RAC – Southwest Region
Meeting #3
November 16, 2023

- [Bekka] Good afternoon and good morning. 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 of the Southwest region. We're now going to conduct roll call. For the members of the committee who are present, please come off mute and say, "Present," when your name is called. Margo Kickingbird DeLaune?

- [Margo] Present.

- Danielle Mitchell. Jane Nell Luster?

- [Jane] Present.

- Elisa Begueria?

- [Elisa] Present.

- Richard Bowman. Stephanie Thompson. Anya Dozier Enos?

- [Anya] Present.

- Dudley Darrow. Stephanie Hinton?

- [Stephanie] Present.

- [Dudley] Dudley Darrow's here. Sorry, I couldn't get unmuted fast enough.

- Thank you. Jennifer Chidsey?

- [Jennifer] Present.

- Nilam Agrawal?

- [Nilam] Present.

- Dr. Sylvia Leal?

- [Dr. Leal] Present.

- And Dr. Lesley Casarez?

- [Dr. Casarez] Present.

- Thank you all. I can confirm that we have met quorum for this meeting, and we can now move forward with our planned activities and votes. So our agenda for the day is...first, let me pause and say, to engage in the meeting we'll proceed as we have in the past where you can raise your hand and be called on if you have a comment. And you can also use the chat feature.

To review our agenda we have completed the call to order and the roll call. We are currently reviewing the meeting agenda and the objectives. We will then review the recommended priorities for the Southwest region. We will review the draft report by section. We'll deliberate on that report draft, vote to approve the report and the recommendations, and then finally, adjourn.

Our meeting objectives are first to review the report draft and the recommended priorities. Second, the full committee will deliberate and comment on the draft. Third, to vote on the approval of the report to be submitted to the Secretary of Education. I also meant to acknowledge that I have been designated as the chair for this meeting as our regular chair, Stephanie Thompson, was unavailable to attend.

She, if she were attending, would be summarizing the need-sensing activities that occurred. I'm going to do that briefly. 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, national educational agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

And there were 196 public comments received for the Southwest region. Comments were also collected from the Chief State School Officers, governors, and the regional educational laboratories governing board for this region. All of this resulted in the following priorities determined by the committee. The first is Broadband Access Rates and Issues.

The second is Teacher Preparation and Retention, priority three, Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners, priority four, Career and Technical Education and Post-Secondary Opportunities, and priority five, Creation and

Implementation of Curriculum Aligned with Standards. During meeting number two, the RAC members were nominated to serve on a writing subcommittee to draft the report, and their names are included on the slide right here.

So, we thank all of these committee members who served as writers for the report. We are now going to hear about each priority from each of these committee members. So for the first one, I will turn it over to Dr.

Sylvia Leal.

- Hello. I will be reporting on priority one, Issues Related to Broadband Access. The disruption of COVID-19 pandemic had a big disruption on our educational system, and it revealed that many schools struggle to provide virtual education to their students. This was due to the lack of access to high-speed broadband in their area.

This was not an issue of devices, but rather it was an issue of lack of broadband infrastructure that exists in many parts of the southwest. When it is available virtual learning is still not accessible for many low-income students due to the cost.

We also learned about recent data that indicates that students with access to broadband at home outperformed those who did not in mathematics. We also know that the lack of broadband also impacts other educational factors, such as opportunities to take advanced courses, to take college courses, or just to get general homework support. The RAC members of the Southwest region indicated lack of access to broadband presents a huge gap and disadvantage to students, especially rural students and low-income students.

They advocated that access to broadband is not a luxury, but rather a necessity for the 21st century learning, and that it's essential to assist students in developing the educational and digital competencies needed to secure future job opportunities and to participate in today's economy. There were several recommendations for technical assistance that were included in the report.

Two of these include supporting states to develop broadband plans that address availability and access issues for all students in all communities, and to advocate for federal funding to mitigate the cost of access for students and school districts. We know that the broadband issue is not a new issue, but the

disparities that exist across the southwest indicate that it is a priority in today's world.

And we believe we need to ensure virtual education options and resources are accessible to all students in all classrooms and in all communities. Thank you.

- Thank you, Sylvia. Next, we'll hear about Teacher Preparation and Retention from Stephanie Hinton.

- Hi. Good afternoon. So, teacher preparation and retention were identified as a priority need area for the Southwest region. It's been a persistent concern that was just further exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several related issues contributed to the heightening of this issue, which includes, you know, fewer college graduates selecting education as a career, fewer completing a teacher preparation program, state teacher licensure requirements that allow for alternative or emergency certified teachers.

So while it is serving as a way to help recruit individuals from a variety of fields, it's also putting the burden on school districts to prepare and educate folks in the profession. As well as teachers leaving the profession due to lack of support, long hours, and low salaries. Technical assistance that was recommended would involve programs that incentivize students to enter the education profession in the beginning and support new teachers through practicums, mentoring, on-the-job training, and address issues that challenge teacher retention.

Highlight and share examples of teacher preparation and retention that are working well across the southwest. Thank you.

- Thank you, Stephanie. Now I believe Nilam will speak about Opportunity Gaps Among Different Groups of Learners.

- The Southwest Regional Advisory Committee has decided to prioritize a focus on opportunities for all learners to increase the literacy scores and college readiness and see this as an acute area of need based on the data and public comments that we have received.

Opportunity gaps has existed for low-income students, rural students, children with disabilities, and English learners, according to the national and state data that we have collected and reviewed. 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 schools for students with disabilities and overall literacy, and academic success for English learners, at-risk students, children with disabilities, and economically-disadvantaged students.

We know this is not a new issue, and this has come up in previous deliberations for the RAC committees in previous years. Southwest region has chosen that opportunity gaps among different groups of learners between the following categories identify the academic opportunity gaps between all students and students who are English learners.

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 identify the rate of receiving instruction in inclusionary learning environment. Based on the public comments, the state data, the

[inaudible] data, we found that students representative of different groups of learners are struggling a lot. There was a huge deficit in the academic performance of EL versus non-EL students, both in mathematics and reading scores. And parents have raised concerns around disaggregated data need.

There is no national disaggregated data available for each of the 13 categories of disabilities, and parents have also raised concerns that RTI is not universally applied to all students with disabilities. Thank you.

- Thank you, Nilam. Now we'll cover Career and Technical Education and Post-Secondary Opportunities.

- Good morning. Good afternoon, everybody. Here's a quick overview of priority four. Career and Technical Education encompasses post-secondary education offered at high schools. That leads to industry certification, success in the workforce, and pathways to college degrees and certification.

Strong support for CTE post-secondary opportunities was voiced through the public comment. Research findings also support the inclusion of courses through dual-credit and work-based learning. Key recommendations include ensuring consistent non-competitive funding for CTE post-secondary opportunities.

And also the recommendations included ideas for improving these approaches and improving access for at-risk and rural high school students.

- Thank you, Anya. And finally, we'll cover Creation and Implementation of Curriculum Aligned with Standards.

- That is going to be me again. So identifying and incentivizing access to high-quality structured evidence-based curriculum in all content areas, but especially in literacy and math has a priority for our region to improve student opportunities and outcomes, as well as support teacher preparation and retention.

Technical assistance should support analyzing available curricula for alignment to set criteria that reflect high-quality structured evidence-based practices to support LEA and informed selection and decision making. Develop ways to promote embedding training with identified high-quality instructional material and practicum experiences in teacher preparation programs, and to provide parent information about how students are progressing towards mastery of the standards.

- Thank you. And again, thank you all for your hard work on these priorities. Now that we have summarized the report, we are going to move on to discussion and deliberation on the report draft. So this is an opportunity if you have edits to suggest that or clarifying questions that you could bring them to the committee.

However, edits are going to be limited to the accuracy of the report contents, and we will not be looking at grammar or writing style, or formatting edits at this time. Does anybody have questions or edits for the report?

- I would like to speak up on the previous slide, Rebekka.

- On the priorities?

- On the priorities. I believe it's listed correctly in the report, but priority one should read Issues Related to Broadband Access. And I just want to clarify for those that are viewing this for the first time to understand the focus was not rates but it is correct, I believe in the report.

- Got it. Thank you for that clarification.

- Yeah. Issues Related to Broadband Access is priority one.

- Thank you.

- Do you all want the report up? Would that be helpful at this point? All right.

- This is Nilam. For point number three we need to include Stephanie Hinton because she helped me finish that.

- All right. So add Stephanie as a contributor.

- Yes. For the Opportunity Gaps Among all Learners.

- [Alison] I'll add that into the PowerPoint. Thank you.

- Thanks, Alison.

- Okay.

- Yep. Just checking issues related to broadband. Yep. Okay. Yes. What else?

- Go ahead, Anya.

- So based on the conversations that this committee had in meeting one and meeting two, and in looking at the report, I think that there's an important piece that might be missing.

And so I did reach out and to see where an additional piece might appropriately fit. And the idea was to maybe to propose it as another priority. And I'm thinking that if we decide to do this, the other priority would be data disaggregation for key subpopulations and inclusion of Bureau of Indian Education Data.

In both of our previous meetings, we did talk about the lack of data for American Indian Alaska natives, and also really the impossibility of pulling out Bureau of Indian Education data from the state data that we were provided.

And so I did just a very brief outcomes and findings, priority needs, and technical assistant recommendations that I'd like to present if that's possible.

- Yes. Do you have it where you can copy it into the chat?

- Yes, I do. Okay. I can copy it into the chat. It's a little bit lengthy and it would sit on page 22. Let me just make sure I'm getting it to everybody.

I'm having trouble pasting.

- That was what you emailed earlier, is that right?

- Yeah. This is a little different.

- A little different. Okay. I tried to scrape some of that from there.

- So I can't do the screen share. I can try again to...it may just be too, I'm wondering if it's too long.

- Can you email it to Jen?

- Yeah.

- And while you're doing that, just to clarify, this is...what you're saying, this is content that was discussed and just isn't necessarily reflected yet in the report, and it's identifying gaps in data that was available?

- Yes. Which I think actually does impact really all of the priorities that we identified.

- Just to comment if that's okay. This is touched on in the opportunity gap section.

It's probably not as flushed out as it could be due to limitations of space and timing, but it was one of the technical assistance recommendations that Nilam and I wrote about in the report, basically stating that there is need for more data and data that is broken down more disaggregated for different populations including, like special education categories, as well as information for tribes, and English learners.

Just to fully understand you know what is going well and where those gaps exist to better support our students. And so I do want to point out that it is there, I don't know that it is as flushed out as maybe what you're looking for, and it does affect other areas of course. But there are...it is commented, noted on, and discussed as a technical assistance recommendation in that section.

- This is Nilam. I wanted to second Stephanie, and if you go to the opportunity gaps technical assistance, this has been written down. We appreciate that you are sharing the flushed-out data, but even within the deliberations of the opportunity gaps, we have tried to cover the lack of information and data with regards to Native Indians and the tribes. And we also cited a case in New Mexico, which highlights the lack of

[inaudible] provided to English language learners, Native American students, and economically-disadvantaged students. And that should be under priority number three below table 1A and 1B.

- And I did see...I really appreciated that work. I did see it in each priority, but the fact that those data weren't available really impacts every single one of our priorities.

Just imagine how much more robust our identification of needs and our recommendations could have been had we had that data. And once I noticed that, I also realized that in the southwest region there is the Bureau of Indian Education, and we weren't, you know, like we could dig into it, but it should have been alongside the states, the, you know, we've got each of our states, but the BIE is also a state in some ways.

And as I say, it made me wonder how much more robust could our pieces have been had we had more of these data. And I think we didn't have more of the data because either they don't exist or they're not easily accessible.

And so that's why I am suggesting the additional priority - And Anya, this is Margo from BIE. In a large sense, it doesn't exist. We've started trying to gather that data this year from some questions we have from our assistant secretary, but it's a very slow process right now in gathering that data.

A lot of it is missing, a lot of it we can't get because some of the tribes aren't using the system that we have in place for them to input student longitudinal information until we can get them to work with us in inputting that information.

It's very spotty at best right now, so there is a need it's just that it doesn't exist in the way that it should right now.

- And so therefore the recommendation is the identification, and the collection, and the presentation of those data. And Jennifer, I'm not sure if you received the...

- I did. So I'm going to pull it and then copy into the... Yeah.

- And I also found that I don't have the expertise to have the language to identify how the special education data, how those subgroups also need to be disaggregated.

And so I'm looking to Nilam, you know, for edits specific to that area because the way I wrote it, it almost sounds like we're requesting disaggregation by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and that's not what it is.

And Nilam, I thought you made a really important case for that both in our meetings and also in the section that you referenced.

- Thank you. And I agree with you. I think disaggregated data is so critical to get meaningful impact from this whole exercise. And when we are putting students in a category, what we are failing to understand is the latitude of the need within each of those categories. And that is what is written there. So yes, Dr.

Enos, I think we can expand on that. Definitely, it's going to be a committee decision, but I so appreciate you highlighting the area of needs for the Native American community because we just could not find anything. It is so sad that when we were doing the studies there is no data for 12th grade math for English learners. And if we are going to understand what is the impact of the interventions and the remediation processes on the investment that we are doing, and we do not even have data, how do we measure the efficiency of the process?

- And thank you. Jennifer, I did send you a Word attachment.

- Oh, a Word. Okay. Let me see.

- Yeah.

- I will check again.

- I just emailed it.

- Oh, okay. Okay. I see.

- It was at the top. All right. Yep. Let me copy.

- And yeah, I apologize. When it was recommended that it be proposed as another priority just before the meeting, I sketched out how it might look.

- And Jen, could we copy it into the document instead of a comment? So it's easier to read. For the full committee, we will need to vote on this as a change

to the report. So I just want to make sure you all have the ability to read it. It is a couple paragraphs long or multiple small paragraphs I should say.

But it does follow the same structure as the other areas in terms of outcomes and findings, priority needs, and technical assistance recommendations.

- Is it okay to scroll down a bit or people are still reading the top part?

- I'm not seeing that section at all.

I'm seeing the section that is on curriculum.

- Yeah.

- Huh.

- I'm not seeing it either. And I was imagining it would start on page 22.

- I think it's technically started... Oh, you know what? Are you all looking on...I think I know what's going on. I have a different... I have a local copy. Okay. One second.

- Are you copying and pasting it into our shared copy?

- That's what I'm doing right now. Alison, the report template that you emailed yesterday, not template, but the report, where would I find...is that in...?

- Messages, SharePoint?

- Okay. How do we want to do that then?

- Can we just show it on the screen, the edits, and then...

- Yeah. Well, it sounds like folks are looking somewhere else. So let me know if you all are okay with looking on the screen that I'm sharing or, sorry, I stopped sharing, but I can bring it back up and then we can look at it, but yeah, you're not going to see it on your SharePoint at this point.

Sorry.

- Right. Right. Everybody received just an attachment when we sent it because in case somebody was writing edits, we didn't want the main document to have edits. So the easiest thing right, right now is if Jen edits on the document you

have, if you can share your screen and everybody just look at the Zoom screen to read...

- Yeah. Yes.

- ...edits.

- So it's right here.

- That's the section [crosstalk].

- Hold on, hold on. Here we go. Where did it go?

- Because I wrote that section. So the section we're showing right now is the section on curriculum.

- Other priority, I think because this bullet got, so right here, other priority data desegregation for key subpopulations and the inclusion of Bureau of Indian Education data. Okay. And let me just get rid of this comment because it's probably taking up space. Okay, here we go.

- Jennifer, can you adjust the screen? For some reason I'm seeing only part of that.

- So it spans two pages.

What part are you...

- No, no. I meant the width. Somehow, it's not fitting in my screen. There we go. Well, went too far.

- Okay. Yeah, it's going to be a little tricky. Sorry. Okay, so this is another priority. Let me just highlight this so I know where I am because the formatting is obviously not, there we go. Okay. So there's outcomes and findings, everyone sees that part.

Okay. Priority needs is that okay? Should I keep going? No, I'll stick right here.

- This is Nilam, and I just wanted to comment under the priority needs where we see that bullet 0.1, "While student education data are readily available, data on the designations within special education were lacking," I think it's mostly readily available so they're aware, even within the category, not all data was available.

So I think mostly would be a more appropriate word there - Got it. How does that sound to the committee? I see a few thumbs up. Okay. All right.

- Yes, mostly is good.

- Or most, sorry. It's mostly right.

- Can you do that? Can you put two adverbs together? Well, we'll get a copy editor, but we'll...yeah, we've got the gist.

- That's a grammar question. We're not dealing with grammar right now.

- All right.

- And yes, this is one of the bullet points where I was hoping for Nilam's, and others' help because it's like the data designations within special education, what is that term? It used to be disabilities, and I don't know if that's still the terminology.

So data on the...yeah, on different disabilities within special education something.

- Yes, this is Nilam. I would suggest that we expand it to read data on each of the 13 categories under IDEA. So that is my suggestion, but definitely committee members may have something else to suggest.

And then "within Special Education" would be redundant.

- Okay. Do you want to go down to technical assistance and read that section?

Is there anything further to add under those bullets for priority needs?

- Let's go to technical assistance. I copied it by section into the chat.

- Thank you.

- So it's another way to view it if needed. Are there any other comments on this proposed addition? Are we ready to vote on this proposed addition?

All right. Nobody's saying no, we're not ready.

- Okay.

- Okay. So then I'm going to call for the vote and you're going to use your raise hand feature so we can accurately count the vote. And you need to take a

screenshot for the record. So I call for the vote for the Southwest RAC to accept the proposed edits for the report as revised during this meeting. And we'll wait until we hear that a screenshot is available.

- [Dave] The screenshot has been taken.

- Thank you. So the edits for the report for the Southwest RAC have been approved. Are there any other edits to propose or clarifying questions? Okay. Then I believe we're ready to conduct the final vote to approve the report.

- Got a couple questions.

- I'm sorry. I wasn't sure if they were still voting. Nilam, go ahead.

- Oh, no, I need to lower my hand. Sorry.

- Okay. Nevermind.

- Okay. All right. So now same thing. I'm going to call for a vote for the Southwest RAC to approve the report to be submitted to the Secretary of Education. And we'll go through the same procedure, excuse me. Raise your hand if you choose to vote yes, we will take a screenshot.

- The screenshot has been taken.

- All right, then the report has been accepted by the RAC. Well done. Are there any final questions or comments before we adjourn the meeting?

- This is Nilam, I have a question. When can we read the final report?

- That is a great question. We will be notifying you when it's available. It will first go through edits within the Manhattan Strategies Group, and then it'll go to the secretary and it'll be after that, that it's available for the public.

And we will notify you when that time is. I will ask any colleagues or Jennifer to jump in if there's anything additional to share around timeline.

- [Dr. Daley] Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. In regards to timeline... Actually, I'm sorry, Dr. Michelle Daley from U.S. Department of Education, excuse me.

The edits are being incorporated by MSG. And the report should be ready in about a month, at least by the end of the year. And it will be provided to the secretary. After that, the report will be uploaded to our OASE website and also

to the RAC website where the registration links were found throughout the process.

And of course, it will be made public then. So I would say by the end of the year, early part of next year, which seems like about two weeks away, so it will be ready soon. So thank you very much. And we definitely want to also thank you for all you work that you have done. We have learned so much from you.

We truly appreciate all the work that you have done, all the effort. We know it was a short time. We were able to incorporate a few extra weeks, which we're sure was helpful, but just the fact that you did such great, amazing work in the short period of time, we truly appreciate it. So we definitely want to say thank you from the department. Thank you, Bekka.

- Yeah, thank you, Michelle. Jennifer, did you have a question? Just a hand raise. Okay. And Jane Nell, did you have a question? Okay.

- No, I did. Somehow, not being on the phone, I can't quite tell what all the actions I'm taking, so I apologize.

- No problem. We completely understand. Just wanted to make sure before we adjourn, and again, I echo Michelle's thoughts as well and comments. We are so appreciative of your time and your efforts and are excited about this report that you have created and that we will share with the secretary. All right. Seeing no further questions or comments, I move to adjourn the meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee for the Southwest region.

If you could please come off mute, and if you agree, say aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- Aye.

- All right. The meeting is adjourned as of 1:41 p.m. Eastern time on November 16th, 2023. Thank you again. We are so appreciative of your time.