

## MINUTES

Certificate of Mastery Study Committee  
Meeting of June 30, 2000

OSPI Burien Conference Center

**Members Present:** Nick Brossoit, Carly Cyr, Terry Densley, Rosemary Fitton, Marc Frazer, Gary Gainer, Linda Hernandez, Gary Kipp, Al Link, Robert McMullen, Steve Mullin, Rich Nafziger, Patrick Patrick, Marv Sather, Dennis Wallace

**Members Unable To Attend:** Barbara Clausen, Lynn Fielding, Gay Selby, Andy Wheeler

**Staff Present:** Larry Davis

**Guests:** Heidi Audette, Bob Butts, Cathy Fromme, Edie Harding, Gary King, Kathleen Lawrence, Susan Mielke, Bill Moore, Suzi Morrissey, Alice Tanaka



The meeting was called to order at 9:03<sup>am</sup> by Gary Gainer, committee chair. Following introductions, Mr. Gainer reviewed the intended purpose of the meeting.



Rosemary Fitton, committee member and Director of Assessment and Evaluation for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, provided the committee a starting point review of basic assessment issues. Highlight information from her presentation included:

- One assessment should not be used to do too many things (e.g., curriculum overhaul; accountability)
- Assessment is a communication process.
- Norm-referenced tests (comparing students to students to standards) are less sensitive to instruction and place students on a curve. The state norm-referenced testing program consists of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED).

- Criterion-referenced tests (comparing students to standards) are very sensitive to instruction and do not place students on a curve. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is the state's criterion-referenced testing program consists of the
- Developing an assessment system requires attention to six elements of "Construct Validity"
  - Content: relevance, representativeness, technical quality
  - Substantive: actual demand of tasks on theoretical basis
  - Structural: assessment, including rubrics, should parallel domain construct
  - Criterion: correlations with external measures
  - Generalizability: can one generalize from the assessment to the domain?
  - Consequential: what are the expected, intended, and unintended consequences?
- Validity is concerned with what is intended to be tested is what is being tested.
- Reliability is concerned with whether validity is being achieved over time and from situation to situation.
- A "valid" assessment is one in which the inferences drawn and the decisions made from test scores are justified.
- Cathy Taylor, professor at the University of Washington and assessment expert, based on technical studies she has conducted, concludes that the WASL tests in reading and math are valid and reliable.
- A test will always be a sample of what we expect students to know. Not all the EALRs are intended to be included in a large-scale assessment.
- The underlying purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.
- Quality of instruction is part of the validity and reliability equation.



**Following Ms. Fitton's presentation, an open discussion was held that generated a number of questions and observations/comments, including:**

**QUESTIONS:**

- What's the purpose of connecting the Certificate of Mastery (CoM) to the diploma? What are we trying to accomplish? Does the consequence match the intended purpose?

- Is it possible to have a valid and reliable system of education, but it is not valid and reliable for students?
- Are the following assumptions fair and appropriate?
  - It's necessary to change the high school system, hence the CoM.
  - The business community is unhappy with the skills of high school graduates.
- Is the system valid and reliable (as opposed to the test)?
- Is it fair to condition graduation on a test?
- What system are the fish (i.e., students) swimming in?
- Is the system ready to bank on the CoM because all the variables are controlled?
- Why wasn't the CoM made an endorsement instead of a requirement?
  - We had wide variation of expectations for different populations of students. We needed high expectations for all kids.
- How do we push learning without being destructive or punitive?
- What can we learn from other states about their assessment experience with validity and reliability?
- What about multiple forms of assessment and the impact on validity and reliability?
- Can we do on-line computer assessment and scoring?
- If we don't get the tests back, not just the scores, how do we move forward with assessment as a tool to improve learning?



OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS:

- If EALRs aren't tested, they won't get taught. The WASL tests EALRs only related to Goal 1 and math from Goal 2.
- How well would business people do on the WASL?
- For some students, homeschool and private school are paths of least resistance (since students in these settings are exempted by law from having to take the WASL in order to graduate.)
- We (the business community) wanted standards. We didn't set the EALRs or cut-scores.
- The content of the high school curriculum is "silo'ed", feeding a perspective by some teachers that the WASL doesn't have anything to do with them. Few to none want to integrate classes and subjects. "I teach history. I don't teach reading and writing (within history)."

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- K-12 is lying to business about the skills of graduates. The problem really is that teachers shut their doors and decide what to do on a daily basis, instead of doing what they should be doing. Reform is making us look more closely at what we do as teachers behind our classroom door. The CoM requirement is really helping us focus with intent. The system needs a kick in the rear and the CoM is the kick. Now let's find the right consequences.
- Not just some administrators wanted an effective date for the CoM, to leverage their staffs off the dime. Some teachers wanted an effective date for the CoM, to leverage their administrators off the dime.
- We need to look at and consider what doesn't count from the students' point of view. 40-50% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are lousy in English/language because it doesn't count. Is there a recurring pattern of non-accountability at lower levels? Is there a correlation between middle school grades and WASL 10 performance? Kids in middle schools need to see the bigger picture.
- Linking the CoM to the diploma is a coercive carrot and stick. No single test can do the job. We need to build value outside the high school to do well inside the high school. We need an alternate way to demonstrate competency against the standards.
- Change the state teacher evaluation law to reflect the EALRs.
- The student "body" has changed significantly over the years.
- There is a lot of system frustration right now.
- If we focus on things other than test scores, test scores will take care of themselves.
- We have to deal with the possibility of alternate diplomas.
- Access to staff development is problematic in many places. It is often voluntary, not mandatory. (Can this impact validity and reliability?)
- Employers are very concerned about the skills of entry-level workers, especially the quality of students coming out of high school.
- The GED is easier than the WASL. We need to look at this issue.
- There are consequences to everything.
- Kids are not coming out of the elementary and middle schools prepared to do high school level work.
- Folks didn't set the EALRs with an eye toward graduation requirements. They focused on content standards, not assessment standards.

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- Students have to meet standards. How we (i.e., schools and districts) help them get there is our call. We can't get kids to work and at the same time punish schools.
- Reading, writing, communication, and math are the gateway skills to the content areas.
- CoM = a core set of skills leading to transition pathways.
- The state has not stepped up to the plate on staff development.
- Deep system changes:

OLD

Teaching  
Sort and separate  
Learn  
Knowledge

NEW

Learning  
Standards driven  
Learn and apply  
Knowledge and skills

- For lots of students the WASL doesn't come naturally to them (as a form of assessment). Need to have an alternative to the WASL. Work ethic makes you successful. Need consequences or incentives so students don't think the WASL is just another test.
- WASL is one piece of the system. There are classroom issues affecting students' opportunity to learn: class size, class instruction.



The committee began identifying "parking lot" issues for study and discussion:

- State laws and rules on assessment
- Alternate ways to the WASL for students to demonstrate standards competency
- Incentives for students to take the WASL seriously
- What are other states doing with high stakes testing
- Legal information about validity and reliability



The committee discussed varying logistics and agreed not to meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Fridays. The next meeting will be September 28<sup>th</sup> from 2:30-6:00<sup>pm</sup>, at the OSPI Burien Conference Center. The next meeting will focus on setting a specific work plan for the committee.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:50<sup>am</sup>.

### Attachments

- WAC 180-51-063 Certificate of mastery—High school graduation requirement—Effective date
- WAC 180-51-064 Certificate of mastery—Validity and reliability study
- Most current CoM Study Committee member list
- OSPI National Technical Advisory Committee (assessment)
- OSPI State Technical Advisory Committee (assessment)

**WAC 180-51-063 Certificate of mastery -- High school graduation requirement -- Effective date.** (1) Pursuant to RCW 28A.655.060 (3)(c):

(a) The certificate of mastery shall be a graduation requirement, but not the only requirement for graduation from high school; and

(b) The state board of education is responsible for determining when the secondary Washington assessment of student learning has been implemented and is sufficiently valid and reliable.

(2)(a) The state board of education establishes the 2007-08 school year as the first year in which graduating high school students shall be required to have attained the state certificate of mastery in order to graduate, in addition to other state and local graduation requirements.

(b) The state board of education fully recognizes that a higher standard of validity and reliability must be applied when the result of the assessment affects the ability of an individual student to receive a high school diploma. Therefore, the state board of education will continue to monitor the high school level Washington assessment of student learning. If the board finds that the assessment is lacking in this higher level of validity or reliability, or both, by the beginning of the 2004-05 school year, the state board may change the effective date of the certificate of mastery, for state graduation purposes, to a later school year.

(c) Beginning the 2007-08 school year, the certificate of mastery shall consist of the subject areas under the student learning goals for which a Washington assessment of student learning secondary assessment has been implemented and declared valid and reliable for graduation purposes. It is expected that the initial certificate of mastery will be comprised of reading, writing, communications, and mathematics.

(d) Beginning the 2009-10 school year, the certificate of mastery shall include science if a Washington assessment of student learning secondary assessment has been implemented and declared valid and reliable for this subject area.

(e) As determined by the state board of education, in consultation with the legislature and the academic achievement and accountability commission, successful completion of the Washington assessment of student learning secondary assessment in social studies may be required to achieve the certificate of mastery or may lead to an endorsement on the high school transcript.

(f) As determined by the state board of education, in consultation with the legislature and the academic achievement and accountability commission, successful completion of the Washington assessment of student learning secondary assessment in arts and health and fitness may lead to an endorsement on the high school transcript.

(g) Beginning with graduating students in 2001, attainment of the state certificate of mastery may be noted on the student's transcript pursuant to written district policy.

(3) Notwithstanding WAC 180-18-055 and 180-51-107, subsection (2) of this section shall not be waived.

(4) The certificate of mastery shall not be a graduation requirement for students who receive home-based instruction under RCW 28A.200.101(3) nor for students attending private schools under RCW 28A.195.010(6).

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.230.090. 00-04-047, § 180-51-063, filed 1/27/00, effective 2/27/00.]

**WAC 180-51-064 Certificate of mastery -- Validity and reliability study. (1)**

The state board of education recognizes that a state investment in activities to verify the validity and reliability of the secondary Washington assessment of student learning for graduation purposes is critical. Therefore, the state board will work with the legislature to establish funding support for validity and reliability substantiation activities.

(2) The state board recognizes that there remain unanswered questions about the certificate of mastery. In order to facilitate the necessary dialogue to address the questions and issues, the board will establish a certificate of mastery validity and reliability advisory committee. At a minimum, the advisory committee shall include representatives from the academic achievement and accountability commission, the office of superintendent of public instruction, the public, the business community, and education stakeholder groups.

(3) The advisory committee shall examine and make recommendations to the state board of education on validity and reliability issues and conduct a review and analysis of the requirement that students obtain a certificate as a condition for high school graduation.

(4) The advisory committee shall submit to the state board a final report and recommendations not later than the board's meeting in May 2003.

(5) By the second Monday of January 2001, and no later than the second Monday of each year thereafter, the state board of education will provide to the house of representatives and senate committees on education, a progress report on the deliberations of the certificate of mastery validity and reliability advisory committee. The state board will submit any proposed policy change based on recommendations of the advisory committee to the house of representatives and senate education committees for review and comment before the change is implemented by the state board under its rule-making authority.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28A.230.090. 00-04-047, § 180-51-064, filed 1/27/00, effective 2/27/00.]



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