Mastery-based Learning
in Washington State

MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING
July 22, 2021 Meeting Agenda
1:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom meeting

Agenda:

1:00-1:15   Welcome and Introductions

Alissa began the meeting with a native land acknowledgement then welcomed two new work group members. Rhett Nelson, Director of Alternative Learning at OSPI introduced himself as the new OSPI representative on the work group (replacing Kathe Taylor). One of our two Association of Washington Student Leaders representatives had to step down from the work group due to other commitments. Samiksha Matis introduced herself as the new student member to fill the second slot on the work group.

1:15-2:30   Postsecondary Education and Training Programs Panel
Facilitator: Mike Reilly, Former Executive Director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
- Christian Bruhn, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Centralia College
- Dr. Phil Reid, Vice Provost, Academic & Student Affairs, Professor of Chemistry, University of Washington
- Shereen Henry, Deputy Director at Washington Alliance for Better Schools (Career Connect Washington Regional Network in King/Pierce Counties)

Mike Reilly provided a brief overview of the national work happening regarding learner profiles at the higher education level. Digital standards (e.g. Lumina Foundation) have been developed for comprehensive learner records (CLRs). CLRs are verifiable, with open badge standards, and easily shared with employers. Learners have agency over their learning and the ability to share their learning record (used, curated, and controlled by the learner).

- What do postsecondary providers need to help their students be successful during the K12 to postsecondary transition? What needs more attention from the K-12 system?
  - Students are not given enough information about different pathways after high school like apprenticeship and career launch. There seems to be a lack of trust for any option beyond the traditional 4-year college; we have to change messaging on what is a good path or job. There are also system barriers in higher education: Running Start students have to reapply to the program they are already in post high school after completing 25% of their credits, we actually lost students who didn't get their paperwork in under the deadline.
  - Post coronavirus, Centralia College is looking more at transcript placement that is more of a personalized process for students (versus test-based placement). We're working with our 11 district partners to say how are we going to transfer senior English into English 101 more seamlessly (now we have a dataset after this past year.) Also syncing up math curriculum across the 11 school districts we work with—the College in High School program helps with curriculum crossover. We're seeing progress when it comes to math classes transferring well and we have a template moving forward.

- College courses without preparation is setting students up to fail. The communication piece between K-12 and 2-year colleges is very important. Guided Pathways will stretch to K-12 and helps with 4-year college transfers. From an equity perspective—not every student has the options to explore in high school and taking classes that interest students helps with retention.
- Keys to student success: selection, placement and advising. To identify the best math course—a placement test should be only one factor. We have to guide students toward entry points through their broad areas of interest. Information that can be provided about the student that helps guide the student to where they will be successful is what higher education needs. One of the challenges will be making the information from K-12 to be consumable as they use courses and grades for placement.
- We need to understand the depth of the study students have undergone. But other components of a student's life experience are important as well for holistic review: resiliency, leadership, other experiences beyond the academic piece. We want to identify students who will take advantage of all the experiences we offer in terms of persistence and career. Post coronavirus, we're not relying on standardized exams anymore. We are working with advising staff to understand the background of the student to make sure they're placed in the right level for each course to give them the greatest likelihood of success. That's part of the Guided Pathways work: having conversations around meta-majors and what students are interested in.
- Students and parents don't have access to all the pathway options. College is talked about and some students get to hear about apprenticeships, but not all students are told about the Career Connect Washington work or even 2-year colleges. Students don't have to go straight to 4 -year college; there are different ways to earn a degree. Some employers will provide tuition reimbursement, etc.
- We have to build trust in communities about the new pathways we're building. Likewise, we have to change the messaging about what students are told about going straight to college.
- What are the most important skills, mindsets, attributes, and competencies our students need for postsecondary and career success in this rapidly changing and complex world?
  - We are looking at what we can measure for our learner profile at the community college. We keep hearing about the continued need to focus on critical analysis, global engagement, etc. and we are working on how to assess these. The biggest fear we have heard from students is that they won't be successful and they don't belong in higher education. Sometimes K-12 tells students that when you get to higher education, you'll just be a number—so we are continuing to message that our students can succeed and it helps with retention. For Profile of a Graduate, consider including skills like confidence or the ability to persevere.
  - By the time kids are 10, they decide if a particular job is available to them or not. From the employer view and the companies I work with, the number one thing I hear is "build lifelong learners." Employees that are willing to reskill, move into other jobs, etc. – need to be able to learn and be flexible. Companies also look for problem-solvers that are competent in communicating about the problem and how to work with others to solve it. The 4 C's of collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking are all needed to problem solve.
  - Self-monitoring (or other phrases: showing up on time, meeting expectations, seeking out support in a timely manner when it's needed, etc.) is part of the social and emotional learning.

- o Math comes up all the time, but specifically proportional reasoning as well as data analysis and statistics. We need more applied math so students can think about how they can be a good employee and problem solver.
- o Data analysis is becoming more important (we started data science minor at UW for this reason). A sense of belonging is very important for students in higher education.
- o Higher education is looking for leadership (and I mean that in a broad sense). People working with their community, community organizers, working in politics, etc.
- o Digital literacy is definitely becoming more important—and something we are trying to incorporate more for all of our students' course of study.
- o No matter a student's path after high school, there's similar attributes you'll need across college and career to be successful. The same broad competencies are needed for all students.
- The work group has heard in previous meetings how the transcript is used in the admissions process and the capacity challenges faced by admissions officers when evaluating non-standard transcripts. What are some solutions? What is valuable in a mastery-based transcript that admissions officers could use effectively (e.g. course placement), and what things about a traditional transcript are critical for either admissions or placement?
  - o For placement, the traditional transcript gives a B and that's the snapshot we get. MBL transcript could say here's where the student's comprehension was lower, then we know how to help the students with our curriculum. MBL transcript could give us a lot more useful information.
  - o The challenge for non-standard transcripts is lack of standardization/putting things on the same scale. For digital badging—if there are standards for these, then it helps know what these things mean. The transcript as it currently exists—I see that going away. The comprehensive learner record (CLR/blockchain)—that's where it's evolving so that it remains with the learner forever. I welcome that evolution, because it makes for a richer description of the learner.
  - o As a K-12 teacher, students always asked how can I get my grade up? But what I wanted them to ask is what am I missing in my learning? Career Launch starts with high school students the summer before their senior year (they're doing an internship and getting a credit, with their work-based learning coordinator working with them.) For our T-Mobile team of students, the first thing they learn about is the company's communication tools (e.g. Slack) with their mentor, then they have their mentor notes about how they're learning. When they go to interview in the future, then they have artifacts of all the skills they've learned and who said they've learned them.
  - o Traditional transcripts are convenient for sorting based on grades and courses taken. Highly selective schools could struggle with a mastery-based (MB) transcript, but the power the MB transcript could bring for advising would be huge. MB transcripts have to be in a format that can be easily understood and operationalized, but we could get there.
- We are in a period of social change in our country, so I know some of the changes we are seeing is as a result of the larger movements taking place in the U.S. Our teachers don't look like our students—that speaks to some of the lack of alignment in K-12/postsecondary pathways. I am excited that UW is asking not what degree do you seek but what are you interested in? We have to move away from siloing of students (we do that at every stage of education.) I am also excited that you all said we will eliminate the transcript as we know it. Our current high school graduation requirements are very aligned to college requirements. I didn't hear anyone talk about the evolution of our K-12 system and the expectations/maturation of our higher education systems in creating this pinch point where students cannot pursue the opportunities that interest them because of our current graduation requirements. For K-12 Profile of a Graduate, what does K-12

actually need to produce? Then a student's finishing touches/training could be through corporate training or community college.

- o It's the responsibility of K-12 to keep aspirations open for students. That includes that they have messaging around all the different things open to them (e.g. apprenticeships and other opportunities.) The NGSS actually lead to the competencies that employers need.
- o 75% of our students are first generation students. We need the earliest possible messaging about opportunity and support for that opportunity. Community colleges can help K-12 help students understand the opportunities open to them.
- o Something we learned through comprehensive learner records—students who are well-resourced could populate that document with (unpaid) internships versus students having to work jobs to pay for school.

- I think that currently, privileged white families are succeeding in the system. I think our biggest pushback will come from those families. How do we overcome that resistance to keep the status quo from those families and your colleagues in higher education?
  - o On the admissions side, you're exactly right. The heavy reliance on standardized tests to both admit, place, and give scholarships has exacerbated inequities. If we are looking at a MBL approach, it could help level the playing field. We need to change more traditional admissions practices we've used.
  - o I have felt for years that the white parent groups are pushy about honors classes and a lot of things in the system. We have to stop giving the white voice power in the system. WABS has a parent leadership group called Natural Leaders that gives them access to principals/district leadership (as much as PTA has). School boards etc. have to say we want to hear from other voices.
  - o On the instruction side, we're looking at curriculum development/understanding systemic racism across all of our disciplines.
  - o While white students are doing well in the system, they're not thriving and they're not getting out of it what they want—so we might be able to leverage this.

- We need to stay away from zero sum of looking at other options opposed to higher education. We don't know much about what our students do who don't go onto postsecondary. For a mastery-based transcript, what are the opportunities to fill in the gap for the tests that have now been pushed aside?
  - o Over time, I think some of our vendors who work with postsecondary institutions (2 vendors are used by 80% of institutions) could find ways to translate a mastery-based transcript.

- How are we seeing creativity in our K-12 system? How do we evaluate that? Who is on your application review committee—is there diversity on that committee?
  - o Admissions office is more diverse than higher education generally.
  - o Community college is open access—we accept applications then figure out how to support students. For both support staff and instruction, we are working to become more diverse.
  - o We look to build a diverse group of readers to provide a holistic review (multiple people review a single application to UW).
  - o For creativity, more inquiry/experiential-based opportunities help show students they have creativity.

2:30-2:45   Public Comment

No public comment was received at the meeting.

2:45-3:00   Student Feedback from The Root of Our Youth

Randy shared with the work group about the State Board of Education (SBE) engagement with [The Root of Our Youth](#) (ROOY) on SBE's three major streams of work: accountability, graduation requirements, and the Profile of a Graduate. Work group members were encouraged to watch [The Root of Our Youth panel](#) from SBE's July Board meeting where they shared their recommendations with the Board.

Everything we heard from ROOY connects back to the Profile of a Graduate and reinforced the why for this work:

- ROOY came up with their [own version of a Profile of a Graduate](#)—it is more focused on personal growth and developing as a person than the other Profile of a Graduate examples shared. The students shared that they wanted to learn in school about financial education, how to fill out a rental application, and generally how to do life. Students also felt the career center was underused and there needs to be a career class.
- The current education they're getting isn't engaging and doesn't give them a chance to learn in ways that develop them as thinkers and individuals who are going to be our future leaders. Rote memorization and the classic classroom setting isn't compelling to them (even though some of them have done well in the system), it's not engaging.
- They started with the notion of stop the harm. True engagement in ethnic studies, decolonization, and antiracism are all very critical as a starting point. Then, we can talk about project-based learning, student agency, more options in graduation pathways, and high school as a time to explore before they move out of K-12. They wanted to see choices for what they could do in their high school experience.
- Learning over grading: They needed teachers who could switch up what and how they teach to customize to their students. One student said their district adopted a Black Lives Matter curriculum, but there were no consequences for teachers who didn't teach it. Students were told that black student lives were political, and didn't belong in the classroom, meaning they didn't belong in the classroom.
- They didn't feel like their skills were appreciated or that their race was affirmed in the classroom. They were grateful for ROOY because they felt like they were being made whole there.

Work group members engaged in a discussion about the ROOY feedback:

- It underscores how insufficient the High School and Beyond is in many schools. I have some calls into Naviance to really make this a tool for exploration. Some schools have School Resource Officers but no counselor—absolutely wrong priority.
  - School Links and Major Clarity are also great systems to support HSBP, CTE, WBL. School Links have even added methods to track the course groupings towards graduation.
- Did students talk about the role their families and communities played?
  - One student talked about how her parents were educated in another country, so the differences in her education versus theirs was a challenge. Mostly they focused on how critical being a part of The Root of Our Youth was, the organization was their community more than school was.
- Students know what they need regarding soft skills and what the employers say they need—they're the same skills.
  - All students in different contexts are saying the same things concerning what they want more of, and what they want less of.

3:00-3:30   Profile of a Graduate Survey Review

Members provided feedback and finalized the Profile of a Graduate survey.

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

- I was concerned by a comment made by a panelist saying that she hoped students would come to her and instead of asking for extra credit, ask what they needed to accomplish as a learner. If a student is getting a low grade, then they're missing some learning. So, it's not a deficit on the part of the student, but on the part of the instructor. This is a reminder to be learner-focused when we are working on the Profile of a Graduate.
  - I was thinking the same thing—a letter grade is such a traditional part of the system. Students concerned about grades are probably concerned about going onto higher education and knowing that's part of the system.
- I don't think we're asking OSPI to change learning standards, I think we're asking for the demonstration of that mastery to be changed so it is applicable for students. And for my comp science bill, I just found out there's 27 classes considered to be comp science so I have no idea what I'm asking students to be taught. The work we're doing clarifies what educators and students are doing in service of what (and for parents especially who know the least about what our students are doing and the why).
- Understanding the why and what supports we need to provide schools and teachers to do this (otherwise it will be implemented poorly). That's why I'm hesitant about new things usually.
  - That's why the demonstration sites are important, because they'll opt into participating. That's going to be the real magic, these MBL demonstration sites who embrace MBL and show what advantages they provide to their students.

3:55-4:00   Next Steps

Alissa asked members to share the listening session information with their networks as sign-ups are still fairly low.

4:00   Adjourn