The Washington State Board of Education

An education system where students are engaged in personalized education pathways that prepare them for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning.

COVER: MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP UPDATE

Prepared for the November 2019 Board Meeting

Information item.

As related to:

☐ **Goal One:** All students feel safe at school, and have the supports necessary to thrive.

☒ **Goal Two:** All students are able to engage in their schools and their broader communities, and feel invested in their learning pathways, which lead to their post-secondary aspirations.

☒ **Goal Three:** School and district structures and systems adapt to meet the evolving needs of the student population and community, as a whole. Students are prepared to adapt as needed and fully participate in the world beyond the classroom.

☒ **Goal Four:** Students successfully transition into, through, and out of the P-12 system.

☒ **Goal Five:** Students graduate from Washington State high schools ready for civic engagement, careers, postsecondary education, and lifelong learning.

☐ **Goal Six:** Equitable funding across the state to ensure that all students have the funding and opportunities they need, regardless of their geographical location or other needs.

☐ **Other**

Materials included in packet:

- September 23 Meeting Notes from the Mastery-based learning (MBL) Work Group
- Work Plan from the MBL Work Group

Synopsis and Policy Considerations:

Staff will update members on the MBL September meeting, the agenda for the work group's November meeting, and the work group's work plan for the coming year.

The mastery-based learning work group has an interim report due to the Legislature on December 1, 2019. The report outlines the state of mastery-based learning (MBL) in Washington State as well as provides insight into national and international examples, activities of the work group this year, preliminary findings, and areas for further exploration during 2020. A final report will be provided to the Legislature, detailing all findings and recommendations of the work group, by December 1, 2020.

MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING
September 23, 2019 Meeting Agenda
1:00-4:00 p.m.
John L. O'Brien Building, House Hearing Room A
504 15th Ave SW, Olympia, WA 98504

Members Attending: 	Aurora Flores (attending via Zoom), Kory Kalahar, Ashley Lin, Jenny Morgan, Dr. Paul Pitre, Miguel Saldaña, Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos, Frieda Takamura, Kathe Taylor, Sen. Lisa Wellman

State Board of Education Staff Attending: 	Dr. Randy Spaulding, Linda Drake, Alissa Muller

Members Absent: 	Krestin Behr, Rep. Chris Corry, Lafayette Jones

Randy Spaulding, Executive Director of the State Board of Education, thanked members for attending and acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional lands of the Nisqually and Squaxin Peoples. He welcomed members and introduced the meeting goals: this work is a priority for the Board and we appreciate the support of our legislative champions in making this work possible. I'd like to acknowledge and thank members for engaging in a June meeting and subsequent individual meetings that helped us to develop the initial draft work plan we'll be discussing today and for those of you who were able to participate in the webinar we hosted in August.

This meeting will be focused on discussing members' vision for the work group and what members would like to see included in the interim report this year. We will have a chance in a moment to hear from our legislative members on that point.

Additionally, the work group is tasked with reviewing the role of the HSBP in supporting mastery-based learning and we will have hear a bit about local school district implementation of the HSBP.

We hope to leave today with feedback on two key questions:

- What is the collective vision for the work group?
- What information would you like to see included in the interim report due to the Legislature on December 1, 2019?

Members of the work group introduced themselves.

1:00-1:30   Vision for the Work Group
Senator Lisa Wellman and Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos

Linda Drake introduced the vision discussion. The question of vision is a two-part question: 1) What is the vision for the work group? 2) What is the vision for mastery-based learning for the state? The first question will help frame the work plan, the meetings, and the preliminary and final reports. The second question will help roll-out the work of the group, and create the potential for state-wide impact. Resources from other states and organization say that one of the first steps to creating a system that supports mastery-based learning is creating a shared vision. Staff hope to use this discussion for the

basis of a communication effort to start that work—promoting the vision of the work group, and hopefully starting a statewide discussion about mastery-based learning. Staff want to use the group's vision to start branding our website and in communications about the group.

Rep. Santos shared her vision for the work group: The system that is in place today, distinctly and perhaps by intent, disadvantages certain groups. We are not doing our job as a state to provide equitable education to each of our students. We need to develop a program that actually engages the student through their culture and community. For example, the canoe journey of the Salish people—you could teach math and science skills to design the canoe (culturally relevant and aligns with learning standards), teach history and storytelling (ELA) during the journey, as well as teaching teamwork and soft skills, and teaching nutrition based on what you can retrieve from the sea. When you develop a mastery-based approach, this has the promise of being a culturally responsive approach of engaging the students we historically and systemically have not served well. It's not about if that child gets into college/enters the workforce right away—the more important metric is whether that child will be able to continue to fuel their learning regardless of what they do next. This is going to be a hard U-turn for our state, as it's very different than what we have done in our education system since our state's beginnings. "There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other wings." -W. Hodding Carter, II. Our communities and families should be providing the roots, while our education system should be providing the wings.

Sen. Wellman shared that her vision of the work has been informed through her roles as co-chair of workforce of the future for Pacific Northwest region, chair of the Early Learning and K-12 Senate committee, and EOGOAC member. Young people need to come out of the system with what they need to thrive in a 21st century economy, versus the agricultural/industrial base our education system was founded on. Mastery is a really important way to look at learning: even in four-year higher education degrees, some institutions are breaking up degrees into various certificates (e.g. social work and certificate in case management—so a student could use case management in something else entirely). We have to look at how skills will transfer across systems, states, jobs, and industries. We have created a system of regimentation where we cannot recognize talents well. That is why some companies are now looking for science fiction writers—because they can think outside the box. Across the provinces of Canada—there is an agreement of a structure for mastery. About 30 European countries have created a structure for mastery—with an older population. We cannot or should not create something that precludes flowing into other systems—we should not create barriers to things of which we cannot yet conceive.

Rep. Santos referenced a report received during assembly days from the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) that discussed the transformation within the workplace—which included competency-based description of jobs. Some higher education institutions create and accept competency-based transcripts. We are using today's education system to prepare students for jobs we cannot imagine in the future (KnowledgeWorks). Our current system is not aligned to this, and it will be threatening to many existing institutions.

Sen. Wellman noted it is important to think about vision and policy, but we cannot leave out implementation. We have to provide foundational tools for people to actually implement a policy. The resume/portfolio of the future will include ways to recognize and value experiences/learning that have already taken place.

1:30-2:00   Work Group Discussion: Vision for the Work Group
The full work group engaged in a discussion around a vision for their work moving forward:

- Higher education will be very important during this initiative.
  - At Washington State University, conversations are being had around stackable certificates.
  - The Western Governors University model has also been very effective.
  - Technical and community colleges programs include a competency-based focus and we have a lot to learn from these systems. When students are asked "what are you going to do with your life now?" it does not have to be a degree. This is an opportunity to see what assets students bring, the family and community they bring—how can we continue to incorporate their background into their education, with the things they live with and dream about. We have disenfranchised many of our students with our current industrial (factory model) education system and we have disenfranchised ourselves from the talent students have with this system as well.
- Student-centered education and how can we further that—there are so many ways students can demonstrate competency/mastery. As a small alternative school, we create many opportunities for students for this (e.g., our program called no child left inside). My vision for this work is to help
  K-12 principals answer the questions that are out there for them—how do I align credit to this? What is the rigor and relevancy involved? This will open up doors for principals to feel like they can be flexible.
- My vision is to have a system that has the support and programs needed to suit more students. One student I know wants to be an apprentice at Boeing after high school (he fulfilled his third credit of math requirement through precision manufacturing). We need to create more opportunities like this for students. Sometimes we are so locked in as counselors trying to meet every graduation requirement that we have created regimentation that does not work for students. The scary reality of our school system is we do not have as many staff or programs that we need to allow them to explore their interests.
- However, we do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. Our current structure works really well for some students.
- The opposition is building—we need to be very clear about what needs to happen among ourselves and a clear understanding about who will not find this acceptable.
- One of the reasons I personally believe mastery is important is that it focuses on learning (versus teaching). That is why we put the charge into law that students advance upon demonstration of learning. When this occurs someday, you would no longer need separate highly capable programs. It also begins to lessen the stigma for those students who need more time in a particular subject (no need for "remediation.") When you focus on learning (as opposed to teaching)—we have to think about the implementation piece as we develop policies and recommendations. Utah and Idaho have already established in law mastery-based learning and have schools who have it in place—we can learn from their mistakes. A middle school teacher there shared that once a child is educated in a mastery system—you have to have some place for that student to land. The middle school students did not have a high school to land with mastery in place. We want to recognize the power of deeper learning—in grades K-8, the more "advanced" students (we are still stuck in segregating students based on age not learning)—who have already achieved whatever the learning goal is, they are then teaching the students in the process of learning. This becomes deeper learning for those who have already mastered the content.
- Kids are so excited about their learning in an integrated atmosphere. We have to look at how higher education is educating our teachers. How do we develop a mastery-based transcript for students?
- How do we really create student-centered environments where students are agents of their learning? Adults have to see ourselves as learners too.

- Every student needs a post-high school plan that makes sense for them. That does not have to be a 4-year degree, but it does have to be a way for them to continue learning as makes sense for their plan. Students need to be able to define their own learning journey/have agency. We often do not trust students to let them choose to go down a path. We need to provide flexibility and support them (and allow them to change paths as makes sense). On the webinar, Jason talked about some of the toxic narratives that are heard in schools. The future is scary—we are worried about having a livable world (climate change). With mastery learning—how can we bring learning so that it is something that is meaningful for students, makes sense in their communities, and that students are passionate about? Bringing creativity and entrepreneurship into learning, and students personalizing their own learning naturally follows.
- There was a principal who forbade their students to participate in civic demonstration and said it would count as an absence. The b on our charge—competencies that include transferable learning objectives—that demonstration could have resulted in the students being given competency civic credit. What we are trying to do is build more flexibility for everyone, first and foremost the student. As has been said, learning takes place for adults too. High performing nations focus as much in the learning of the teacher as the student.

2:00-2:45   **Discussion: Work Group Deliverables for the First Report**
                      Timeline for the Report
                      Work Plan

- The group agreed it is important to meet during legislative session, to keep the momentum going.
- Additional issues to come back to and consider throughout the work group's time together:
    - What happens to our testing system? What changes, what goes away?
    - 24-credit graduation requirements—does this stay the same? Is it reconfigured somewhat?
    - All of our 295 districts have different contracts—would these allow mastery-based learning?
    - Communication plan on how do we sell this. Many people will be relieved that we understand how big of a shift mastery-based learning would be—that we understand things are tough out there, and we've got your back.
    - Identify stakeholders.
    - Probably need another meeting on the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) and making it more robust.
- There is a fear factor. Change is hard. Families and communities—we want to change the system to meet their needs, but they have found comfort in status quo.
- Need a better understanding of what is going on in the state (as well as outside of the state, e.g. Idaho, Utah, New Hampshire). OSPI is already required to report to the legislature about what types of competency-based assessments already exist.
- Scott Marion is a nationally recognized expert on tests/testing. His work of late is focused on competency-based assessments. We need to understand what we are using assessments for—I think we will need more developmental assessments. How to align credits? What is the meaning, the learning, that is associated with the requirements? Time—do families want the current schedule? What kind of flexibility do we need? We should hear from staff from our very small districts, who have waivers for time (4 day school week).
- There is a free resource from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) where research staff can be assigned to dive into these topics from policies across the nation.

- In the interim report, we need to provide the list of questions/concerns/further areas of exploration list (parking lot) referenced previously. We also need to provide the map of how we think we are going to get there.
  - Preliminary/working definitions
  - More study is needed on issues such as: funding. It is appropriate to include this recommendation for future study in our report.
- We do not want to have a differentiated diploma—we need to build mastery-based characteristics into the existing Washington State Diploma. Can we build a framework in state policy that encourages a completely mastery-based high school program, resulting in the Washington State High School Diploma? (Versus the current waiver program)
- We need to look further at the alignment between credits and mastery-based learning.
- The work group needs to distinguish between mastery-based learning and personalized learning. If this group could define what we mean by certain approaches—that could go a long way to helping the public understand what we mean. One of the most important things this group could help accomplish: the way we talk about mastery-based learning in a unified manner.
- Communication plan:
  - We need more student voice and community/family voice. Some way to communicate to EOGOAC where this work might be going, how could EOGOAC be involved/same with commissions/alphabet soup/family engagement groups (OEO, etc.)
  - We also need to get students, teachers, and administrators on board with our vision. If they do not know about this work, how can they use it for their students.
  - Danger of going broad rather than deep in this work, need to keep it to the statutory charge. We could go broader in conjunction with other groups, such as EOGOAC, as long as we are broadening reach not scope.

2:45-3:00   Public Comment

No public comment was provided at the meeting.

3:00-3:45   High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) Presentation
          Katherine Mahoney, Assistant Director for Policy, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
          Cathy Woods, Director for College and Career Readiness and On-Time Graduation, Everett Public Schools

- In a mastery-based system, how do we ensure that the HSBP becomes a tool used by all educators, not just the counselor?
- Most parents know nothing about the HSBP. Implementation ranges from a webpage with checkboxes to more developed booklet
  - Language barriers for some parents
  - HSBP should be able to follow students, even past college (should be a transportable tool)
  - Need a way to incorporate after school/summer/other learning opportunities
  - Multiple online platforms, districts would like to see some standardization
- Cathy Woods – Director of Career and College Readiness and On-Time Graduation, Everett Public Schools
  - Everett has a HSBP District Facilitator, who spends one day a week in each of the comprehensive high schools. She also builds connections with community partners.
  - The rest of the HSBP work falls to the counselors.

- In Naviance (Everett's online HSBP platform), alerts can be pushed out to students based on their interests (e.g. college visit alert).
- Need to bring in more general education educators to work around the HSBP (special education educators are already highly invested)
- To address the digital divide, Everett high school students are each provided digital devices and they are rolling them out to middle school students as well. Free hot-spots are provided to students who don't have the Internet at home.
- Some training is provided around the HSBP, but need to build more ownership.
- We need well-trained, caring staff to support students and families and teach them how to use the HSBP tool. But challenges are different in each school district, so some districts will have more capacity for this than others. How do we equalize the HSBP as a key tool for each and every student?
- More students are coming from middle school with high school credit—HSBP needs to be well-supported in both middle and high school.
- Katherine Mahoney, Assistant Director for Policy, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: HSBP is the thing that creates agency for students over their own education experience
- We have to communicate that all pathways are open to all students.

3:45-4:00   Next Steps

A recommendation was brought up to set aside time for the group to debrief on the day in subsequent meeting agendas.

Staff will send a draft of the interim report (via email) to members on October 24. Members will need to provide feedback to staff by November 7, in order to bring an updated report to members at the November meeting.

Staff have heard from various work group members they want to hear from Washington schools who are already doing mastery-based learning. For the November meeting we will be at Avanti High School in Olympia. Avanti is a performance standards school where students receive a personalized education. Student learning is tied to demonstration of competency and not tied to seat time.

No work group members had any school suggestions for other schools using a mastery-based learning model to invite to the November meeting—so staff will select one school using the Big Picture School model and an additional school using a different model of mastery-based learning to also include during the November meeting.

Staff will send out today's PowerPoint, discussion notes, and a Doodle poll for our spring meetings by the end of the week.

4:00   Adjourn

Mastery-based Learning
in Washington State

Draft Work Plan for the Mastery-based Learning Work Group

Date	Activities	Topics	Outcomes/Deliverable
September 23, 2019	• Plan and hold September meeting of the Work Group • Location: Hearing Room A, O'Brien Building, State Capitol, Olympia	• Vision • Work Plan • Deliverables for the Interim Report • High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP)	• Shared vision of Mastery-based Learning (MBL) • Identification of content topics in Interim Report • Shared understanding of the requirements and delivery models of the HSBP • Discussion of HSBP as a tool for Mastery-based Learning
October and November (Submit by December 1, 2019)	• Staff will develop a draft based on September meeting discussion • Work Group members review and provide feedback • Create final report and submit to the Governor and Education committees	• Topics identified in September meeting	• Interim Report with preliminary findings o Staff will send a draft of the report (via email) to members by Oct. 24. Members will need to provide feedback to staff by Nov. 7, in order to bring an updated report to members at the Nov. meeting
November 14, 2019	• Plan and hold November meeting of the Work Group	• School-level mastery-based/personalized learning • Student panel • Review draft Interim Report	• Feedback on Interim Report
January	• Webinar	• Higher education models	• Shared understanding of components of MBL from higher education that could translate to the K-12 system
Winter/Spring	• Update to EOGOAC on the vision and work plan of the mastery-based learning work group		• Identify ways the work group and EOGOAC can collaborate around building shared understanding of the state's vision for MBL
February 27, 2020	• Plan and hold September meeting of the Work Group	• High School Transcript and Postsecondary admissions • Course level mastery models (e.g. World Language, or WL)	• Begin to build guidelines and recommendations for recording mastery-based learning on transcripts
April 16, 2020	• Plan and hold April meeting of the Work Group	• Educator preparation • High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP)	• Build recommendations for supporting educators in professional development around MBL • Creating recommendations around how HSBP can support MBL

Mid-June		• Framing a mastery-based diploma • System level MBL models	• Begin to develop draft guidance for schools on how to offer a completely mastery-based program that results in a high school diploma • Identification of issues to be addressed in policy
Summer webinar		• Webinar for partner orgs to report on work of the work group?	• Work group members reinforce relationships with partner organizations o Identify challenges and ways of collaborating around MBL
Mid-August		• ID key themes / issues	
Mid-October		• Recommendations	
Mid-November		• Final meeting online or in-person	
Final Report: Submit by December 1, 2020			• Staff will develop a draft based on September meeting discussion • Work Group members review and provide feedback • Create final report and submit to the Governor and Education committees