

Research Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2023, 1-2:30 p.m.

RAC Members in attendance:

<i>RAC Domain</i>	<i>Name/Affiliation</i>
<i>Early Childhood</i>	Anne Douglass UMass Boston
<i>Early Childhood</i>	Yoonsook Ha Boston University
<i>K-12</i>	Brian Gill Mathematica
<i>K-12</i>	Christopher Cleveland Harvard University
<i>K-12</i>	Dan Goldhaber CALDER & the University of Washington
<i>K-12</i>	Sarah Cohodes University of Michigan
<i>K-12</i>	Shaun M. Dougherty Boston College
<i>Higher Ed</i>	Alexander K. Mayer MDRC
<i>Higher Ed</i>	Monnica Chan UMass Boston
<i>Higher Ed</i>	Shanette Porter University of Chicago
<i>Labor and Workforce</i>	Hannah Hermanson ForHealth Consulting at UMass Chan Medical School
<i>Labor and Workforce</i>	Pinghui Wu Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
<i>Labor and Workforce</i>	Penny Hasseli MassHire Metro North Workforce Board
<i>District and Advocates</i>	Anne McKenzie Hadley Public Schools
<i>District and Advocates</i>	Sean Precious Brockton Public Schools
<i>District and Advocates</i>	Vernee Wilkinson SchoolFacts Boston

Also in attendance:

From the E2C Hub Team: Ofa Middleton, E2C Hub Equity and Research Manager; Danielle Kane, E2C Hub Outreach and Engagement Specialist; David Bogojevich, E2C Research and Data Hub Analyst (DESE); and Ana Vasconcelos, E2C Research and Data Hub Analyst (EEC).

Agency Representatives: Jocelyn Browne, EEC Deputy Commissioner for Research, Innovation, and Supports; Elana McDermott, DESE Education Specialist; Kendra Winner, DESE Research and Evaluation Coordinator; Mario Delci, Associate Commissioner for Research & Planning; Suzanne Smith, DHE Director of Research and Evaluation; Lauren Godding, EOLWD Manager of Customer Engagement & Experience.

Welcome and opening discussion

Ofa welcomed everyone, reviewed the meeting agenda, and announced that Jeremiah Johnson would be joining his UMDI colleague Mark Melnik on the RAC.

Members discussed a [news story](#) arising from a clause in California's Department of Education data sharing agreement that banned researchers from participating in lawsuits detrimental to the state. State representatives from DESE and DHE confirmed there is no such language in any of their agreements.

Recap

Ofa then reviewed topics covered in the first RAC meeting on June 16 as well as the meeting of the E2C Leadership Group on July 14. She noted that in response to RAC feedback on June 16, the E2C Hub is moving ahead with forming a Student and Family Voice Committee.

Review New E2C Hub Website

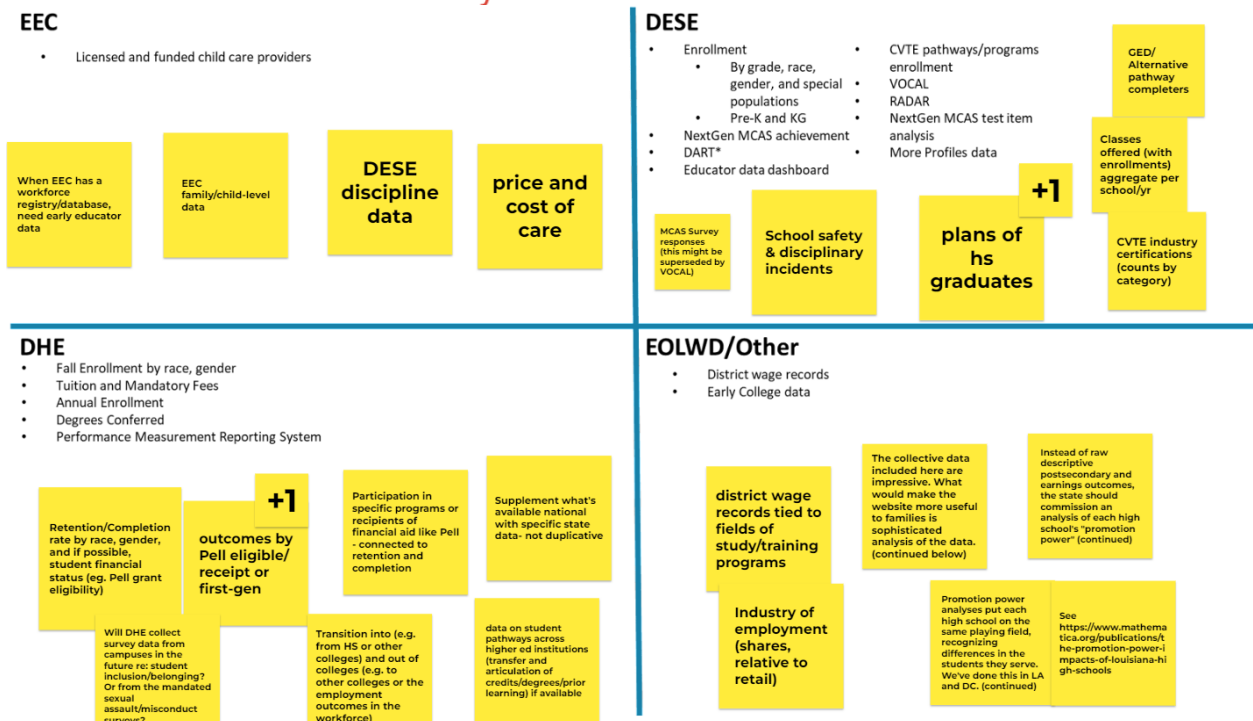
Ofa introduced the [new website](#), highlighted its features, and demonstrated how to find and use and download the datasets. She shared a list of currently available and planned datasets. Members wanted to know if labels could be changed from Fiscal Year to School Year to avoid confusion. David said this was on the radar and will be updated. Members questioned who the data was for and whether their feedback was solicited. Ofa said E2C Hub audiences include educators, policymakers, researchers, students and families, and we expect the datasets to be used by data analysts, researchers who use public data, and those looking for clean, multiyear data.

Jamboard

Members were asked their feedback:

- **What additional datasets do you most want to see included in the Data Hub?**

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Additional discussion: Ofa noted that plans of high school graduates is included in the Success After High School dashboard. Members were interested in following students across trajectories from high school and beyond as well as data stories that could be more useful to student and families that showed the effectiveness of individual schools to improve student outcomes.

A RAC member a link to a recent report that serves as a useful example: [Promotion power of high schools in Louisiana](#). One committee member responded that measuring and reporting differences in school outcomes after adjusting for student characteristics could help address the uneven housing demand that disproportionately responds to unadjusted outcome differences. The member noted that there is a nonprofit organization in Connecticut that produces reports taking a similar adjusted approach to presenting school outcomes to the report linked.

Another member shared a link to [Early Warning Indicator System \(EWIS\)](#), a related data system by DESE, that is not public facing. One member asked if dual enrollment data could create duplication that impacts perceptions of enrollment trends. Ofa explained there are data quality efforts to eliminate double counting across state agency datasets. A state agency representative added they have internal dashboards to examine dual enrollment trends.

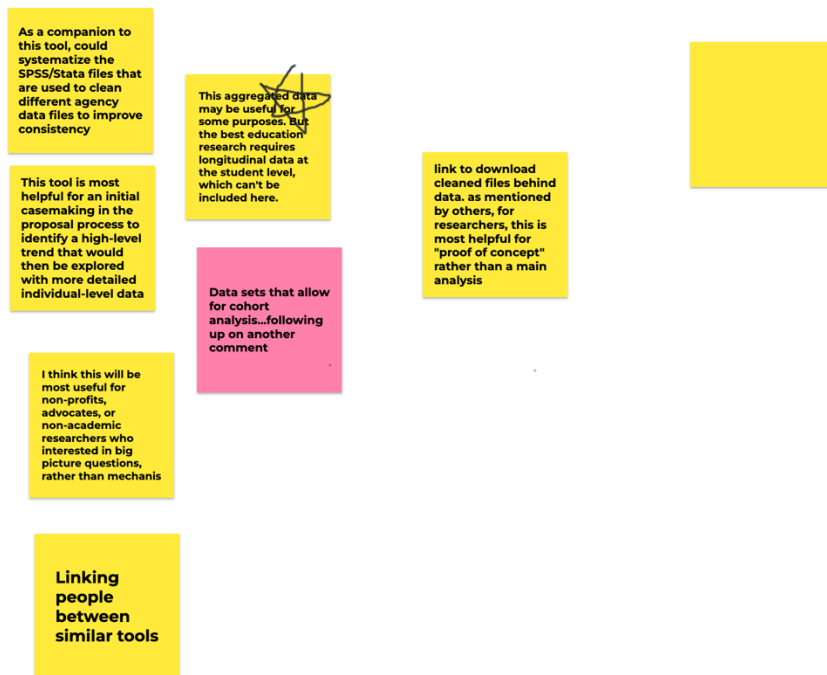
One RAC member asked whether the E2C Hub would replace existing data tools and sites. Ofa and David explained the Data Hub is supplemental and may offer features and datasets that are not offered elsewhere, but it is not replacing popular tools like Profiles.

A RAC member suggested the E2C Hub provide help users navigate to related sources of data with links and breadcrumbs.

Another RAC member asked whether the E2C Hub would have data not already available in national datasets. Another member asked whether the E2C Hub would have data not available in national datasets. Mario replied that this is something they are working on.

- **How can we make this tool as useful as possible for researchers and analysts?**

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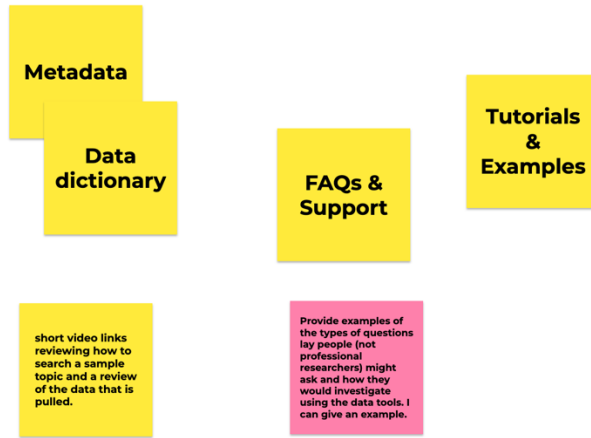
Additional discussion: One committee member requested systems to improve consistency in data cleaning methods across datasets, which would help researchers more easily reconcile data from different sources.

Another member suggested criteria to consider when prioritizing datasets for the E2C Hub:

- What data drives change in the education system
- What data is not available from other sources
- How much use: gauge demand based on usage patterns of similar data and dashboards on other state and agency websites

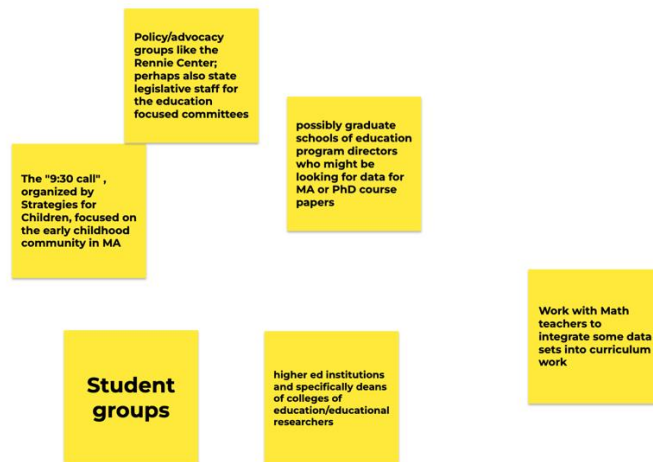
- What documentation do you need to make good use of the data?

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Building a cross-agency research agenda

Ofa gave an overview of the process for setting research priorities and agenda, including the roles of the agencies, cross-agency leadership group, the Research Advisory Committee, subcommittees, and E2C Hub team. The goal is to adopt a consolidated research agenda by June 2024 with a review every six months for small updates and every two years for a major revision. She outlined the process for meeting that goal and shared Virginia as a model.

A RAC member offered his recent experience with the process in Washington and suggested Massachusetts look to that once it's available. There was discussion about how specific the research questions should be and if they will limit the scope of researchers' requests. Considerations to include are: Cost benefit to the state to provide data, implications for policy change, ability to determine causality, and novelty of the questions.

One committee member noted that the research topic areas in the Virginia example seem quite broad, and asked how narrowly focused Massachusetts' agenda would be.

Ofa said the individual state agencies will determine their process for setting the priorities, and the E2C Hub is seeking to develop overarching priorities and specific research questions for its cross-agency questions, but are flexible and open to input from the RAC on its design.

Another RAC member suggested that Massachusetts provide researchers with specific instructions for requesting data relevant to each appropriate agency.

One RAC member recommended adding a step to the research agenda process to collect feedback on whether the research helped to understand the problem or question as it was intended.

Discussion from agencies

The education agencies were invited to share their process for setting a research agenda and the topics they currently focused on.

Early Education and Care

Jocelyn Browne said EEC is working on the next phase of its strategic action plan, speaking with the board and stakeholders, to ensure the agenda is aligned with their goals. They will communicate more broadly in the fall and will keep in touch with how this group can be involved, both with the subcommittee and the larger group.

EEC is focused on:

- Number of programs available for families to access
- How programs are financed, the history of underfinancing, and new opportunities to support programs
- Keeping programs open
- Professional growth of educators

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Kendra Winner explained that the Office of Research and Planning develops a research agenda on an annual basis, meeting with DESE centers and offices to hear from them on the status of projects and upcoming needs. Due to the changing nature of program needs, grants, and RFPs, the agenda has not been publicly shared. OPR would look for input on how to communicate to researchers as well as how to diversify the researchers they work with.

DESE is focused on:

- [Educational Vision](#)
- Eradicating service gaps
- Diversifying researchers

Kendra explained, “Similar to the relationship between the broad strokes of a state-level cross-agency research agenda and the specific needs of program offices, I would see the Education Vision as the general signal. The Research Priorities will reflect the specific priorities of program offices as they implement work, some of which, for example, may be required by the legislature and is related to the vision contextually but not noted specifically.”

She provided the [2022 Research Priorities](#) as a reference but noted some priorities will be out of date.

Elana McDermott added that they are looking at cross-agency research, such as early literacy.

Department of Higher Education

Mario Delci said DHE is a small agency in transition with a new commission. In June, the BHE adopted 10-year targets for racial equity.

DHE is focused on:

- [Racial Equity](#) (and [BHE-approved targets](#))
- [The Equity Agenda](#) Strategic Initiatives
- [Education finance](#), dollars to students, dollars to institutions
- [Support Services for Student Success](#)
- Evaluating post-college/career outcomes
- Continuing education for adults

He invited RAC members to attend DHE’s Evidence-Based Policy Making Advisory Council, which is a public forum. A fall meeting will be announced soon.

Ofa asked for comments and feedback via email or the survey and closed the meeting at 2:30 p.m.