**MEANINGFUL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA WORK SESSION
MEETING NOTES**

OCTOBER 30, 2009

Advisory Group: Arcella Hall, Ed Judie, Mark Mansell, Scott Poirier, Wes Pruitt, Shep Siegel, Maureen Trantham

SBE Board Members and Staff: Eric Liu (Board Lead), Steve Dal Porto, Connie Fletcher, Bunker Frank, Bob Hughes, Kathe Taylor

Observer: Tim Knue

Welcome, Introductions and Overview of Agenda. Eric introduced the discussion as an opportunity to revisit two of the graduation requirements that are part of the SBE's overall effort to create a meaningful high school diploma. He reminded the group that the SBE's purpose of a diploma recognizes the implied social contract with all of the "investors" (parents, schools, postsecondary institutions, employers, etc.) to say that the kids are ready to enter all aspects of their immediate post high school life.

The purpose of the meeting was to refresh and reset our minds on these two requirements, and determine how the SBE make them more meaningful. The group's input would provide valuable advice to the SBE on how to proceed with these two requirements. With respect to the place of essential skills, we would need to determine what "bundle" of skills we valued, and how we assessed for them.

Eric posed several framing questions:
- What is the optimal way to incorporate some notion of essential skills into the Culminating Project requirement? What would you put into it? How would you "chunk up" the skills? How broad or narrow gauge should these categories of skills be? How do we articulate them? [What kind of skills, how do we categorize them?]
- Do we want to incorporate "backward mapping" so that planning/preparing for the CP begins earlier than the senior year? If we want to catalyze more of a PBL mindset in the schools, it requires resources, particularly for the professional development needed to help teachers understand how to do PBL.
- One of the guiding principles of Core 24 is for students to be more intentional and mindful during their high school career. Is the HSBP, as it exists today, carrying enough of that water?

Demonstration of an Education Management System. As a stimulus for discussion, the group looked at an Education Management System (EMS) managed by ESD 113 that some districts are using to provide support and guidance for the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) and Culminating Project (CP). The EMS guides students through a process of identifying interests and exploring careers, in part through databases like ONet, WOIS, etc. Students also calculate expenses associated with different career choices and are guided to

think about where the money will come from. There is also a load system for a resume, with links to help students write a resume; the student can then load the resume they have created. It Includes an "adds reflection" piece, and a place for students to record classes they have taken or plan to take. Parents can log on and see the progress of their students through an electronic portfolio (eFolio) piece that defines/lists the required elements, and provides a "status check" of where the student is in meeting the requirement.

Wes Pruitt called the group's attention to a website that provides career information, including a "consumer reports" on workforce programs. Here's the link: http://www.careerbridge.wa.gov.

Culminating Project and High School and Beyond Plan: Discussion

The group discussed the history and underlying rationale of the culminating project (CP) and high school and beyond plan (HSBP), underscoring:
- The rationale behind the SBE's historical separation of the culminating project from the high school and beyond plan in order to:
    o Assure that the culminating project could relate to <u>any</u> student interest (vs. a career interest) and whether that still made sense
    o Keep the 2 requirements distinct in case the SBE didn't want to keep them
- The interest of the SBE, when creating the culminating project, in including an oral communication component (since oral communication was not part of goal 1). However, that decision was left to local control.
- The deliberate policy linkage of the culminating project to basic education learning goals 3 and 4, and the challenges of defining those two goals

The group raised questions about:
- whether it still made sense to separate the culminating project and high school and beyond plan, as both were key components in the effort to personalize a student's education
- how the two requirements could personalize a student's education

Big ideas that emerged from the discussion
1. Connecting with guidance and counseling
- SBE has been clear in recognizing the importance of comprehensive guidance in supporting students and schools in the implementation of Core 24. The SBE has also been clear in calling for the initiation of the HSBP in middle school.
- The HSBP needs more structure, and the planning components identified by Navigation 101 might provide that structure
    o Navigation 101 is an embedded curriculum. The legislature has funded Navigation 101 for 3 biennia; private money has also been invested. The funding enables schools to change the way they are organized to support and plan for kids. Ongoing costs may be minimal once reorganization has been accomplished.
    o Navigation 101 pulls the guidance away from counselors and divides it up with teachers.
    o Not all schools have Navigation 101; some have similar systems
    o Many districts are implementing the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) counseling and guidance model that includes career, academic, and social-emotional components.

2. Timing/Introduction of HSBP and CP
   - When does the HSBP begin? The SBE has suggested it should begin in middle school.
     - We might want to think more broadly about the HSBP—the word high school defines a four-year period—how do we help students and staff lay the foundation *before* high school? How do we help students move forward to prepare them for the next point in their learning?
     - Perhaps we need to re-title the HSBP to acknowledge that it begins earlier than high school, or to acknowledge that some of our students don't enter the system until their senior year. Perhaps we call it a "learning pathway" plan.
   - When does the CP begin? Is it just a senior-year requirement?
     - Is the CP more of a rear-view mirror mindset than a windshield mindset? Is that what we want?
     - Rear-view window is as crucial as the windshield; if you know where you've been, you know where you're going.
     - Perhaps we need to re-title the CP to a "learning transition" project—something that talks about looking forward rather than looking back.
     - If it were possible for school communities to see that a CP requirement should be something that students prepare for throughout their education, then the CP requirement would have done that already, so it may need to be tightened to encourage what we want to see happen in the system.
     - Requiring students to take occupational education/CTE classes in the freshman year could be one way to begin the CP, especially because CTE classes are project-based.

3. Connections between the HSBP and CP
   - It may be time to recommend the HSBP be connected to the CP and allow student to explore personal interests; but if you want the SBE to say, we want the HSBP to be tied to the CP, then we need to be specific about what we want to happen.

4. Nature of HSBP and CP
   - Project-based learning is a way to engage students, but it's not just a question about how we define the project, or whether teachers have the skills to guide project-based learning, but how we assess. We should probably have state-level assessments to express the standard of performance that the state expects.
   - High School and Beyond Plan needs rigor—but what does that look like? Perhaps it means in part some realism about what it takes to get to where they want to go. Actually filling out forms—applications, etc.---is one way to make the future real.
   - Job shadowing might be something to add to CP.
   - The HSBP could be deliberately connected to a career concentration course.

5. Role of HSBP and CP in personalizing a student's education
   - We have to remember the student population. Personalization and flexibility is key because students are very diverse—from foster kids who may not be at grade level to AP kids who are far beyond grade level. Not all of them will fit in any one box.   In our discussion of plans, policies, and procedures, it's easy to forget that students are at the heart.

6. Providing a consistent framework
   - SBE can set a minimum standard; the challenge is to find the balance between prescriptive guidance and local control

- A common framework with core elements that build greater consistency would enable students who move across school districts.
- Consistency, in and of itself, is helpful. But to say it's a four-year CP that begins in the freshman year does not address the multiplicity of our student population. Students move around.
- Could build a structure for the CP around the Partnership for 21st Century (P21) skill groupings—and let kids choose 3 out of 4 to build into their CP. Create a framework, but allow choice.
  - Goals 3 and 4 are satisfied with demonstration of 21st century skills in a CP.
  - Or we could say here are a couple of skills that should always be part of the CP; and here are some areas of flexibility.
  - Life skills are guiding characteristics. The core (including global awareness and civic literacy) has to be a component. Students could choose one of the other two areas—learning and innovation skills or information, media, and technology skills—to emphasize with their plans.
  - CP is a way of addressing the things that aren't addressed in a regular class, so life skills and core subjects go off the list—they should already be addressed. Technology skills are used every day. The CP is catching the rest of the stuff; we're really talking about applied skills—communication, critical thinking, problem solving, etc. Creativity and innovation, and understanding own unique skills, using applied skills, would capture the imagination of kids.
  - At the root of 21st century skills is to help students through experiences and content to learn for a lifetime. What the system does is emphasize content. We rarely talk about process. Is there a process expectation that would allow students to really own the CP for themselves?
  - If the essential skills are delineated, we should also say that districts need to develop a process that allows all stakeholders to have input into the design—will be more likely to get district buy-in

Parting Thoughts

The SBE should use its bully pulpit to advocate for active learning K-12 and should consider joining the P-21 movement.

Eric closed the meeting by thanking people for engaging and indicating that at a follow-up meeting, we would aim for giving the group something to react to.