. Does the committee have any questions or suggestions for proposed changes to this section of the report? Okay. So since we do not have any, we will move to the next portion of the report, which is teacher recruitment and retention, and we have Dr.

Ragan-Martin and Ms. Gedward presenting their section.

- Hey, good morning. We looked at teacher recruitment and retention, knowing that there's a critical shortage of qualified teachers not only in the region, but also across the nation. There's a need to find solutions for all schools, especially

those that are rural, high poverty, and high minority schools, which tend to have a higher percentage of unfilled positions.

There's a lot of research out there right now. This is a hot topic across the nation. Teachers feel overwhelmed with the needs of students post-pandemic. They also are in need of a better work-life balance. Mental health is definitely an issue, not only for students, but also for teachers. They want an awareness of salary increases, as asked from teachers, as well as help in interventions with students that are at risk.

The technical assistance recommendations are really looking at how can those rural, high poverty, high minority districts increase salaries or supplements? How can we provide mentoring and support, especially for new teachers? And how can we provide professional growth opportunities for all teachers so that they feel valued, and have the ability to grow as professionals?

- Thank you, Dr. Ragan-Martin. Does the committee have any questions, clarifying questions, or proposed changes for teacher recruitment and retention? Okay. Next, we'll move on with post-secondary education, with Dr.

Rios.

- Educational attainment refers to the highest degree received by an individual. It was identified as a priority. The benefits of higher educational attainment levels are multiples, and at different levels. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, educational attainment is associated with outcomes such as productivity, economic growth, innovation, social mobility, and health outcomes.

There is a need to increase the level of post-secondary education in the Southeast Region for the populations age 18 and older. Findings from the Americans surveyed from the U.S. Census indicate that the South is last when it comes to educational attainment for this age group. The committee recommended that increasing post-secondary educational attainment requires a sustainable and comprehensive strategy that includes, among other things, researching factors that impact the high school graduation rates, and their relations to college enrollment, looking at college readiness, looking at secondary persistence and completion, including from the post-public policy angle, and also funding transition college-bridge programs, persistence programs, and basic needs for students.

The committee recommends technical assistance on best practices to develop, implement, and evaluate college readiness programs, also to foster college persistence and completion, how effective partnerships can be developed to address the basic needs of post-secondary students, and strategies to identify equity issues regarding post-secondary educational attainment.

Thank you.

- Thank you, Dr. Rios. Committee members, do you have any questions, or proposed changes for the attendance section? Okay. Members, as I call the vote, please remember to raise your hand, use the Raise Your Hand function so that we can accurately call the vote, and take a screenshot for the record.

I call for the vote for the Southeast RAC to accept the complete report and submit it to the Secretary of Education. So I'm counting nine votes.

- [Dave] The screenshot has been taken.

- Thank you. So the report has been accepted by the RAC. So this is just a reminder that with the submission of the report, the committee is now terminated by the Secretary of Education, once the report has been submitted to the Secretary.

However, the committee may reconvene at the discretion of the Secretary. Therefore, the committee will... If it's required to meet again, a date will be announced to conclude its work, and submit the report to the Secretary.

- Thank you, Dr. Riaz. So now, I just want to make sure we have space, does anybody have any questions or any comments?

- There are some people with their hands up. I'm not sure if they're asking a question, or they have left their hand up. Now their hands are down.

Okay.

- Sorry, I did not share the information on attendance. Do you want me to share that information?

- I'm sorry, that was my fault. I didn't call on you for attendance.

- That's okay, I didn't stop you.

- Sorry...

- I can just quickly share that information.

- Yes, please.

- Okay. Of course, attendance was chosen as a priority, especially because of the increase in disengagement, and chronic attendance issues following the pandemic. It has severely impacted student attendance, and also student achievement because students who are not at school cannot perform as well. In the research, students of poverty and minorities are more likely to have chronic attendance issues, and it's important to look at the root causes why students are not attending school, and why families are disengaged.

So really looking at the causes and building relationships with those students and those families. The technical assistance recommendations are to determine how districts can build and increase family engagement, sharing effective strategies to include student voice in decisions that are made, to build community partnerships and mentorships, and to share professional learning for teachers, how to improve student engagement and build relationships with students.

Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Omar, can we take a new vote now that we have heard on attendance as well?

- Yes, sure So members, once again, please use the Raise Your Hand function so that we can accurately call the vote. Again, we're calling a vote to approve the report to be submitted to the Secretary of Education. So I'm counting eight votes to approve.

- The screenshot has been taken.

- Thank you. Okay so once again, the report has been accepted by the RAC.

- Thank you, Dr. Riaz, and thanks, Dr. Ragan-Martin. So again, are there any further questions or comments at this time? All right. Well, hearing none, I just want to thank everyone very much for your time and engagement throughout this entire process.

And I'll move to adjourn the meeting for the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southeast Region. And can committee members please concur by stating "Aye?"

- Aye.

- Thank you. This meeting is adjourned on Tuesday, November 14th, 2023, at 10:19 a.m. Eastern time. Thank you.