Mastery-based Learning
in Washington State

MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING
April 29, 2021 Meeting Agenda
1:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: [Zoom meeting](#)

Agenda:

1:00-1:45   **Welcome and Introductions**

Randy Spaulding opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement and shared he was joining from the traditional lands of the Squaxin, Nisqually, and Chehalis Tribes, and invited members to recognize the tribal lands they are connecting from via chat.

Alissa Muller welcomed the original and new members of the work group. Members of the work group introduced themselves and shared their answers to the prompt in the PowerPoint. Key observations made and initial questions shared included:

- Greater enthusiasm for mastery-based learning (MBL) than initially predicted. What does full implementation look like for our students/staff/district?
- What changes should we consider now that we have capabilities we didn't have before coronavirus (e.g. expanding broadband/1-1 devices)? What evidence do we have of student learning in digital classrooms, where there is a focus on being global citizen?
- We want true learning that sticks with kids. To achieve that, we need to tailor what educators are doing to what works for kids.
- Importance of speaking directly with students about what is and isn't working for them.
- There are many interesting forms MBL can take depending on who is doing it, but many commonalities regardless. How to effectively involve students, families, and communities of color in this work?
- There are a variety of ways the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) is being implemented across the state as well as how transcripts are being done across the state. We need to continue to understand how MBL is being used across Washington and the nation and use that information to move our work forward. This work group includes a diverse group of people—and there is power collectively in all of the organizations we represent. How do we make sure we are building leadership in the schools across the state, in order to get MBL in the hands of our teachers so they can implement MBL with our kids?
- As a classroom educator, it seems like we are the only ones who know about MBL and the benefits it has for our kids. Through this work group, I have seen how many people are passionate about the work.
- The lesson coronavirus has taught us is that we must change and be innovative. We need multiple ways to help engage students—life happens, and they need multiple ways to earn credit and move on to the next phase of life. How do we move forward in a positive way after the year our educators and students have had to bring new energy and life, but not wanting to overwhelm our educators/students/families?

- I am passionate about MBL because I believe it can increase learning opportunity for students of color. However, first planning needs to take place for school districts to buy into this, because it's a huge transformation for our system to acknowledge and respond to the fact that we have kids at different levels of content in each classroom. We have to ensure there is an educational piece for our educators in each role they play in our system.
- We have an opportunity—this year has been our opportunity in education to do all the things we've talked about once upon a time. This group has allowed me to go and think about education differently amid being mired in CDC guidance, etc. How do we use that moon shot to realize we are forever changed and to then incentivize the entire system?
- We've had learning standards in place a long time that detail what students need to know and be able to do. This work has reinforced for me the importance of honing in on the standards and what we're asking students to master as well as the importance of relationships with students. Learning is a progression, not a destination. We're not going to return to normal as others have already said—how do we leverage this time when we're off center to advance MBL and generally rethink systems?
- In healthcare and other industries, the focus is already on mastery. The Aurora Institute helped me see how far MBL is spreading and developing across the nation. I also really enjoyed talking to students about their experiences with MBL—how it made so much sense for them, and if they hadn't been in a MBL setting, education wouldn't have been nearly as valuable to them. How do we integrate MBL into our current system to ensure the education being delivered is the type we want, so our educators are able to provide this at a high level?
- I found the New York City Mastery Collaborative fascinating. What do we want educators to know and be able to do, so we can center students and system change to all move in a similar direction?
- I echo what everyone has said about approaching education differently to make high school an engaging experience for students. From an equity standpoint, how do we make sure the MBL pathway is both valued and useful to students as the other graduation pathways and that it is equitably available to students?
- Any opportunity to present students options to better meet their needs is a good opportunity to increase equity. What does this mean for educator preparation programs?

1:45-2:15   **Scope of the Work Group**
- Group discussion of desired outcomes for the work group
- What information do you need to achieve the statutory charge for the workgroup?

Alissa reviewed the founding charge for the original work group, from E2SHB 1599, which defined mastery-based learning for the state. The work group has adopted the definition as a guide for their work. The legislative definition has the added benefit of being widely accepted by policymakers and practitioners in the field of MBL, as it was created in 2011 at the National Summit for K-12 Competency-Based Education hosted by the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL) and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

E2SHB 1599 established the work group to explore the barriers to MBL and provide recommendations around how to increase capacity for MBL, including the development of a MBL pathway to a high school diploma. The original members accomplished a lot during the work group's first phase, with the 2020 Report as the primary body of work and recommendations. Additionally, the work group encouraged the SBE to develop mastery-based crediting rules and informed the rule development. The rules and authorizing statute of the work group are the primary laws governing MBL in the state.

The next phase of work focuses on the development of Washington's Profile of a Graduate. Per the legislation, the Profile of a Graduate is developed in 2 stages:

The first phase is the MBL Work Group's development of the Washington State Profile of a Graduate describing the skills a student should have acquired by the time they graduate high school. In order to develop the Profile, the work group must seek guidance from the EOGOAC regarding how to meaningfully engage with communities who have been systemically underserved by the education system, including communities of color, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. The work group shall consult with specified stakeholders during the development process. The work group will submit a report on the recommended Profile and related recommendations for supporting implementation of MBL to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature by December 10, 2021, as well as submit it to the SBE.

On a related note, SBE had an opportunity to engage a consultant around this work, because of some funding that would have run out if we didn't use it by the end of our fiscal year. Because of that, we will be working with Athena Group, as a supplement to the larger community engagement process the work group design, to get feedback from communities of color from around the state.

In phase two, the SBE then reviews the Profile of a Graduate developed by the work group and submits a report of related findings and recommendations to align graduation requirements with the Profile, and to support implementation of MBL, to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature by December 31, 2022.

Several relevant sections of law relating to the work group's charge were shared by Linda Drake, including RCW 28A.150.210 (Basic education—Goals of school districts; Last updated in 2011), RCW 28A.150.211 (Values and traits recognized; Last updated in 1994), RCW 28A.230.020 (Common school curriculum; Last updated in 2013), and WAC 180-51-051 (Procedure for granting students mastery-based credit; Adopted in 2020).

The work group members shared their initial impressions about desired outcomes and information they need to achieve the statutory charge for the work group:
- Professional development hadn't been there to teach online before coronavirus. We have to align what we're doing in the classroom with professional learning and schools of education.
- This presentation with the references to the various existing laws that include goals we have for our education system shows me part of why our work is so important. The Profile of a Graduate will help modernize what our expectations are for our students regarding the values and traits we want them to develop in our system. Our state's basic education goals don't align with specific courses or credits. That's where our system misalignment begins because there are multiple ways to show a student can communicate successfully, it doesn't have to be a certain course they take. I am excited because we will have a chance to demonstrate the ways our education system is still just built around a 19th century schoolhouse that has been updated a little here and there but is not helping students who are expecting a 21st century education—we have to deliver on our promise to students and families. What are the core values and traits for our students to obtain, and how are we measuring whether the goals have been met? Is it really by a credit and subject requirement system?
    o For instance, a particular student may be better served by taking computer science instead of Algebra II.
- Educators who have tried teaching in a mastery-based approach have found it rewarding but did not have the support of their school leadership, so they ended up very frustrated. I hope what this group develops is something that is valuable for students and educators, but also, we have to help administrators understand the scaffolding so they can implement MBL.

- We also have to consider some of the bills we passed this year that we need to find some way to incorporate going forward, for instance the bill about media literacy and digital citizenship. We have to make sure our teachers are prepared and our school environment is modified to support MBL, while also paying attention to what is changing in the economy.
- How have other states done this—we can learn from them and their experience. In the Swiss education model, the purpose of education is not to raise up a generation of people who can spit back what they've been told, but rather to create the next generation of creators/innovators/thinkers who will ask questions of themselves and the world.
    - How do we lift up Washington's unique circumstances, truly focus on the individual child, and make our state student-centered? I don't want to be like every other state. I want every child to be represented in this Profile of a Graduate.
- We have to educate all levels of the system, because when things like MBL are talked about, they can be interpreted different ways by different groups. Communication between school boards to students and every stakeholder in the system has to happen about MBL and the Profile of a Graduate. We should personalize the Profile of a Graduate to students and to adults as well. The Profile of a Graduate has to be a common goal for each stakeholder and school, so we can make sure it's something everyone can get comfortable with in their respective role.
- MBL works well in many different settings. From other states and people doing MBL, I would love to hear more about students who have done MBL and what those students have done in college or their next step.
    - Any statistics about MBL students and what the rate of success is that we could find would be great. There is a misconception that MBL is a "less rigorous" pathway — I think case studies of mastery-based students, especially around their college and career plans, would be helpful to address concerns.
    - Rigor is often confused with quantity of work, not quality of learning.
- Members want to hear directly from the consultants about their community engagement plan.
- The institutions training our counselors need to be part of this conversation. We have to continue to work on our counselor to student ratio. The more students counselors have, the less time they have to get to know students as individuals to help connect them with appropriate pathways. We need to have policies and procedures in place at district-level so that everything is clear, so we can present options to students. I'd love to give students more options, but I can't with all the current graduation requirements.
    - Where are students and parents supposed to go to see all the options in a clearly explained way? This year, we got a Google form to fill out about choosing the pathway that is best for us. We don't know really what the pathways are, I don't know where to go to find this information. If we want options to be accessible to all students, this information can't just be held in the hands of counselors because there are so many students and counselors can't go in depth with them all.
    - In educator preparation programs we talk a lot about equity. I'm highly educated and can't find the information I need about my kids' school. We're sending candidates to the field with innovative information that can help the mentor teacher too, but the downfall is the lack of support.
    - Our district has passed the sample policies and procedures around mastery-based crediting from WSSDA. This needs to be fleshed out in each high school and as a priority for the district.

2:15-2:30   Public Comment
No public comment was provided at the meeting.

2:30-3:00   Profile of a Graduate Examples Presentation

Recently, the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL) published a [policy brief](#), in which they identified the top issues to address in state policy for transforming our K-12 education system. The first recommendation calls for defining "student success through a [Profile of a Graduate](#) to create a vision to modernize and redefine more holistic graduation requirements based on what students need to know and be able to do for future success."

Alissa shared that the goal of her presentation is to help members begin to visualize what may be possible for Washington's Profile of a Graduate by reviewing several models of Profiles from around the country. (Note: See separate PowerPoint for additional details on each of the Profile of a Graduate models mentioned below.)

- Snoqualmie Valley, Washington
  - Like most districts, Snoqualmie Valley's purpose for developing the Portrait is that in addition to a rigorous academic foundation and strong subject mastery they aspire to help students gain, the Portrait of a Graduate focus is turning the district's attention to helping students develop the personal skills, competencies, and attributes a student needs to be successful post high school.
  - They developed it over the course of 5 months, with several methods of hearing from the community through a Thoughtexchange exercise and through a public forum. They have developed a three-year plan to implement the Portrait throughout the district and its curriculum and have also begun designing a Portrait of an Educator.
    - Some districts or states that design a Profile of a Graduate also develop a Profile of an Educator and a Profile of a System to better actualize change throughout their work.
  - There are a few other examples in Washington of schools working on things similar to a Profile of a Graduate. Everett School District has adopted the 21st century skills and associated rubrics. A lot of districts start the Profile development process with 21st century skills or the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking). Lincoln High School in Seattle also identified characteristics important for graduates in their community during their strategic planning process but have not yet built their Profile.
- South Carolina: In South Carolina, conversations around new definitions of student success began at the local level. Superintendents in the state had conversations with local communities around the skills and knowledge students should have upon graduating high school. A coalition of education and business leaders organized under the South Carolina Council on Competitiveness in 2012 created the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. A network of 37 schools adopted the Profile as a shared mission in 2013. Five years later, South Carolina developed the Competencies of the Profile to make the Profile actionable in all schools and classrooms around the state. Each competency, or interdisciplinary skill, has rubrics with seven levels that track student growth and readiness for postsecondary success. The state's Department of Education provides ongoing professional learning opportunities around the Profile of a Graduate and associated competencies, including a teacher leader fellows network to lead the implementation in their schools as well as self-paced learning for educators.
- In California, the Sonoma County Office of Education, the Career Technical Education Foundation, and Cradle to Career organizations came together to develop the Sonoma County Profile of a Graduate. The Profile was created through an 18-month process of community conversations based around several guiding questions:
  - What are the hopes, aspirations and dreams that our community has for our young people? What are the skills and mindsets that our children need for success in this rapidly

changing and complex world? What are the implications for the design of learning experiences we provide in our school system and across our communities? How do we ensure equitable access?

- o The Profile of a Graduate website has various resources for interested stakeholders, including a "Take the Pledge" campaign intended for the entire community to get everyone involved in helping the area's students prepare for success in their futures. The website also includes conversation prompts and next steps for parents, schools, community organizations, and employers to engage with students around the Profile of a Graduate and skills it contains.
- Glenbard District 87 (IL) also used a ThoughtExchange exercise and included a large development committee to develop their Profile over the course of 3 meetings. They developed a short promotional video about the process of developing the Profile and why it would help their students.
- Wyoming's development process for their Profile of a Graduate is ongoing, facilitated by their State Board of Education (SBE) and its Advisory Committee. The SBE has a dedicated webpage about the Profile development process to share their plan with the public and provide ways for members of the public to provide input through community conversation meetings and a survey where Wyoming residents can share their opinion on what is most important for a high school graduate to know and be able to do.
- Utah: The work group will hear more about Utah's Profile during a panel at their meeting in May. It was noted that Utah developed their Profile of a Graduate as a model that districts can adapt as fits their local needs. Some profiles, like Utah's, specifically include both academic skills as well as social/emotional skills.

3:00-3:30   Timeline Planning

Alissa shared a blank draft of the workplan for the work group. Staff kept track of member questions and input during the discussion so members can review a draft of the full workplan at the May meeting.

Topics of discussion included:
- What does success look like for each of the different types of educators and the supports each of the roles offer?
- Research around the impact for students of the Profile of a Graduate in the classroom and if it changed the rate at which businesses report receiving career ready graduates.
    - o How does this impact instruction/classroom practice, and how is it tracked and assessed?
- Members want to include holding a community forum in the work plan. However, a barrier could be moving forward without public understanding of the goal. A Profile of a Graduate helps communicate what is different and what is the same (or better) about a MBL approach. If we don't have community forums, we lose out.
    - o First, we need to provide common understanding about the direction we're headed.
    - o Members would like to do a survey after we know more about what we are trying to achieve, but it has to be carefully constructed. We need to develop a baseline vocabulary first. Then each work group member should also share with their networks to help distribute it.
    - o Make sure people understand the phrases we use—how do we create content and resources people can access to learn about the work we're doing? We need to share smaller pieces along the way. E.g. before community forums, could we create a short video/illustration of what we mean about what does MBL look like?
    - o We need students' help talking about this to make the Portrait of a Graduate cool. Are there student groups (LYAC, AWSL, etc.) or MBL schools who could help? We may want to

convene a group of young people early on about what we are envisioning and ask how they'd like to be engaged.

- Questions beyond the Profile of a Graduate primary statutory charge the work group would like to grapple with:
    - How do you assess in a MBL system?
    - What are the essential questions the public will ask us that we will have to have at least an initial response for?
        - WG members will also go back to their respective organizations to ask about what questions they have.
    - How can we give assurances that the rigor is still present in MBL? We need to also ask stakeholders what they think rigor is.
    - WSAC will be meeting with higher education partners about transcripts, etc.
    - Desire to look at culturally responsive curriculum and the legislation around culturally responsive training that passed this session.
    - Student voice: what role did students play in implementation of the various Profile of a Graduates?

3:30-3:55   Discussion: Debrief the Day

Work group members had a chance to debrief and reflect on the discussion during the meeting.

3:55-4:00   Next Steps

Alissa requested work group members let her know if they had not received the calendar appointments for upcoming meetings or if a member already knew they were going to miss an upcoming meeting due to a conflict.

Members will receive the meeting notes and a Doodle poll to select dates for a longer retreat meeting in August or September next week.

4:00   Adjourn