Research Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
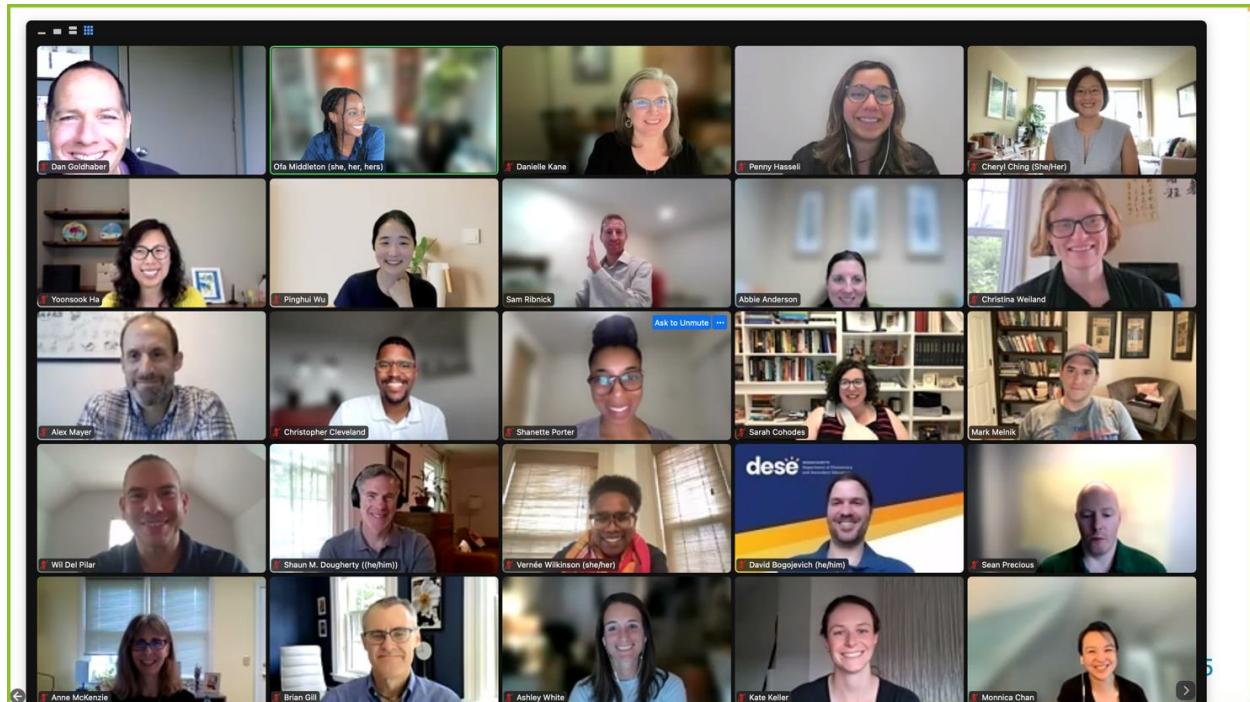
June 16, 2023, 1-2:30 p.m.

RAC members in attendance:

RAC Domain	Name/Affiliation
Early Childhood	Ashley White Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation (MTF)
Early Childhood	Christina Weiland University of Michigan
Early Childhood	Yoonsook Ha Boston University
K-12	Brian Gill Mathematica
K-12	Christopher Cleveland Harvard University
K-12	Dan Goldhaber CALDER & the University of Washington

K-12	Kate Keller EdVestors
K-12	Sarah Cohodes (with baby Isaac) University of Michigan
K-12	Shaun M. Dougherty Boston College
Higher Education	Alexander K. Mayer MDRC
Higher Education	Cheryl Ching UMass Boston
Higher Education	Monnica Chan UMass Boston
Higher Education	Shanette Porter University of Chicago
Higher Education	Wil Del Pilar The Education Trust
Higher Education	Mark Melnik University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI)
Labor and Workforce	Pinghui Wu Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
Labor and Workforce	Hannah Hermanson ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School
Labor and Workforce	Mark Melnik University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI)
Labor and Workforce	Penny Hasseli MassHire Metro North Workforce Board
District and Advocates	Abigail (Abbie) Anderson Lowell Public Schools
District and Advocates	Anne (Annie) McKenzie Hadley Public Schools
District and Advocates	Sean Precious Brockton Public Schools
District and Advocates	Vernée Wilkinson SchoolFacts Boston

Also in attendance:

The E2C Hub Team: Ofa Middleton, E2C Hub Equity and Research Manager; Sam Ribnick, E2C Hub Executive Director; David Bogojevich, E2C Research and Data Hub Analyst (DESE); Danielle Kane, E2C Hub Outreach and Engagement Specialist; and Julian Smith-Sparks, UX/UI Designer.

Agency Representatives: Amy Checkoway, EEC Senior Associate Commissioner; Kendra Winner, DESE Research and Evaluation Coordinator; Elana McDermott, DESE Education Specialist; and Suzanne Smith, DHE Director of Research and Evaluation.

Welcome and introductions:

Ofa welcomed the members, introduced the E2C team, and invited members to introduce themselves.

Discussion:

Ofa reviewed E2C Hub leadership structure, the RAC's objectives and responsibilities, membership and expectations, and participation as well as a [description of potential areas of focus](#):

- Research questions in priority areas
- Public datasets
- Research briefs and data stories
- Data quality and completeness
- Data/research request processes
- User experience testing

Q1: Which RAC topic would you like to focus on first?

Identifying research questions in priority areas was the clear preference, followed by research briefs and data stories, data quality and completeness, and public datasets.
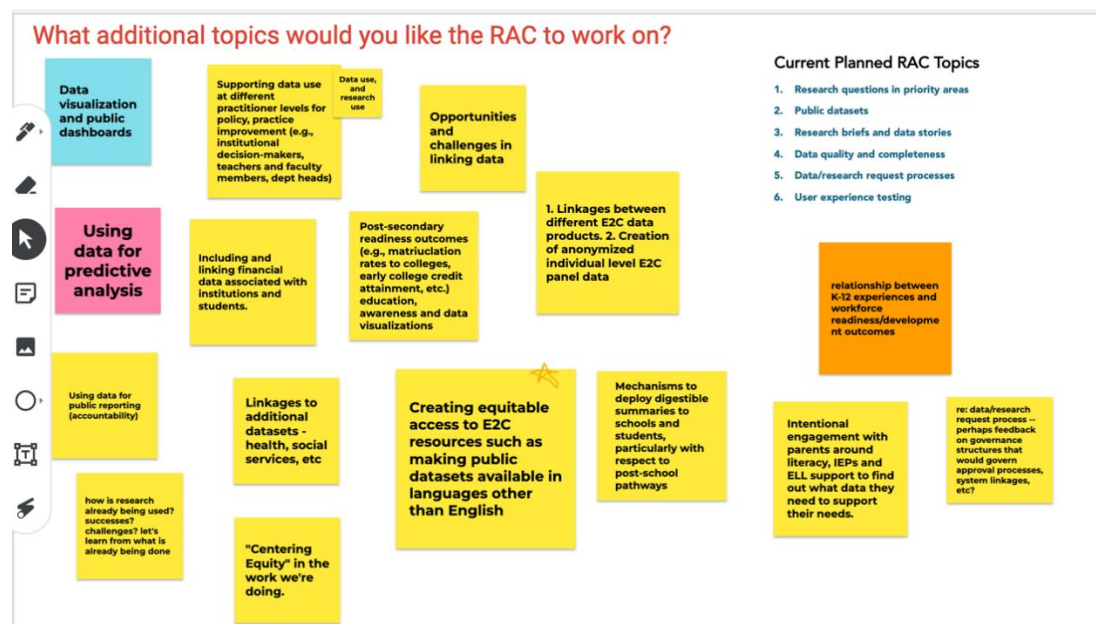

Members were asked to share what they more most excited about. Select responses included:

- *"I'm definitely excited about briefs and data stories as a means to synthesize the publicly available data."*
- *"Most excited about research questions. MA is a great place to work with policymakers because of the openness to empirical evidence, and there's lots of important work to be done."*
- *"Public datasets. As someone who uses and oversees the data that gets submitted and used by DESE, this is of interest to me."*
- *"I think it is difficult to address any of the other areas without knowing the priority areas and research questions. Would also be helpful to be able to see a data dictionary to know what data elements you currently collect and what is missing."*
- *"I'd opt to go with the research questions first as I think that helps to set the agenda for other issues, like data collection and quality. Data quality/completeness seems a natural follow on to research questions."*

What additional topics would you like the RAC to work on?

Common themes included linking datasets and creating equitable access to data and research.

The question of data governance was raised and will be addressed in the data/research request processes.

Overview of E2C Hub

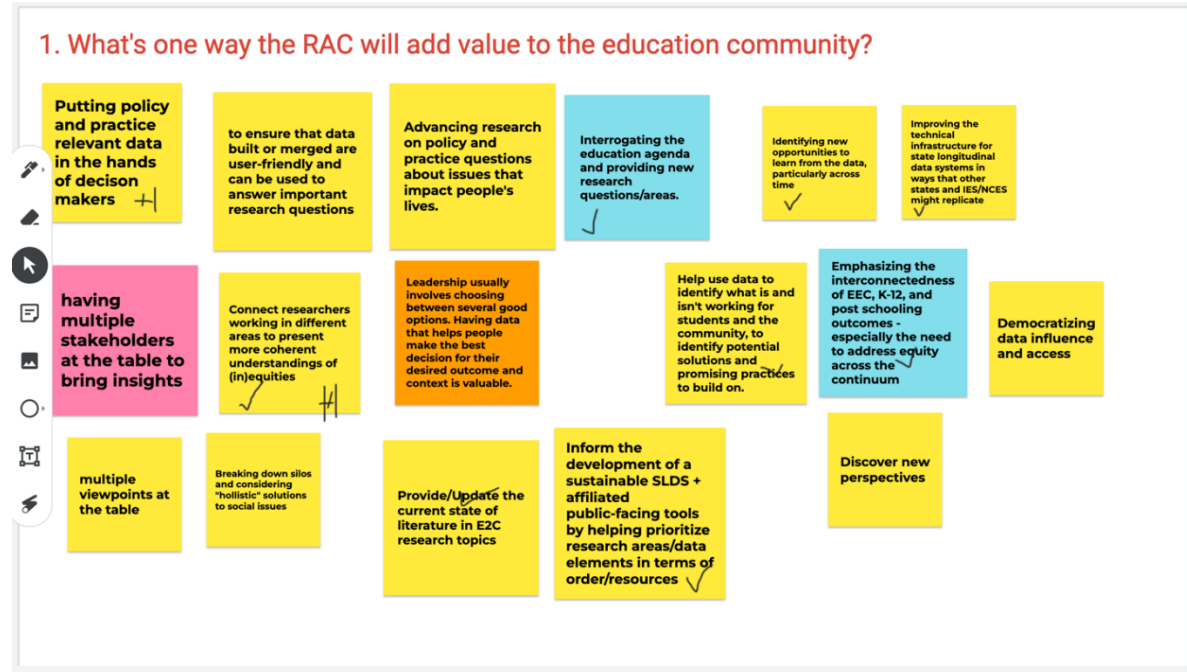Ofa presented an overview of the E2C Hub including:

- Vision
- Cross-agency participation
- Principles
- Leadership structure

Sam explained that the Cross-Agency Leadership Group has been working for about a year to establish priority research areas. How can RAC members take those areas and form research questions? Communication with the RAC on this work will enhance the state's data and reporting capabilities.

Q1. What's one way the RAC will add value to education community?

Members reiterated the value of bringing together multiple perspectives and domains to increase understanding of inequities and identify possible solutions.

1. What's one way the RAC will add value to the education community?

- Putting policy and practice relevant data in the hands of decison makers
- to ensure that data built or merged are user-friendly and can be used to answer important research questions
- Advancing research on policy and practice questions about issues that impact people's lives.
- Interrogating the education agenda and providing new research questions/areas.
- Identifying new opportunities to learn from the data, particularly across time
- Improving the technical infrastructure for state longitudinal data systems in ways that other states and IES/NCES might replicate
- having multiple stakeholders at the table to bring insights
- Connect researchers working in different areas to present more coherent understandings of (in)equities
- Leadership usually involves choosing between several good options. Having data that helps people make the best decision for their desired outcome and context is valuable.
- Help use data to identify what is and isn't working for students and the community, to identify potential solutions and promising practices to build on.
- Emphasizing the interconnectedness of EEC, K-12, and post schooling outcomes - especially the need to address equity across the continuum
- Democratizing data influence and access
- multiple viewpoints at the table
- Breaking down silos and considering "hollistic" solutions to social issues
- Provide/Update the current state of literature in E2C research topics
- Inform the development of a sustainable SLDS + affiliated public-facing tools by helping prioritize research areas/data elements in terms of order/resources
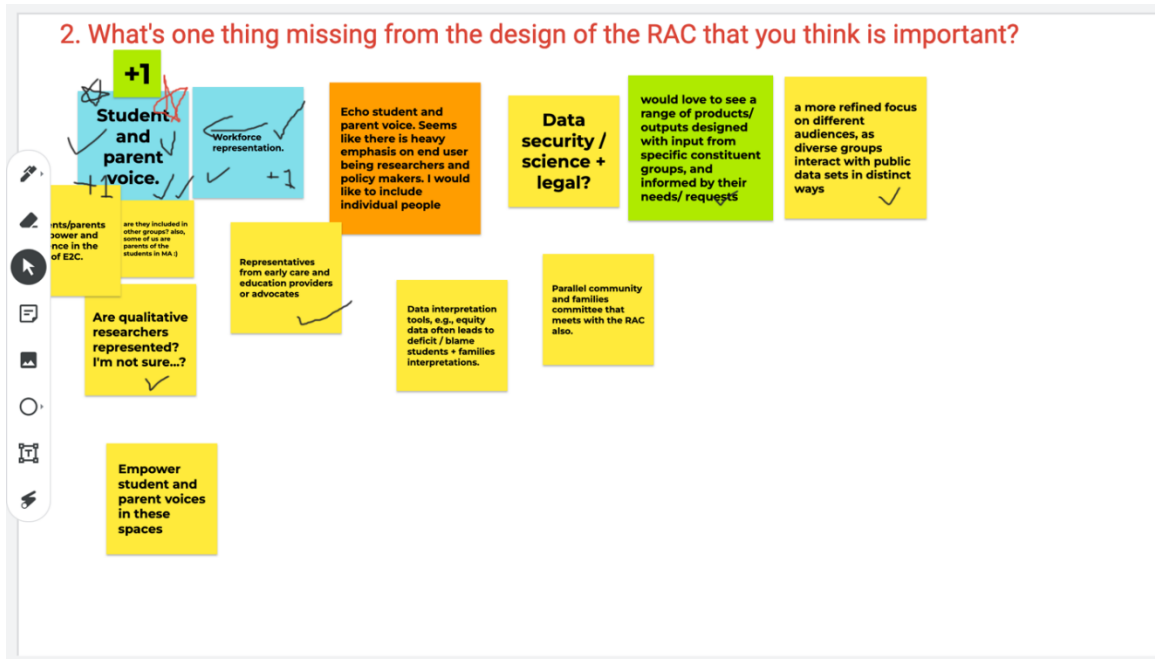- Discover new perspectives

Select comments included:

- *"Looking at data on racial inequities, it's valuable to be in a space where we can ask questions that go beyond silos and think of more holistic solutions to inequities."*

- *"I agree. I study subsidized early education and care and would love to see how that impacts work in higher ed."*

Q2. What's one thing mission from design of RAC that you think is important?

Several members indicated a desire to include student and family perspectives in the E2C Hub's work.

Discussion included:

- *"It can be challenging to integrate, but perhaps form a separate committee to offer feedback on research questions and agenda. 'Nothing about us without us.' How can parents more actively engage and use this data to make decisions? Folks represent institutions, K-12, school-based entities, but what about people impacted by those decisions at the table?"*

- *"The emphasis is heavy on research and policy makers, but maybe that's where it begins. What are parents'/individuals' questions and how might they inform work of the group?"*

Asked whether student/family voices should be integrated with the RAC or invited as a separate committee, members offered:

- *"I worry about initiatives trying to be all things to all people and as a result don't achieve results needed. It risks not being useful to anybody. Too many levels of conversations will stall the work. But maybe students and families could be part of an alternate committee."*

- *"It makes sense to have two separate groups, but have a representative join our committee, so their perspective is considered."*
- *"It seems irrelevant if we're not doing student/parent engagement in some way. Don't underestimate their ability to understand. They are the end user. If we bypass them, it becomes a values issue. Likely establish as a parallel committee, and it will take some intentional thought and design. It could be aligned with civics engagement and programming."*
- *"Adding support to the idea. Don't create new silos."*

Q3. What access or resources do you wish you had for the work you're doing?

RAC members expressed the desire for more linked data and collaboration between agencies, organizations and even states.

3. What access or resources do you wish you had for the work you're doing? Dream big!

- Easy/legal linkages between health, education, earnings data, as well links to parent-level data
- Individual-level linked education to UI records data +1
- College retention/completion rates by detailed demographic characteristics
- All of this, at minimum, needs to be disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- ROI analysis to help people evaluate education, training, program choices from a total cost and projected benefit perspective
- earning data disaggregated by highest educational attainment and program of study
- During Boston Public Schools Capital Planning w/school closings/mergers/new builds there needs to be a research Impact study focused on displacement of Black & Brown students.
- Information about social and emotional development
- State ids from birth in Mass hospitals that could be linked across time with DESE/EEC data
- Employment and earnings data; data on students in non-credit courses at community colleges. +1 +1
- data elements to answer equity-related questions
- collaborative development of RQs that address a range of constituent needs/interests
- more collaboration across research teams. How much do we reinvent the wheel/duplicate efforts?
- More information on how E2C interacts with other program offices within DESE and other MA agencies
- +1
- More agency staff/support for research collaborations
- Inclusion in DESE data of district-collected P-2 benchmark assessments (like NWEA, DIBELS, iReady)... It's a black box for student test score outcomes until third grade
- Info on research priorities from other states who have SLDS systems in place (although MA seems like a leading SLDS state)
- Access to earnings data from other states
- FWIW - this is possible in other states, so not as aspirational as the LOL might think

Select comments included:
- *"My take is that it's necessary to intervene early to really move the needle on educational achievement/equity, so I'm particularly interested in the data available from birth to kindergarten, the possibility of either evaluating or designing interventions that target students at this early age. As a concrete example, there's a study about the extra*

help mothers get if they have low-birthweight babies. The [study](#) leverages the fact that the intervention is based on a weight threshold, but the research looks at school and later life outcomes. "

- *"Would like earnings data from other states."*

Sam noted that members of the RAC who work in other states could be helpful in providing the ideas and connections to break down barriers and make data sharing across state lines possible.

Announcements

[Slides](#) and notes of this meeting will be posted online. Ofa will send out a post-meeting survey. RAC meetings are posted and open to the public in order to support the work of researchers and prevent any conflicts of interest. The discussion here will be presented at the next E2C Hub Leadership meeting on Friday, July 14.

The next RAC meeting will be Friday, August 18.