



U.S. Department of Education

Identifying and Addressing Priority Education Needs

West

Regional Advisory Committee

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities and results of the West Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), authorized under the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ETAA) (Pub. L. 107-279; 20 U.S.C. § 9605). The 10 RACs were established to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Education (Secretary) regarding the educational needs of one of the ten regions served by the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) for input regarding technical assistance activities described in Section 203 of the ETAA and how those needs would be most effectively addressed. The Secretary sought recommendations for nominations to serve on the RAC from the Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, and education stakeholders within each region and appointed members to the RAC in August 2023. The activities discussed in this report took place from August to November 2023.

The Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) representing the West region was comprised of 14 representative members selected from Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. These members included a chairperson, business representative, principal, two practicing educators, three individuals representing other school administrators, three representatives from institutions of higher education, a district (LEA) representative, a parent representative, and a state agency representative.

Members reviewed a regional profile comprised of educational statistics and other relevant data to inform their individual assessments of the challenges and educational needs in the region. The RAC additionally sought input from Chief Executive Officers of States; Chief State School Officers; REL Governing Boards, and other education stakeholders through processes including online surveys, focus groups, and public comment solicitations. The goal of these processes was to solicit the views and needs of schools (including public charter schools), educators, parents, teachers, administrators, local education agencies (LEAs), librarians, businesses, state education agencies (SEAs), and other customers within the region regarding the need for the activities described in 20 U.S.C. sections 9564 and 9602 and how those needs would be most effectively addressed.

The West RAC held three virtual meetings to discuss and conduct its needs assessment. During the first meeting, held on September 8, 2023, the RAC reviewed educational data and public comments, deliberated, and made recommendations to address the needs of the region. During the second meeting, held on October 11, 2023, the RAC reviewed additional data, deliberated on the educational needs of their region, and voted on the top five recommended priorities to be included in a final needs assessment report. A final meeting was held on November 14, 2023, to review the subcommittees' written recommendations and vote to approve the final needs assessment report for submission to the Secretary.

The four priorities identified by committee members and discussed in further detail in this report are, presented in alphabetical order:

- **Priority 1:** Chronic Absenteeism,
- **Priority 2:** Opportunity Gap,

- **Priority 3:** Social Emotional Learning, and
- **Priority 4:** Teacher Retention and Recruitment.

School choice was not selected as a priority due to insufficient data. Once the four priorities were determined, each subcommittee was then tasked with writing a brief report focused on their assigned priority. This report presents the data analysis and recommendations related to each of the four priority areas. The following sections of this report will provide a more detailed overview of the data collection processes, summary of findings, and its recommendations will be outlined. We will conclude the report by providing a summary of our findings and a synopsis of any recommendations. Appendices are also included.

Introduction

The Secretary of Education (Secretary) established ten Regional Advisory Committees (RACs), authorized by the Educational Technical Assistance Act of 2002 (ETAA) (20 U.S.C. sections 9601 et. seq.) and governed by the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (Public Law 92-463). The purpose of the RACs is to collect information on the education needs of each region and how those needs may be addressed through technical assistance activities provided by the Comprehensive Centers Program described in section 203 of the ETAA and other Department technical assistance activities.

RAC members are appointed by the Secretary based on recommendations from Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, and education stakeholders within each region. West RAC membership is comprised of both Special Government Employees (SGEs) and representatives of organizations or recognizable groups of persons including state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), including rural and urban LEAs, institutions of higher education, parents, practicing educators, including classroom teachers, principals, other school administrators, researchers, and individuals from the business community. For a complete list of West RAC members, please see Appendix B.

Each RAC sought input on regional educational needs from Chief Executive Officers of States, Chief State School Officers, Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Governing Boards, and other education stakeholders in the region and the public. The West RAC conducted outreach activities such as public comment surveys to obtain input from various constituencies on regional needs and how to address those needs, used statistical data from the West Regional Profile (Appendix C), conducted seven focus groups, and deliberated during public meetings on September 8 and October 11. The RAC established four subcommittees to draft a report summarizing the results of the needs assessment and their recommendations. A final public meeting was held on November 14, 2023, to review the subcommittee's recommendations and vote to submit the final educational needs assessment report to the Secretary.

This report is based on the assessment of educational needs within the West region, which includes the following states: Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. The analysis and recommendations herein represent the findings of this assessment and the advice of the West RAC to the Secretary.

Data Collection

The West RAC met from early August through late October 2023 and prioritized the collection of data throughout the process. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through surveys, public comment, and focus groups. Stakeholders providing data included: schools, teachers, administrators, members' or regional labs' parents, adult education programs, businesses, librarians, LEAs, and SEAs.

Seven focus groups were held during September and October that included California Family Engagement Network (Statewide), Parent Organization Network (Los Angeles), Stockton Unified School District (San Joaquin), Berkeley Unified School District (San Francisco Bay Area), Parents for Public Schools (Statewide), San Bernadino County Superintendent of Schools (San Bernadino/Riverside), and California Association for Bilingual Education (Statewide). During September and October, the Governors and Chief State School Officers (CSSO) of the West region had the opportunity to provide feedback on priority areas. Governors and CSSOs identified student learning and achievement gaps as an area of concern. Comments included a desire for a focus on literacy, providing support for ELL and special education students, and a desire to ensure that teachers have all necessary resources needed to meet the needs of all learners. In October, REL West Governing Board members had an opportunity to provide comments on needs for their region.

Data was also reviewed from the 2022 Nation's Report Card - National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Assessment Comparisons (Institute of Education Sciences, 2022). The data highlighted gaps between male and female students, white students and students of color, and free-and-reduced lunch eligible students and free-and-reduced lunch non-eligible students.

Public Comments

Public comments were collected from a variety of stakeholders throughout the months of September and October. Those providing public comment were given the opportunity to share the needs they believed should be prioritized and then provide feedback on how to address the priorities.

Public comment requests were sent out by RAC members and included almost 92,000 educators in September 2023. As of September 7, 2023, 7 public comments were submitted for the West region. Respondents identified as educator (N=1), other education stakeholder (N=2), parent (N=2), and teacher (N=2). By October 2023, 624 public comments were received.

Public comments regarding priorities were sought and included questions such as: Why or why not this need should be a priority, rationale for why it is a priority, what is your evidence for this priority, and a request for ideas regarding how this priority may be addressed through technical assistance activities.

Summary of Findings

The West RAC synthesized information from various RAC members, their constituencies, and public comments (see Appendix D) to determine the highest-priority educational need areas within the West region and recommend strategies to address the needs.

The priority needs, voted on by committee members during a public meeting on October 11, 2023, are presented below:

- **Priority 1:** Chronic Absenteeism
- **Priority 2:** Opportunity Gap
- **Priority 3:** Social Emotional Learning
- **Priority 4:** Teacher Recruitment and Retention

For each need presented below, the committee summarized the needs, their analysis, and generated strategies to meet the needs through technical assistance.

Methods and Outreach

Stakeholders identified included schools (including public charter schools), businesses, teachers, librarians, administrators, members of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Governing Boards, local educational agencies, parents, state educational agencies, adult education programs, and other customers. In September and October 2023, seven public focus groups were held that included the Statewide-CA Family Engagement Network, Los Angeles Parent Organization Network, San Joaquin Valley Stockton Unified School District, San Francisco Bay Berkeley Unified School District, Statewide Parents for Public Schools, the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, and the California Association for Bilingual Education.

Recommendations

Chronic absenteeism is a common issue across the nation. There is evidence that absenteeism levels are higher now than before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the U.S. Department of Education, eight million students were chronically absent pre-pandemic, and 10.1 million students were chronically absent during 2020-2021, the first full year of the pandemic. A comparison of the data available for the following school year of 2021-2022 shows chronic absenteeism is on the rise as compared to SY 2020-2021 in all West region states (U.S. DOE, n.d.).

As identified through public input and commentary, and a deeper exploration of data and literature, many youths in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah have experienced **opportunity gaps** which negatively influence their academic success and general academic experiences. These gaps can be attributed to a multitude of factors to include the quality of education provided and available (i.e., resources, instruction, equity, inclusion, etc.), as well as other social, economic, and cultural dynamics. To address these needs, the committee has recommended the implementation of comprehensive talent management plans that include targeted recruitment, retention, and development practices which are responsive to the needs of each school community and include all levels and types of positions.

Not all state decision makers agree as to the value of **social emotional learning (SEL)**, however there is a robust literature base extolling its positive impact on academic and behavioral health. SEL programs, when implemented correctly, can have consistent, positive impacts on a broad range of student outcomes including increased SEL skills, attitudes, prosocial behaviors, and academic achievement, and decreased behavioral problems and emotional distress. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](#)) defines SEL as the fostering of social and emotional competencies through explicit instruction and through student-centered learning approaches that help students engage in the learning process and develop analytical, communication, and collaborative skills. SEL is not to be confused with mental health, although SEL can contribute to mental health. Recommendations include recognizing the difference between SEL and mental illness but collecting and maintaining student data from both perspectives; mandating SEL training for teachers who will be implementing the SEL curricula; and developing/providing culturally responsive SEL training.

Teacher recruitment and retention in the West region, specifically Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah, are pressing issues that require immediate attention. By implementing a combination of competitive compensation, professional development, improved working conditions, targeted incentives, and diversity initiatives, the region can work toward sustainable solutions to address current and future teacher shortages, ultimately benefiting educators and students. Collaboration between state and local education agencies, school districts, and teacher preparation programs is essential in tackling these challenges effectively. The comprehensive centers' leadership in informing viable solutions to address these persisting, challenging issues would be invaluable to supporting education in the West region.

Priority 1: Chronic Absenteeism

Methods and Outreach

We initiated our analysis with a variety of data points encapsulating chronic absenteeism trends, which were delineated in the chronic absenteeism reports for the years 2017-2019. This data was meticulously gathered using a combination of attendance records, student demographic information, and school-level absenteeism rates, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the patterns and factors contributing to student absenteeism in the region.

The committee utilized a comprehensive data collection strategy, including regional profiles, data from State School Officers and Governors, insights from the REL Governing Board, and public feedback. We reached out to an extensive network of over 500 educational stakeholders, with 350 responding to our online survey aimed at understanding chronic absenteeism trends. This effort provided pivotal insights, allowing us to tap into a wealth of community knowledge and direct experiences to inform our policies and initiatives.

Regional Education Leadership

During a three-month consultation period, the Regional Education Leadership received a significant volume of input, encompassing over 200 comments from Chief State School Officers, governors, and members of REL Governing Boards. The feedback consistently echoed themes of enhancing student engagement, addressing equity in educational access, and the imperative of integrating mental health support within schools to mitigate absenteeism and improve academic outcomes.

Public Comments

Over a four-week period, the public comment initiative yielded 150 remarks from educators, parents, and community leaders. The predominant themes revolved around the need for personalized learning approaches, better support for students with disabilities, the impact of socioeconomic factors on education, and calls for more robust family and community engagement in school activities.

Outcomes/Findings

- Poor school attendance has high costs in terms of young people's academic learning, connection to peers, teachers and schools, health, high school graduation, and future employment. Chronic absence—missing at least 10% of school—is an important benchmark of poor attendance.
- Several racial minority groups have higher chronic absenteeism issues than White and Asian students. (U.S. DOE, n.d.).
- Districts have challenges tracking absences, which may cause system-wide problems, especially where allocations are connected to attendance.
- Poverty may influence absenteeism, with fewer material resources contributing to students not wanting to attend school due to embarrassment. An Institution of Higher Education (IHE) RAC member described conditions leading to students losing enthusiasm for school, such as losing trust in the home environment or feeling embarrassed when clothes and shoes are not the same level of quality as their peers.

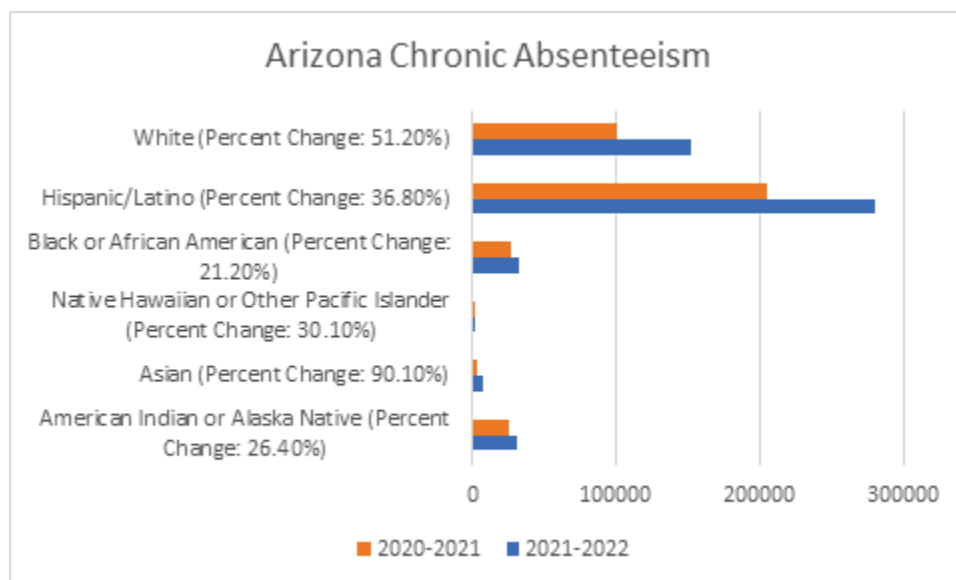
- Absenteeism often has both school and home components. Arizona was cited as having the lowest ratio of school counselors to students, yet in some remote districts, school leaders are more interested in hiring social workers who can also assist with issues in the home.
- Six focus groups in California led by a parent RAC member all reported that chronic absenteeism is a key issue. This RAC member added that California represents a diverse population, which may provide opportunities for clarity on the reasons for this in relation to ethnicity and disproportionality.

Priority Needs

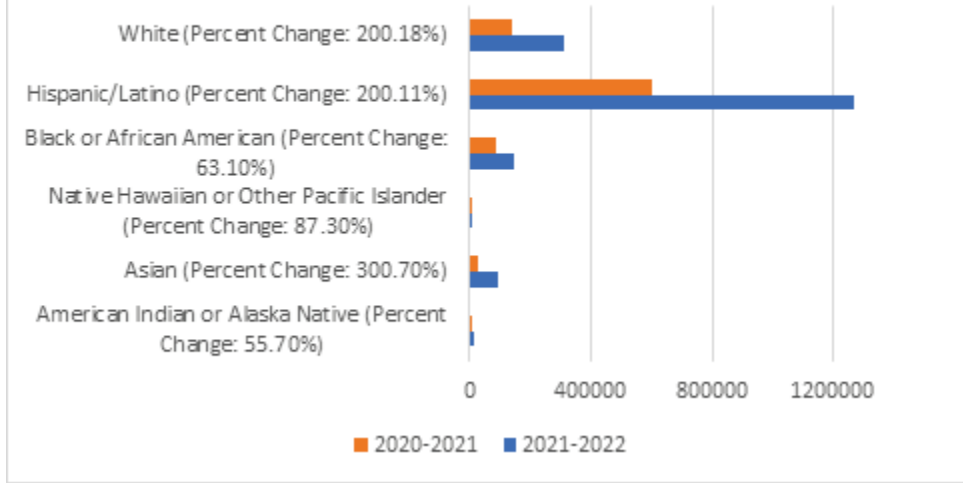
A Los Angeles United School District study (2023) showed that chronic absenteeism has physical health, mental health, and “disconnection” components. Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselors surveyed for this study described students as feeling disaffected or disengaged from school. The RAC Chairperson added that although chronic absenteeism has historically been a struggle in this district, other districts across the nation are also seeing chronic absenteeism dramatically increase following the COVID-19 pandemic.

A dissertation reviewed showed African American youth felt disengaged and disconnected from adults in their school (Cue, 2020). It also found that skipping classes was a more significant issue than skipping the whole school day. Student perceptions about school came directly from high school students. Students said that they did not feel welcome at school, and that they did not have someone who identified with them at school or made them feel like it mattered if they came to school or not.

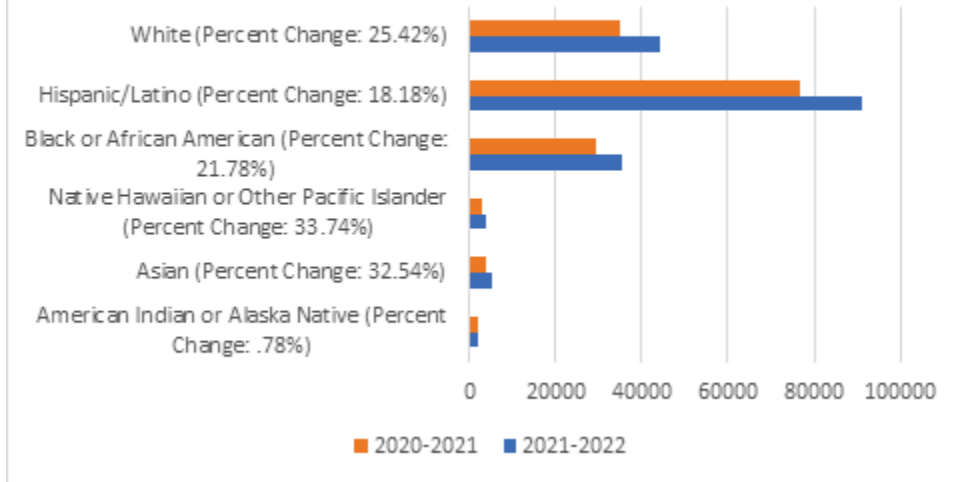
Data from the four West RAC region states showed that Native American, African American, and Latino students had much higher absenteeism than White or Asian students, indicating a persistent and, in some instances, a widening gap.

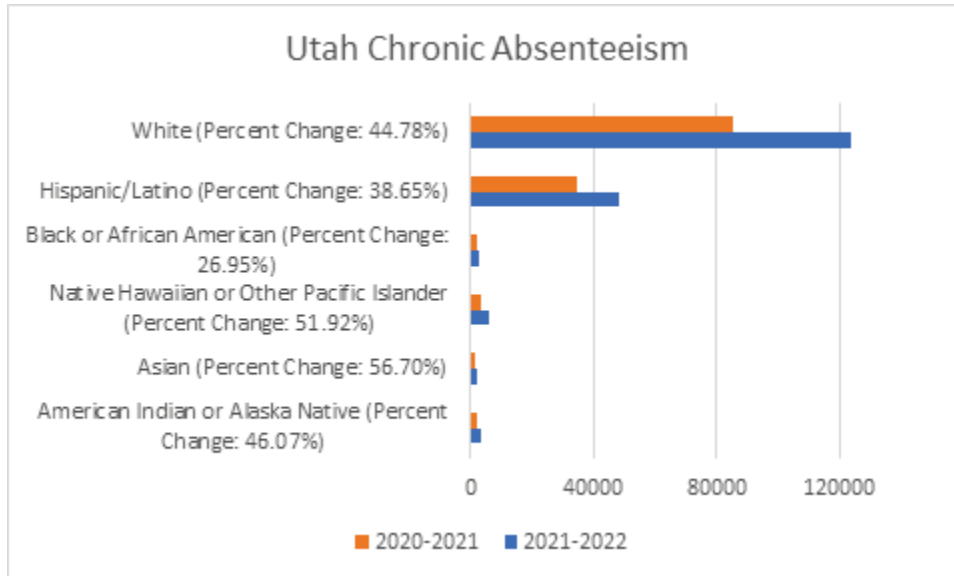


California Chronic Absenteeism



Nevada Chronic Absenteeism





Source: <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>¹

A discussion group in Arizona led by an IHE RAC member described low-quality teachers, particularly in reservation communities, as contributing factors to student disengagement and absenteeism. These school leaders described a lack of selection from a broader, well-qualified, and well-prepared pool of teachers. These hires were often made late in the year from a selection of candidates who had been unable to obtain jobs elsewhere, which resulted in teachers who were unprepared to meet the needs of the communities. Not only did the quality of teaching suffer, but student attendance dropped.

An IHE RAC member described feedback from some of the reservation communities, indicating that a social worker would create a better connection between the needs at home and the resources in the community. This feedback was consistent whether speaking to school leaders in Bureau of Indian Education schools or the public schools in the State and was found to be particularly relevant regarding the most remote school systems.

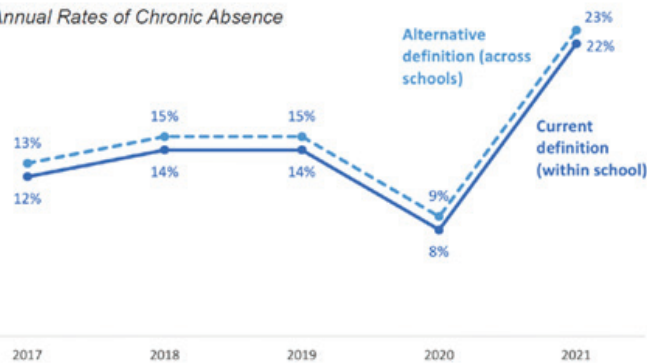
A study in Arizona showed that absenteeism was higher in 2021 than during the COVID-19 pandemic (Perrault, 2021). A 7th grade Native American student cohort in the study showed a nearly 50% absenteeism rate.

¹ The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the collection and reporting of data on EDE, beginning in SY 2019-20. The Department urges abundant caution when using the data and recommends reviewing the relevant data notes prior to use or interpretation. This includes data on state assessments, graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism.

The 2021 AZ Chronic Absence Rate Exceeded Pre-Pandemic Levels



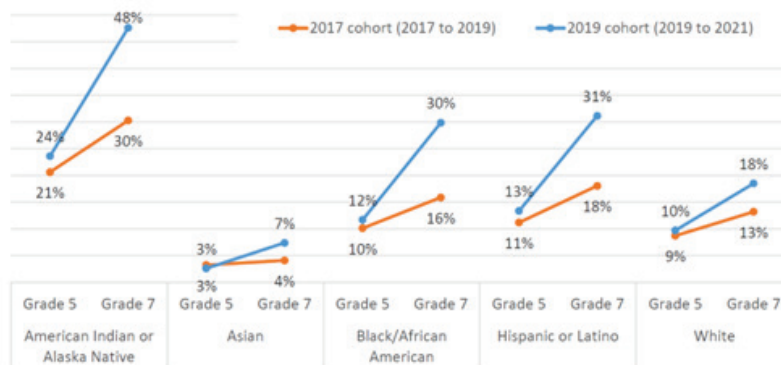
Statewide Annual Rates of Chronic Absence



The Rates of Chronic Absence for American Indian or Alaska Native Students Nearly Reached 50 Percent in Grade 7 in 2021



Percent of Students Chronically Absent in Grade 7 by Race/Ethnicity Status in Grade 5, 2017 and 2019 Grade 5 Cohorts



An LEA RAC member shared that a district in Utah is addressing absenteeism by having attendance specialists and parent specialists work with students and parents together on stressing attendance. These are classified (hourly) staff who work with both students and parents to understand the importance of school attendance.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

Schools in rural areas, on the reservations, and in impoverished inner-city areas often experience great difficulty attracting well-trained teachers who may share the cultures of the students they teach or who at least have experience working with those students. In order to proactively ensure teachers and administrators are well-prepared and appropriately prepared prior to assuming their positions, efforts should be made to ensure universities and colleges have training programs designed to meet these special needs. Instructional programs should meet the needs of students, which cannot happen unless and until educators know and understand the needs of each child. Support LEAs in recruiting well-trained teachers for poor students and in identifying evidence-based interventions, especially for

student groups who have experienced steep increases in chronic absenteeism, and study which interventions are working well and for which student groups (Perrault, 2021).

With respect to supporting specific student populations, we recognize that students cannot learn without attending school or attending all their classes. Chronically absent students may miss school for a variety of reasons, as discussed in the previous sections. Technical assistance should be provided to encourage schools to create healthy and safe learning environments, so all students feel a sense of belonging and connection and to help school staff find and provide relevant and engaging learning experiences so students want to come to school.

Many teachers, educational leaders, and school personnel work directly with students and families where chronic absenteeism is a pressing problem. When funds are available, LEAs may hire attendance and parent specialists who work with students and parents together on improving attendance. We recommend LEAs provide greater availability of classified (hourly) attendance and parent specialists to teach the importance of attendance to students and their families. However, these classified staff who work with both students and parents must be trained to address all causes of chronic absenteeism. If these staff over-emphasize the legal aspect of student attendance, they may be viewed as “the truancy police.” We also recommend that LEAs develop a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) influenced model to support school attendance interventions. Tier 1 might celebrate attendance and ensure students feel welcome; Tier 2 could investigate the causes for a student’s absenteeism and provide mentorship; and Tier 3 could include expanded Tier 2 intervention strategies and other options such as therapeutic approaches to improve family involvement.

Priority 2: Opportunity Gap

Definition of Opportunity Gap (LAUSD, 2023)

Many of our students experience opportunity gaps created or exacerbated by structural inequalities and institutional policies and practices. Opportunity gaps refer to the differential availability of, access to, and experiences with high-quality resources among members of groups defined by socially-constructed categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, and gender). Our evaluative work with opportunity gaps focuses on educational resources aimed at supporting students’ academic or social-emotional needs or at engaging family and community members.

Although we focus our work on these educational resources, we recognize the additional influence other resources have on student educational outcomes (e.g., availability of, access to, and experiences with health-related resources).

We conceptualize educational resources as either human or material resources. Human resources refer to any adult (staff, family, or community member) or student peer who might influence a student’s educational outcomes. Interventions involving human resources could either have a direct or an indirect impact on students. Hiring more qualified teachers leads to a direct impact.

On the other hand, training teachers in new skills has an indirect impact on students, because teacher training in and of itself may or may not impact students. Addressing opportunity gaps related to human resources would mean that students of all backgrounds have similarly high access to and positive experiences with qualified district staff (e.g., hold appropriate certifications) and who are fully

supported in their professional development. Here, addressing opportunity gaps would also mean district staff recognize, value, and leverage the rich array of community cultural wealth students bring with them to the school setting (Yosso, 2005).²

Opportunity Gap vs. Achievement Gap

Conversations around the opportunity gap intersect with the notion of the achievement gap so often that these concepts tend to be conflated with one another. It is important to highlight the difference between these two concepts. The opportunity gap differs from the achievement gap in that the opportunity gap refers to the inputs, such as policies and practices, which are process driven and influence students' relationships with educational resources. In contrast, the achievement gap refers to educational outcomes such as grades and test scores influenced by opportunity gaps (Milner, 2021).

Priority Needs

The specific themes echoed by the Regional Education Leadership, such as enhancing student engagement, equity in educational access, and integrating mental health support, are not distinctly outlined in the final report. While public comments are included, the final report does not specifically detail the themes gathered from these comments, such as the need for personalized learning, support for students with disabilities, socioeconomic impact, English learners and family/community engagement and partnership. Because opportunity gaps are created or exacerbated by structural inequalities and institutional policies and practices, we identify need across five key topics areas described below.

In the area of Supporting Strong Instruction and Academic Achievement, the West RAC found that due to the gap in achievement/opportunity, students who are not supported by the current school systems have less advantageous outcomes in career and life (Kostyo, et al., 2018).

In the area of Supporting Specific Student Populations, students who identify as coming from underserved populations (i.e., race, gender, ability) are performing at lower rates than their white, male, able peers. Building a system of cohesiveness would address opportunity gaps so that achievement is also strengthened.

In the area of Supporting Teachers, Leaders, and School Personnel, teachers are reporting lower job satisfaction due to low pay, large class sizes, and poor quality of mental health.

In the area of Supporting Student and Educator Well-being, members of the populations who identify as students, teachers, and parents are all reporting that their mental health is declining, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the area of Developing an Effective Technical Assistance Response, there are multi-faceted needs that should be prioritized to help decrease the opportunity gap that includes teacher-focused and student-focused services. Teacher-focused needs should relate to teacher mental health access, teacher development, teacher pay, hiring and retention of teachers of color, and class size. Student-focused needs should relate to chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, school climate, extended-year

² Opportunity Gap Expanded Definition – LAUSD Strategic Data and Evaluation Branch, LAUSD, Equity Analysis Project, 4.21.2023)

graduation, college- and career-ready curriculum, student mental health, and support of and for minority students.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

The Department of Education should support school sites with specific issues such as chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, school climate, extended-year graduation, and college- and career-ready curriculum. With these specific focus areas in mind, the Department of Education should implement “accountability and improvement systems [to]...identify appropriate interventions and support” that are aligned with each focus area (Kostyo, et al., 2018).

- Regarding chronic absenteeism, the Department should create clear Federal definitions of what qualifies as an absence.
- Regarding school suspension rates, the Department should establish federally supported restorative justice programs, prohibit use of corporal punishment in public schools, and eliminate referrals to law enforcement for nonviolent, noncriminal offenses.
- Regarding school climate, the Department should establish criteria for Title IV grants to include school climate surveys and promote collaboration with community-based organizations grounded in youth development, parent engagement, and/or mental and behavioral health, and provide grant funding grounded in a whole-child approach to education (e.g., mental health practitioners, access to social workers, after-school programming, etc.).
- Finally, focusing on college- and career-ready curriculum, the Department should create funding for professional development programs aligned with college- and career-ready programs, as well as funding for schools to prioritize hiring of staff who are highly qualified in college- and career-related fields (Kostyo, et al., 2018).

To address the disparity in student achievement due to identifying markers, the Department of Education should promote the hiring and retention of teachers of color. The West region also recommends the Department provide funding incentives to sites and districts who show clear and consistent progress in creating and maintaining systems that support the academic growth of students from marginalized backgrounds. Finally, to support specific student populations, implement accountability systems in the form of state or Federal oversight for schools or districts who consistently underserve their students from marginalized backgrounds, including mandated professional development and/or state or Federal oversight of school/district budgeting.

To address the identified needs of increasing teacher pay, providing access to high-quality mental health services for teachers, and lower class sizes, the West RAC recommends the Department implement a federal mandate of a minimum wage threshold for teacher pay and a federal mandate for districts and charters to provide access to staff development, either through partnerships with universities or other professional development opportunities that will provide pathways to staff pay increase. Guidance should be given for in-house teacher development programs to promote the advancement of part-time or hourly staff to full-time, salaried teacher positions with an emphasis on staff who reside within the school neighborhood, especially for schools receiving Title I funds. The Department of Education could provide grant funding for school staff mental health services, including access to highly qualified mental

health practitioners for each school site, specifically for on-campus adults. The Department could utilize incremental funding across the board, rather than providing funding on a per-child basis, to promote the reduction of class sizes for all Title programs and create federally mandated teacher-to-student ratios that promote the reduction of class sizes or the usage of a co-teacher model.

To address the need to prioritize creating systems that promote mental health well-being of students and educators, the Department could create a federally mandated mental health provider-to-student ratio that promotes smaller caseloads for mental health providers. The West RAC recommends that the Department of Education implement a federal mandate that establishes that educators should have access to mental health providers (e.g., on-site adult mental health providers, or access to mental health services included in teacher benefits packages). Federally mandated professional development could be implemented that promotes a whole-person approach to student learning and staff retention, including access to social services, mental health services, physical health prioritization, and financial health services. Finally, the Department could create federally mandated outdoor play criteria with minimum times for unstructured play for any district or charter network.

Technical assistance programs should be structured in a way that promotes equity and inclusivity across the board. The RAC also recommends that technical assistance programs are implemented with accountability measures in place to ensure programs are being implemented with fidelity, especially programs tied to grant funding. Finally, there should be a no opt-out policy for technical assistance programs.

Priority 3: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Outcomes/Findings

In the West region, there were common themes identified throughout our data collection activities. When the data sources were triangulated, the following findings emerged:

- There is a lack of certified counselors and a large counselor-to-student ratio. The results, based on a national sample, revealed that school counselors' racial identity (i.e., identifying as white), school-level variables (i.e., percentages of students with disabilities, students who are bi/multilingual, white students, and white faculty members) were significantly associated with school counselors' odds of meeting a 250:1 student-to-school counselor ratio. School counselors with a ratio of 250:1 or lower scored slightly lower in leadership practices (Savitz-Romer, Nicola, Rowan-Kenyon & Carroll, 2023).
- The ratio for student to school counselor is 716 to 1 in Arizona, 572 to 1 in California, 445 to 1 in Nevada, and 544 to 1 in Utah, far below the recommended ratio of 250 to 1 (American School Counselor Association, 2021).
- There is a need for staff and student mental health support.
- COVID-19 influenced staff, student, and family mental health.
- Overall school safety may be affected by a lack of mental health support.
- There is a need for implementation of student learning and staff professional development in SEL.

- Gimbert et al. (2023) recommends professional development opportunities for strengthening educators' understanding of their own SEL to improve daily pedagogical practice and ensure each school-wide initiative around SEL drives seamless strategies for attaining school improvement outcomes.

Priority Needs

Many education community members, state/national policy makers and the public increasingly agree that students' development of social-emotional skills is important for success in academic and life outcomes. Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) researchers argue that schools can facilitate the development of these skills, both directly and through the implementation of policies and practices that improve a school's culture and climate and promote positive relationships (Hough, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2017). In a more recent review of 12 meta-analyses involving an estimated one million students from early childhood education through high school, it was shown that SEL programs have consistent, positive impacts on a broad range of student outcomes including increased SEL skills, attitudes, pro-social behaviors, and academic achievement, and decreased behavioral problems and emotional distress (Durlak, Mahoney & Boyle, 2022). The Aspen Institute's recent National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development's report (2019) "From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope," provides an overview/synthesis of what is known about learning and what is needed from future research, practice, and policy to ensure all children and youth learn and develop the types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed in school, careers, and life.

The research notwithstanding, there are wide differences in support for SEL among the state departments of education with some states favoring patriotic, civic, and character education programs (Utah) and others favoring SEL or T-SEL programs (California). California refers to SEL as T-SEL or transformative social emotional learning to support development of equity-focused learning environments (Professional Learning Innovations Office, 2023). The current Superintendent of Arizona does not favor SEL while Nevada skirts the issue by stating "State law requires districts to integrate social-emotional learning or character education into the school curriculum" (National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE, 2023).

In addition, there is much confusion between definitions of social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health. The terms are often interchanged but the concepts of SEL and mental health are quite different. [CASEL](#) defines SEL as the fostering of social and emotional competencies through explicit instruction and through student-centered learning approaches that help students engage in the learning process and develop analytical, communication, and collaborative skills (Balow, 2018).

Social-emotional learning strategies in education center on research that has linked the development of skills like building healthy peer relationships, responsible decision making, self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness to students' success both inside and outside the classroom.

However, it is important to make the distinction that SEL does *not* encompass mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), or bipolar disorder, for example. But SEL programs can support students with diagnosed psychiatric conditions such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and intermittent explosive disorder (IED) (Balow, 2018).

Technical Assistance Recommendations

Technical assistance recommendations should center around clarifying the difference for educators, parents, and students between SEL and mental health curricula and support. That can be done by mandating SEL training for teachers who will be implementing the SEL curricula and by developing/providing culturally responsive SEL training. In addition, districts must be highly systematic in collecting SEL and mental health data on students. Therefore, it is critical that districts have the capabilities to consider the whole child.

Regional offices can help districts build their capacity to house student SEL and mental health data securely, analyze longitudinal trends, and triangulate multiple measures to provide a wider understanding of student challenges and deploy early warning measures. The West RAC recommends supporting mental health training and staff and providing mental health-trained staff at the recommended staff-to-student ratios.

Technical assistance could help state and district leaders understand how school staffing (teacher retention) may lead to better professional development impact. In addition, applied research can help substantiate the role of SEL and its impact on student growth and development across a variety of students from diverse cultures and communities.

Finally, we should explore what a “sense of belonging” looks like for students and how school-based staff with overlapping responsibilities (e.g., teachers, social workers, counselors, nurses) may contribute to this.

Priority 4: Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Data Collection

The type of data collected included secondary publicly available data, using SharePoint (Word/Excel) as the technology/platform to share with all RAC members. An abstract summary, or regional profile, was the output involving quantitative and qualitative analysis. Examples of data obtained included: *The State of the Teacher Workforce: A State-by-State Analysis of the Factors Influencing Teacher Shortage Supply, Demand, and Equity*, Learning Policy Institute, July 2023; *Arizona Recruitment and Retention Report*, July 2023; *National Indian Education Study*, 2019; *OIE Annual Report*, 2021; and *Teacher Pay Penalty Still Looms Large: Trends in Teacher Wage and Compensation through 2022*, Economic Policy Institute, 2022.

Outcomes/Findings

Research data indicates that three-fourths of the United States are experiencing challenges with teacher shortages. The West region of the United States, comprising the states of Nevada, California, Arizona, and Utah, faces significant challenges in teacher recruitment and retention. Nevada (#48), California (#49), Arizona (#50), and Utah (#51) are ranked the lowest in the country for pupil to teacher ratio (McCann, 2023).

This summary provides an overview of the current state of teacher recruitment and retention in the region, highlighting key issues, trends, and potential solutions to address the growing demand for qualified educators.

The key challenges regarding teacher recruitment and retention include teacher shortages, compensation disparities, working conditions, high attrition rates, and diversity and inclusion.

Teacher Shortages: The West region is experiencing a severe shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in urban and rural areas. This shortage is driven by factors such as retirements, high turnover rates, and population growth. In Nevada, several schools could not provide classes due to staffing shortages. This staffing challenge also includes access to substitute teachers. In California, there were more than 10,000 teacher vacancies—including positions filled by people who do not hold credentials—during the 2021-22 school year, according to the State’s Department of Education (Branson-Hotts, 2023). It is estimated that there are 100,000-200,000 individuals credentialed as teachers who do not enter the classroom (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017).

Compensation Disparities: The teacher shortage extended beyond the historically referenced teacher pipeline issue to a seemingly adequate supply of certified teachers who have chosen to opt out of the teaching workforce due to low wages and high cost of housing as well as a lack of available housing and access to healthcare in remote areas. Teachers in this region often face lower salaries and higher living costs, leading to financial strain and contributing to recruitment and retention challenges. Competitive compensation packages are essential to attract and retain high-quality educators.

Working Conditions: While the historical educator pipeline issue has led to alternative pathways into the classroom, poorly trained teachers require more support from veteran teachers, increasing the stress experienced by those teachers. Low pay and low support from school administrations also impact teacher retention and recruitment. A lack of teachers leads to other school staff covering classrooms, impacting the services for which these staff are typically responsible. Challenging working conditions, including large class sizes, inadequate teacher preparation, professional learning, resources, and limited career pathways can deter teachers from staying in the profession. Addressing these issues is crucial for retention.

High Attrition Rates: Many teachers in the West region leave the profession within their first few years due to burnout, a lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient support. Some individuals seek growth opportunities beyond what can be offered through a 30-year career in the classroom. It may be necessary to reconceptualize what this means for a career in education.

Diversity and Inclusion: Ensuring diversity among the teaching workforce is a challenge, with the need to recruit and retain teachers who reflect the region’s diverse student population.

Priority Needs

In September and October of 2023, the West RAC region’s Governors and Chief State School Officers compiled their priorities:

- Increased funding to allow districts to pay a competitive wage for both classroom teachers and all other education staff, especially social workers, school psychologists, counselors, and support staff.
- Access to effective educators, and access and guidance to enroll and be successful in rigorous coursework.

- Recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers delivering standards with aligned instruction.
- Identifying and supporting evidence-based curriculum, interventions, high-quality instructional materials, and resources.
- Identifying career pathways for educators to grow within their profession, supporting mentoring and induction programs for new educators, and addressing gaps in healthcare coverage and affordability for educators and their families.

A 2023 national survey reported that three-quarters of states in the U.S. are experiencing teacher shortages (Jones, 2023). This percentage included all West region states, with California specifically citing challenges in hiring math and special education teachers, and Arizona citing challenges in hiring general education teachers and bus drivers—all of which further exacerbate vacancy rates in high-poverty, high-minority school districts.

A report issued by The Hamilton Project estimates there are 100,000-200,000 individuals credentialed as teachers who did not enter the classroom (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). This suggests there are upward of one million people in the labor market who, at one point in the past decade, wanted to teach and had obtained a traditional teacher education degree but did not find a teaching position.

An SEA RAC member noted that economically disadvantaged students, Black students, and Hispanic students have a significantly higher share of their classes taught by teachers who are underqualified, alternatively certified, and teaching out-of-field. This appeared in at least two reports submitted to the RAC (Nguyen, Lam, & Bruno, 2022; Dee & Goldhaber, 2017). Of the 624 public comment entries, 15.5% were in support of assisting specific student populations.

REL West Governing Board members' responses to RAC's questions cited educators and support staff as the highest education priority, along with the need for increased funding to allow districts to pay a competitive wage for educators and support staff. Of the 624 public comment entries, 68.5% were in support of teachers, leaders, and school personnel.

According to the Education Commission of the States (2023), the West region's State of the State addresses given by governors in Arizona, Nevada, and Utah all emphasized teacher recruitment and retention. Only California did not specifically emphasize teacher recruitment and retention.

An SEA RAC member described the current teacher shortage as more of a retention challenge than a recruitment issue. This member reported a consistent pipeline in Arizona but added that nearly a quarter of new teachers (23.2%) leave within their first four years of teaching. This member also reflected on the frequency of needs survey responses that cited difficulties with student behaviors, and mentioned the supporting research submitted to the committee that the longer a teacher is in the classroom, the better that teacher can manage student behaviors.

RAC members described wages and local housing costs as also impacting the number of individuals who enter and stay in the profession. In remote areas the lack of teacher housing is a factor, as is access to health care and other community services, as described by an IHE RAC member. Without some of these services, good staff go elsewhere.

An IHE RAC member noted that the local economy often pays more than what is offered to classified (hourly) staff. This was in line with a 2022 Economic Policy Institute report that the wage gap between what teachers make and other similarly educated professionals has grown (wage penalty). Teachers on average have made 26.4% less than these other professionals (Allegretto, 2023); the West region teacher wage penalty was reported as follows:

- Arizona, -33.2%
- California, -19.2%
- Nevada, -19.5%
- Utah, -28.1%

Low support from school administration was a recurring theme across needs survey respondents and RAC members, with one SEA RAC member citing the strong correlation between principal support and teacher retention.

An IHE RAC member emphasized the lack of growth opportunities for teachers outside the promotion to an administration position. Younger or early career educators do not see options beyond a 30-year career in the classroom and may be seeking meaningful ways to contribute or other types of leadership opportunities.

Technical Assistance Recommendations

RAC members provided recommendations for how comprehensive centers can support this priority area. Below are a few examples of recommended support for teacher recruitment and retention.

- Increase teacher pay and offer incentives.
- Revise the practice of tying school funding to enrollment size and daily attendance. Teachers with larger classrooms, which are incentivized due to enrollment monies, report having a more difficult time in the classroom. This may also decrease class size, resulting in improved teacher mental health. Develop funding formulas that address differences in community environments.
- Support school administrators and provide support to make better hiring decisions that improve teaching conditions in their schools. For example, use student teaching placements in anticipation of hiring needs or digitally savvy recruitment strategies (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017).
- Examine ways to make the teaching labor market more flexible to address local shortages by creating a more flexible, less state-dependent teacher labor market (Dee & Goldhaber, 2017).
- Encourage shared decision-making between principals and teachers.
- Provide mentorship for early career teachers and provide opportunities and training for teacher-leaders to work with these teachers. This would provide support for new teachers and leadership opportunities for veteran teachers who desire to remain in classrooms rather than be promoted into instructional leadership positions.
- Develop diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) to ensure representation of a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and “anti-blackness” training to reduce implicit bias and

improve pedagogy through learning sessions for institutional leaders, school administrators, and school practitioners.

- Encourage advocacy to improve teaching conditions and support not only for teachers but also for administrators. Regional Assistance Centers could do research to provide the support needed to get policy and legislation passed. Centers could also bring programs and practices that demonstrate results to the forefront so more schools and districts can adopt them and make a notable difference.

In addition, below are **key strategies and recommendations** that can be undertaken to address the critical issue of teacher recruitment and retention.

Competitive Compensation: Increasing teacher salaries to align with the high cost of living in some areas can make teaching a more attractive career choice. Offering financial incentives and bonuses for educators working in underserved areas is another viable strategy.

Professional Learning and Development: Providing ongoing professional development opportunities, mentoring programs, and career advancement pathways can help retain teachers and improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

Improved Working Conditions: Reducing class sizes, providing adequate classroom resources, and ensuring a safe and supportive working environment can enhance teacher satisfaction and retention.

Incentives for High-Need Areas: Implementing targeted recruitment and retention strategies for high-need areas, such as remote rural communities, can help address the most acute teaching shortages.

Diversity Initiatives: Actively cultivating diversity in the teaching workforce through strategic recruitment and retention efforts, scholarships, and mentorship programs can lead to a more representative and inclusive educator population.

Conclusion

In the sections above, the subcommittee of the West RAC provided a summary of findings and offered recommendations for how to support youths and gaps that may exist in their learning experiences. As identified through public input and commentary and a deeper exploration of data and literature, many youths in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah have gaps in their learning impacting their academic success and general academic experiences. These gaps can be attributed to a multitude of factors to include the quality of education provided and available (i.e., resources, instruction, equity, inclusion, etc.), as well as other social, economic, and cultural dynamics, to name a few. To address these needs, this committee has recommended the implementation of comprehensive talent management plans that include targeted recruitment, retention, and development practices, which are responsive to the needs of each school community and include all levels and types of positions. Additionally, partnering with institutions of higher education and ensuring there is better alignment of curriculum and instruction is recommended.

However, when considering these recommendations, it is important to examine all priorities identified by the West RAC as both a collective group of the region's needs and as distinctly separate identified needs. There are areas of overlap among Chronic Absenteeism, the Opportunity Gap, SEL, and Teacher Retention and Recruitment. When reading this report, the West RAC asks the reviewers to make note of the interconnectedness of all four priorities and consider how the different needs might be addressed through the supports recommended for the other priorities. There are areas of overlap where strategically planned supports and interventions could be implemented effectively and efficiently, maximizing resources and avoiding duplication of services. In conclusion, this RAC suggests that all priorities and recommendations for the West region be fully examined and any potential overlaps carefully considered when developing the action plans for each region and each Regional Educational Laboratory.

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Appendix A. Chart of Nominated, Recommended, and Serving RAC Members

Number of Individuals Nominated, Recommended, and Serving on the West RAC

Region	Nominated	Recommended by the U.S. Department of Education	Declined	Resigned	Accepted, Serving
West	64	14	0	2	12

Appendix B. List of RAC Members

West RAC members represented local and state education agencies; institutions of higher education; parents; practicing educators, including classroom teachers; and organizations serving youth, educators, or both. Members included:

Regional Chair

- Dr. Katherine Hayes, Director, Strategic Data and Evaluation Branch at Los Angeles Unified School District

RAC Members

- Dr. Alexa Cunningham, Executive Director, Utah School Superintendents Association
- Dr. H. Meg Cota, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Practice; Director, EDLP M.Ed. & Administrator Certification Programs; Educational Leadership and Policy Programs (EDLP) Department of Educational Policy Studies and Practice (EPSP)
- Ms. Michele Darchuck, MEd, Program Supervisor, Catapult Learning
- Dr. Tonia Holmes-Sutton, NBCT, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
- Ms. Vanessa Danielle Marrero, MSW, Executive Director, Parents for Public Schools of San Francisco; President, Organizational Change and Leadership Student Collective, University of Southern California; Berkeley Rent Board Commissioner
- Dr. Joseph Martin, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Northern Arizona University's College of Education; Principal Investigator and Director of the American Indian School Leadership Program
- Dr. Kelly McQuaid, Deputy Associate Superintendent of Title II – Effective Teachers & Leaders, Arizona Department of Education
- Ms. Crystle Nehrmeyer, Superintendent, Oracle School District, Arizona
- Ms. Brandy M. Olson, Washoe County School District Lead Psychological Services Coordinator
- Dr. Gerry Peterson-Incorvia, Executive Director, Glendale Elementary School District
- Dr. Kathy L. Prather, Superintendent/CEO, Pima County Joint Technical Education District #11, Tucson, AZ
- Ms. Tiffany A. Stanley, Senior Advisor, Office of the President at Western Governors University

Appendix C. West Profile (Comprehensive)

The following profile shows recent data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education for the West region, which includes Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. Data for each state is included along with high-level data comparing information across the regions. The following topic areas are included:

- Information about Districts and Schools
- Student Enrollment Information
- Graduation Information
- Student Academic Information
- Student Non-Academic Information
- Teacher Information
- Teacher Qualifications
- Teacher Shortages
- Financial Resources
- Resources

Note that data includes the most recent tables available in July 2023. In some instances, data have not been disaggregated by jurisdiction so national data have been included as a reference point. Where appropriate, Reflection Questions have been provided for consideration.

Overall Reflection Questions

- What is your overall reaction to the data presented?
 - *Is it what you expected?*
 - *If it was not what you expected, what surprised you?*
- What other data do you need to help you better understand the needs in your jurisdiction or region?
- Are the data available at the state level or do you have access to this data through another vehicle?
- How can the needs assessment help you attain this data?
- What do you believe are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction/region?
- Why do you believe these are the top priorities facing your jurisdiction?
- What input would you like to hear from other stakeholders?
- How will you collect that input?

Information about West Districts and Schools

Totals by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Operating Districts (2020-21)	Total Number of Operating Public Schools (2020-21) ¹	Total Number of Charter Schools (2020-21) ²	Total Number of Private Schools (Fall 2019)
Arizona	691	2,357	554	400
California	2,121	10,328	1,296	3,220
Nevada	20	736	90	130
Utah	163	1,088	136	170

Note 1: Profiles were prepared using the most recent publicly available data. The most recent set of private school data provided was fall 2019, whereas the tables used for reporting the districts and public/charter school data were updated for the 2020-21 school year.

Note 2: Operating schools/districts include all those providing services at the start of the reported school year.

Student Enrollment Information

Jurisdiction	Total Public School Enrollment (Fall 2019)	Public PreK-8 Enrollment (Fall 2021)	Public Grades 9-12 Enrollment (Fall 2021)	Enrollment in Private Schools
Arizona	691	2,357	554	400
California	2,121	10,328	1,296	3,220
Nevada	20	736	90	130
Utah	163	1,088	136	170

Note: Public schools include traditional public and charter schools.

3–5-year-old Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (% distribution by race/ethnicity) (2021)

Jurisdiction	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	Two or More Races
Arizona	45.7%	48.4%	48.3%	42.3%	47.6%	++	44.8%	55.1%
California	51.1%	55.8%	48.7%	47.5%	54.0%	41.8%	53.6%	58.8%
Nevada	42.8%	52.0%	46.2%	38.3%	33.7%	++	++	38.2%
Utah	53.0%	56.7%	++	45.2%	++	++	++	42.7%

++ Reporting standards not met. Either there are too few cases for a reliable estimate, or the coefficient of variation (CV) is 50 percent or greater.

**Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (% distribution by total)
(Fall 2021)**

Jurisdiction	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Two or More Races
Arizona	35.8%	5.7%	47.0%	3.0%	0.4%	4.2%	3.9%
California	21.0%	5.1%	55.9%	11.8%	0.4%	0.5%	5.3%
Nevada	64.1%	6.6%	20.5%	2.9%	0.2%	1.3%	4.4%
Utah	72.3%	1.3%	18.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.0%	3.3%

Number of Students by School Locale (Fall 2019)

Jurisdiction	City	Suburban	Town	Rural
Arizona	614,956	289,730	116,529	125,733
California	2,581,773	2,802,044	356,989	406,450
Nevada	247,955	174,093	36,446	38,440
Utah	108,800	418,194	71,764	85,697

English Language Learners (Fall 2020)

Jurisdiction	Total	Percentage of Total Enrollment
United States	4,963,388	10.3%
Arizona	74,834	7.4%
California	1,148,024	17.7%
Nevada	70,217	13.7%
Utah	54,067	8.1%

Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (2019–2020)^a

Jurisdiction	Total	Percentage of Total Enrollment
United States	26,000,645 ^a	52.1% ^a
Arizona	537,767	51.2%
California	3,648,170	59.4%
Nevada	319,258	64.6%
Utah	223,431	32.7%

^a For the United States data, total includes imputation for nonreporting states.

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Arizona

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	232	121	253	1,880	11	2,726	183
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	305	209	322	3,464	21	3,801	415
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	7,153	1,658	8,166	62,937	295	49,036	7,032

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – California

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	126	4,203	2,375	26,596	84	10,102	1,703
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	288	5,987	2,774	36,030	181	12,042	4,810
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	4,754	44,186	54,485	418,427	2,441	153,740	33,038

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Nevada

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	10	154	298	1,133	25	1,076	257
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	21	159	460	1,605	39	1,237	309
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	763	1,537	8,734	24,455	607	18,101	3,973

Special Education Enrollment Numbers by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group Served under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) – Utah

Age Group	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Ages Birth-2 (Served under IDEA, Part C)	25	49	57	915	49	3,072	131
Ages 3-5 (Early Childhood) (Served under IDEA Part B)	68	78	81	1,206	86	5,424	208
Ages 5 (School Age) through 21 (Served under IDEA Part B)	1,358	808	1,543	16,745	993	54,782	2,510

Student Enrollment Reflection Questions

- Based on the number of students by school locale, where are the majority of your students located?
- Looking at the enrollment distribution by race percentages, how diverse is your student population?
- How does the percentage of students qualifying as ELLs in your jurisdiction compare to the overall percentage of ELLs throughout the United States?
- How does the percentage of students qualifying for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) in your jurisdiction compare to the overall percentage of students qualifying for FRPL throughout the United States?

Graduation Information^{b, c}

Demographic	United States	Arizona	California	Nevada	Utah
Total ACGR for all Students	87%	77%	84%	83%	88%
Percent Economically Disadvantaged (2019-2020) ^d	81%	74%	81%	79%	78%
Percent English Learners (2019-2020) ^e	71%	55%	69%	75%	73%
Percent Students with Disabilities (2019-2020) ^f	71%	66%	68%	66%	73%
Homeless Enrolled (2019-2020)	–	49%	70%	75%	–
Foster Care (2019-2020)	–	45%	58%	50%	–
Private High School Graduates (2018-2019)	340,610	4,150	38,850	1,420	1,390

– Not available.

ACGR by Race/Ethnicity % (2019-2020)^g

Jurisdiction	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Two or more races
Arizona	83%	72%	74%	91%	64%	73%
California	88%	77%	82%	92%	76%	79%
Nevada	92%	75%	78%	86%	72%	83%
Utah	91%	79%	80%	87%	73%	88%

^b Numbers are the public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by selected student characteristics for 2019-2020.

^c The time when students are identified as having certain characteristics varies by state. Depending on the state, a student may be included in a category if the relevant characteristic is reported in 9th-grade data, if the characteristic is reported in 12th-grade data, or if it is reported at any point during the student’s high school years.

^d Students who met the state criteria for classification as economically disadvantaged.

^e Students who meet the definition of English Learners as outlined in the Department of Education *EDFacts* workbook. For more information, see [EDFacts Workbook](#).

^f Students identified as children with disabilities under the IDEA.

^g States either report data for a combined “Asian/Pacific Islander” group or report the “Asian” and “Pacific Islander” groups separately. Total represents either a single value reported by the state for “Asian/Pacific Islander” or an aggregation of separate values reported for “Asian” and “Pacific Islander.” “Asian/Pacific Islander” includes the “Filipino” group, which California reports separately. Number represents the Total reported Asian/Pacific Islander.

Graduation Rates Reflection Questions

- Do you collect data on 5-year graduation cohorts? If so, how does it compare to the 4-year cohort ACGR?
- Which, if any, graduation rate would you prioritize to increase over the next 5 years?

Student Academic Information

To compare students nationally, we have provided results from the fourth and eighth grade math and reading National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results. NAEP—a congressionally mandated large-scale assessment administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)—consists of print and digital assessments in various subject areas. Three of these subjects—mathematics, reading, and science—are assessed most frequently and reported at the state and select district level, usually for 4th and 8th grades. The Nation’s Report Card provides results on student performance based on gender, race/ethnicity, public or nonpublic school, teacher experience, and hundreds of other factors.

NAEP assessment results are reported as average scores on a 0-500 scale (reading, mathematics at 4th and 8th grades, U.S. history, and geography) or on a 0-300 scale (mathematics at grade 12, science, writing, technology and engineering literacy, and civics). These scale scores, derived from student responses to assessment questions, summarize the overall level of performance attained by that student. Scale scores for individual students are not reported, but summary statistics describing scale scores for groups of students (demographic, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.) are reported. More information about NAEP can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

Academic Achievement: NAEP (2022) National and State Averages

Jurisdiction	4th Grade Math	4th Grade Reading	8th Grade Math	8th Grade Reading
United States	235	216	273	259
Arizona	232	215	271	259
California	230	214	270	259
Nevada	229	212	269	259
Utah	240	221	282	265

Student Academic Factors Reflection Questions

- How did students in your jurisdiction compare to the national average of students on the NAEP results?
- Given the national average NAEP score, what goal(s) would you set for your students to achieve on the next NAEP administration? For example, would you like the results to stay stable or would you want to see a 3-point increase on 4th grade math? What do you need to achieve this goal?

Non-Academic Information

Non-academic factors for students include suspension and expulsion rates. Additionally, the most recently reported data regarding students who have carried firearms to schools and have experienced bullying (both on school property and electronically) have been included.

Percentage of Students Suspended or Expelled from Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Gender and Ethnicity (2017–2018)ⁱ

Percent who Received Out-of-School Suspensions^j

Demographic	United States	Arizona	California	Nevada	Utah
Total	5.0%	5.3%	3.3%	5.6%	1.8%
Male	6.8%	7.6%	4.7%	7.5%	2.8%
Female	3.0%	2.9%	1.8%	3.6%	0.9%
White	3.4%	4.3%	2.8%	4.1%	1.5%
Black	12.3%	11.4%	9.6%	14.2%	5.4%
Hispanic	4.0%	5.2%	3.3%	4.8%	2.8%
Asian	1.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.1%	1.0%
Pacific Islander	4.9%	3.9%	3.9%	6.6%	3.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6.9%	9.5%	8.2%	9.4%	4.2%
Two or More Races	5.5%	5.5%	3.3%	5.5%	1.9%

Percent Expelled^k

Demographic	United States	Arizona	California	Nevada	Utah
Total	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%
Male	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%
Female	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%
White	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Black	0.5%	0.1%	0.3%	1.4%	0.6%
Hispanic	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Two or More Races	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%

ⁱ Data by race/ethnicity excludes students with disabilities served only under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (i.e., those not receiving services under IDEA).

^j An out-of-school suspension is an instance in which a student is temporarily removed from his or her regular school (either in person or virtual) for disciplinary purposes for at least half a day (but less than the remainder of the school year) to another setting (e.g., home or behavior center). Out-of-school suspensions include removals with or without the continuation of educational services.

^kExpulsions are actions taken by a local education agency to remove a student from his or her regular school (either in person or virtual) for disciplinary purposes, with or without the continuation of education services, for the remainder of the school year or longer, in accordance with local education agency policy. Expulsions also include removals resulting from violations of the Gun Free Schools Act that are modified to less than 365 days.

Firearms (2019-2020)

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Students Who Brought Firearms to or Possessed Firearms at School	Number of Students Who did this per 100,000 Students, Enrolled
United States	2,431	4.8
Arizona	69	13.9
California	261	4.2
Nevada	31	6.2
Utah	66	9.6

Bullying (2017)

Jurisdiction	Percentage of Public School Students Bullied on School Property ^l	Percentage of Public School Students Electronically Bullied ^m
United States	19.0%	14.9%
Arizona	19.2%	15.2%
California	17.9%	13.6%
Nevada	16.1%	13.0%
Utah	19.4%	18.0%

^lBullying was defined for respondents as “when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again.” “On school property” was not defined for survey respondents.

^mIncludes “being bullied through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, or texting” for 2011 through 2015, and “being bullied through texting, Instagram, Facebook, or other social media” for 2017.

Student Non-Academic Factors Reflection Questions

- What policies are in place to address recent issues of school violence?
- How does your state compare to the national average? Is this a number you would like to change? What other information do you need to make an informed decision about this issue?

Teacher Information

Jurisdiction	Total Number of Public School Teachers (Fall 2019)	Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Fall 2020)	Teachers in Private Schools
Arizona	48,912	23.6	5,630
California	271,805	23.0	51,340
Nevada	25,509	19.5	1,780
Utah	30,256	22.6	1,790

Teacher Qualifications

The following table includes the highest degree earned and years of full-time teaching experience by state and United States. Data from 2011-2012 was the latest data reported at the national level.

Jurisdiction	Degree Levels, Percentage — Less than Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage — Bachelor's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage — Master's (2011-2012)	Degree Levels, Percentage — Education Specialist or Doctor's (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience — Less than 3 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience — 3 to 9 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience — 10 to 20 (2011-2012)	Years Fulltime Experience — Over 20 (2011-2012)
United States	3.8%	39.9%	47.7%	8.7%	9.0%	33.3%	36.4%	21.3%
Arizona	4.6%	44.4%	44.1%	6.9%	16.4%	38.0%	28.5%	17.2%
California	4.8%	43.4%	39.2%	12.7%	9.4%	29.1%	42.3%	19.1%
Nevada	4.5%!	25.1%	49.8%	20.6%	6.5%!	39.0%	36.2%	18.2%
Utah	4.2%	56.8%	27.3%	11.7%!	15.0%	39.9%	25.6%	19.5%

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

Number and Percentage Distribution of Teachers Enrolled in Traditional and Alternative Programs

Jurisdiction	Number Enrolled in a Teacher Preparation Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Traditional Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Alternative Program (Institute of Higher Education [IHE]) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Enrollment by Enrolled in an Alternative Program (Not IHE based) (2019-2020)
United States	590,046	69.9%	8.3%	21.9%
Arizona	38,262	93.4%	4.2%	2.4%
California	36,083	77.0%	18.3%	4.8%
Nevada	5,243	59.8%	14.8%	25.4%
Utah	7,311	86.6%	0.4%	13.0%

Number and Percentage Distribution of Teachers Who Completed Traditional and Alternative Programs

Jurisdiction	Number Completed a Teacher Preparation Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in Traditional Program (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in an Alternative Program- (IHE based) (2019-2020)	Percentage Distribution of Completers in an Alternative Program- (Not IHE based) (2019-2020)
United States	151,138	76.8%	11.4%	11.8%
Arizona	5,908	91.2%	7.9%	0.8%
California	14,300	69.8%	26.0%	4.2%
Nevada	1,226	59.4%	22.8%	17.9%
Utah	2,403	92.7%	0.0%	7.3%

Teacher Information Reflection Questions

- Given national issues of teacher shortages, where are the priority areas in your state?
- What teacher preparation institutions or alternative programs does your state offer? Are these programs going to fulfill your educator needs in the next 5 years?

Financial Resources by State

Description	Arizona	California	Nevada	Utah
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – Federal (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$2,191,507	\$15,163,382	\$680,010	\$712,100
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – State (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$6,193,001	\$60,071,357	\$1,921,522	\$4,042,774
Revenue sources for public elementary and secondary education – Local (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$4,555,169	\$36,576,689	\$3,220,375	\$2,600,268
Amounts and percentage changes of inflation-adjusted state, local, and federal revenues per pupil (FY2021)	\$11,785	\$18,628	\$12,070	\$10,806
Percentage change from FY20-21	7.0%	12.1%	2.6%	5.7%
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction – Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$10,508,680	\$88,216,783	\$485,509	\$6,135,506
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction – Instruction (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$5,838,559	\$51,831,423	\$293,098	\$3,890,534
Current expenditures for public elementary and secondary education by function, and subfunction -Support Services (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$4,259,119	\$33,476,661	\$1,788,745	\$2,000,615
Current expenditures per pupil – Total (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$9,571	\$14,697	\$10,073	\$9,014
Title I expenditures per pupil – (In thousands) (FY2021)	\$238	\$323	\$291	\$123
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction – Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$5,465,366	\$88,216,783	\$4,858,509	\$6,135,506
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction – Instruction and Instruction-related total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$3,518,335	\$57,394,853	\$2,802,946	\$3,555,649
Salaries and wages, and employee benefits for public elementary and secondary education, by function and state or jurisdiction – Support Services Total (In thousands) (FY 2021)	\$1,685,387	\$27,913,231	\$1,192,564	\$1,541,862

Financial Resources Reflection Questions

- Looking at the subfunction allocations, are expenditures allocated proportionately in the correct places?
- How do educator salaries in your state compare to other professional careers?

Appendix D. Summary of Stakeholder Input

Data Source	# of Responses	Time Period	Topics by Category
Public Comments	624	August 18, 2023 – October 15, 2023	<p>Counts from the coding of the public comments. Some comments received multiple codes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining High-Priority Needs-1 • Supporting Strong Instruction and Academic Achievement-182 • Supporting Specific Student Populations-97 • Supporting Teachers, Leaders, and School Personnel-428 • Supporting Student and Educator Wellbeing-119 • Developing an Effective Technical Assistance Response-9 • Other-215
REL Governing Board	1	September 15, 2023 – October 10, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators and Support Staff • Safe/healthy buildings and transportation • African American and Native American student populations are still showing the lowest proficiency and growth • Increased funding to allow districts to pay a competitive wage for both classroom teachers and all other education staff
CSSO	4	September 15, 2023 – October 10, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Literacy-4 • Chronic Absenteeism-1 • High-quality preschool and early learning-3 • Teacher retention and professional development to ensure effectiveness-3 • Student mental health-3 • Student outcomes and personalized learning-3 • College and career readiness-1 • Safe and healthy schools-1 • Parent engagement-1 • Increased student outcomes for students with disabilities and multi-lingual learners-1