Mastery-based Learning
in Washington State

MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING
June 23, 2020 Meeting Agenda
1:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: Zoom meeting

Agenda:

1:00-1:25   Welcome and Updates

Dr. Paul Pitre shared reflections about the current challenges of dual pandemics: the coronavirus that has further exposed the inequities of our system, and the multiple recent incidents of racism and violence against people of color. He stated that a superintendent friend of his was so reluctant to close his schools because he knew some students wouldn't eat if they weren't in school, and that some students may not come back. This fall, our schools will be very different, we cannot and won't be able to go back to business as usual. We must use this opportunity to wholeheartedly address systematic issues. We must embed equity into whatever MBL framework our work group develops, and MBL align well to postsecondary education.

Alissa welcomed Superintendent Laurynn Evans from North Kitsap School District as an invited guest to the meeting and noted that she may be joining us for future meetings as her schedule allows. (Background note: Rep. Santos had a chance to connect with Supt. Evans because of her previous experience implementing mastery-based education.)

At our last meeting, Krestin asked about the data OSPI is collecting on continuous learning. Alissa highlighted a couple of the survey question results for the group (slides 3-5). OSPI asked multiple questions regarding internet connectivity and device availability. Some districts did a survey asking students about their access to the internet and devices—and the percentage of students who responded to the district survey is shown on slide 3. Another question asked districts to estimate what percentage of students had reliable broadband internet connectivity adequate to support online learning (real-time video) from home (slide 4). Of particular interest to this group: quite a few districts are offering competency-based credit via assessment (slide 5).

1:25-1:45   Process for Developing Recommendations for the Final Report

Work group members agreed that the document format (see image on slide 6) proposed by staff would work well as a tool for developing recommendations. Members also commented that the links to past presentations were helpful.

1:45-2:30   Mastery crediting rules

Work group members heard details of the draft graduation requirement rule proposal (slide 7-9). Feedback and questions included:
- What are the potential obstacles/challenges?
  - Recording this could be a challenge. Currently, you can look at a student's transcript and see how they met graduation requirements. That would be a challenge here. Higher

education would need to be able to rely on the fact that learning standards were fully met in a single course for two different subject requirements.
  - o Relationships across science departments and English departments, for example, could be a challenge (because of the way subjects have previously been siloed).
  - o This could be a communication challenge—we don't want it to be seen as lowering or weakening standards. This disaggregation of time and credit is very sticky. Time does matter—as students need time and exposure to master content. However, there is not one set number of hours for a specific subject needed—it varies.
- This could be very helpful because a teacher in history could have a student doing writing (versus a multiple choice test). However I do have some trepidation—if history & English Language Arts are taught in the same course—if the writing component isn't intense/doesn't give students enough grounding—is it giving them the core knowledge in both standard areas students really need?
- We need to be able to document through research and through our recommendation: what is the countervailing argument/rationale to address the concerns? The argument to me sounds like it's not lowering standards, but it's more rigorous to demonstrate these standards in a complex, interdisciplinary fashion. Time in a seat is how you earn a credit currently—our time will be well spent if we can tackle those two pieces (if the work group moves forward with further recommendations around these concepts beyond what is in SBE rulemaking).
- We have seen what remote learning does to equity and access for our students. I appreciate any rules that allow school districts to promote systems of equity, so all children have access in a variety of ways. We need to see children as assets, and to see a continuum of learning where we are able to give students benefit for the products they produce.
- We need to recognize that learning happens outside the classroom experience and encourage those experiences.

Alissa: At the last meeting, several members asked for an update on if districts were adopting the new WSSDA model policies around subject specific mastery crediting. While WSSDA is not collecting this information, SBE was able to do a poll during one of the weekly WSSDA calls with their school directors—and the results are on slide 10. You'll also see that we asked if it would be helpful to put some of these concepts in SBE rule—and the majority of people on the call agreed that it would. Additionally, because of the current situation and not wanting to waste a crisis, you all indicated at your last meeting it might make sense for SBE to go ahead and put some of these concepts into rule.
With all of that in mind, see summary of the draft rule proposal on slides 11-12.
- Per WAC 180-51-050, districts would still need to adopt a written policy before awarding competency/mastery credit. The policy should include details regarding:
  - o which subjects/courses are eligible for mastery-based credit.
  - o other methods allowable for a student to demonstrate proficiency/qualify for mastery credit (beyond what would be established in the new rule). Most likely, this would be specifying what the district has created for locally developed assessment options
- Everything on the slides is pretty straightforward—but there are more creative things that we could do that might need more development/infrastructure to support. For instance:
  - o If a student earned an Industry Recognized Credential—could we give them a course credit? Perhaps it would make sense for the Workforce Board to provide recommendations around which IRCs would make sense to provide specific course credit for. Or, perhaps an IRC could earn a general elective credit.
  - o In New Hampshire, there is a law that by the 2008-2009 school year, the local school board shall require that a high school have in place competency assessments for all courses offered through the high school.

o Additionally, if we want to recognize the learning students can achieve outside of school through extended learning activities, there could be a provision about this in a district's policy on providing mastery-based credit. One example we've seen in higher education is that a student takes a writing course where they put together a portfolio of their prior learning. Regardless of how well the student is able to demonstrate their prior learning— the student meets a writing requirement. But if the student is able to demonstrate their prior learning in, for example, an internship experience, perhaps they also meet a business class requirement.

Work group members shared the following feedback:
- Generally, love the proposal. But where is the pushback going to come from on this one? Area of concern: our education system assesses based on monolithic fault line. An example was shared about a student who could identify an animal by both its native and scientific names, but not the answer the teacher wanted. How do we help ensure that we're not just creating another way to label students as failures again? Assessment is what needs to be deemed culturally responsive.
  o The last thing we need to do is exacerbate the gap for students of color.
- There was a discussion around who would determine if the locally created assessment is appropriate, and if there should be some sort of state oversight to ensure local assessments are not used against the students we want to help.
  o This should benefit the rural districts and largest districts. Do not create a checklist for districts and handcuff educators, rather, this should be flexible enough that we can all work together and anticipate the student need.
  o We need to make sure that cultural competency and cultural pedagogy is taught for our in-training teachers.
  o I respect local control, but they haven't always made the best decisions for our students of color.
- Members agreed the work should move forward now, by providing an intent and a process. However, there are certain considerations that need to be kept in mind:
  o Members want to see an explicitness around cultural responsiveness in the policy.
  o Require for our teachers some professional development around cultural relevancy.
  o In our system, everyone does claim these assessments have been tested for bias. In order to telegraph intent for this policy: air on the side of really strongly telegraphing how you would measure this—you will have to keep records on your use of a certain assessment based on racial demographics—if you see a trend, that's a red flag for cultural bias.
  o Consider collecting data from districts—ask for a narrative about who in the communities districts are working with. Districts say they work with communities of color, and perhaps they work with representatives from certain groups but don't have real relationships with families. That kind of honest assessment of communities districts are serving has to be part of the assessment process.
- We have a system that's been focused on an industrial model. We are educating children to bring them into a 21st century economy. It's a twofer—MBL is also a response to current coronavirus situation. I think we're being responsive—I think this does bring along children where specific assessments have put them in a box. I think it's responsive to a multicultural world and celebrates diversity. I feel comfortable championing the work we're doing.
- The work group may consider looking at if it might make sense to make a recommendation for state assessments and giving mastery-based credit: how much credit (.5 or 1 credit) and the score—what do students need to earn to get credit? Or for core classes—is this really awarding of credit, or is it simply meeting the requirement?

2:30-3:00   Framework for a MBL Diploma

Alissa: Today I want to begin our discussion about the framework for a MBL diploma. I'd like today to be a preview into what will be one of the biggest topics for the group to discuss in-depth at the retreat—as a way to get your wheels turning and so some of these ideas can begin percolating in your brain leading up to the retreat. In Washington, graduation requirements include three components: a student's High School and Beyond Plan, subject area requirements, and a student's pathway option. A mastery-based diploma framework could broadly include the same three components of diploma as in the current diploma framework. However, there could be changes in each component to align with the work group's vision for mastery-based learning. For a MBL diploma—we believe there would be a particular focus on the subject area requirement/credit piece in our system—but we would also need to make sure HSBP and pathways are aligned.

For each of these components, I have drafted a couple of guiding questions for our discussion at the retreat—though these are not exhaustive of all we could discuss for each component, and are simply intended to be a jumping off point for each component. I am going to go over each component briefly. (See slides for discussion questions.)

Subject area requirements: The subject area component would most likely need to change the most, to align with the work group's goals for a pathway to a MBL diploma. While students would still need to demonstrate mastery in each subject area that the state has identified learning standards in, students would have flexibility in how they do so. Perhaps in a MBL model, credits are viewed as a metric to count which learning standards have been met through a demonstration of mastery, but 1 credit no longer equals 1 year of a course.

HSBP: The HSBP component would presumably change the least of the three diploma framework requirements. The authorizing language for the work group asks how the HSBP can be used as an essential tool for a MBL diploma. Perhaps the HSBP serves as the guiding document for a student's individualized learning plan—and can be used to facilitate a shared understanding between the teacher and the student of the student's learning goals.

Pathways: While the graduation pathway options component might need to change somewhat to fit a MBL lens, perhaps an addition of new pathway would align better to the goals of MBL and help make the pathway component more relevant to student's post high school goals.

Along those lines, SBE was tasked by the Legislature to survey stakeholders about the adequacy and equity of the pathways—and whether any new pathway options should be added. One of the most interesting findings that came out of the extensive stakeholder research was that while students and adult respondents supported the philosophy of multiple pathway options, the students who responded to the survey were not sure that the current graduation pathway options are relevant to them or aligned to what they wanted to do after high school.

At their last meeting, the SBE discussed their plan for what recommendations to include in the report due to the Legislature on August 1 detailing the findings of our stakeholder research on pathways. In both the stakeholder surveys and focus groups, the suggestion for an additional graduation pathway that came up frequently was adding a portfolio pathway (as a locally administered assessment option).

For subject area requirements, work group members stated we should also discuss:

- How do we ensure people are focusing on standards (not content lens or bias lens, and not their own lived experience)?
- What other obstacles/barriers are in your way for delivering a MBL diploma?

For the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP), work group members stated we should discuss and consider:

- It would be interesting to be able to learn about whether any of our districts have experimented with using HSBP as not just a planning document/checkoff list, but something that might be more evidentiary of student's growth and development. How can it be used? We could also look at examples outside of our state. In looking at HSBP primarily as a standards-based functional document, as opposed to checkoff list for 24 credits—is it feasible (rather than looking at you're weak in science and strong in this), looking at it more from the standpoint of learning standards we want our students to demonstrate they know and can explain.
- Is there alignment between the Mastery Transcript Consortium's transcript and HSBP?
- A transcript is a thing of the past—it shows that you got an A on this test but nobody knows what was in the course. We're looking at where we're going in the future. What do you know/what can do you do/what have you learned? We have kids doing things now that are valuable (you're not just valuable when you graduate). HSBPs are all over the place. A standardized plan for the HSBP would be worth digging into in this group. I'd like it to be online/dynamically allocated so a parent could see something in a language they understand so they know what their kid is doing. It could be so much more rich. Just think about all the rich things that could be part of the online exploration for kids—things that teachers could put into it—e.g. you might want to see this resource/checkout this company based on your interest in X.
- If schools followed the intent of the HSBP, it would be a collaborative unit between the school and home community.

For the graduation pathways requirement, work group members stated we should consider:
- There was discussion about the previous state requirement of a culminating project: in some places it was rich, in some places not so much. Because of the variety of experiences with the requirement, it was removed. Work group members want to think about what we can learn from the previous requirement of culminating project, to ensure that if a portfolio pathway is established, it has an underlying measure of common rigor.
  - Various work group members volunteered to share their experience with the culminating project. Additionally, it was noted that North Thurston school district had a very robust culminating project process—and there are probably people still in the district that could speak to the process.
  - There was also previously an assessment alternative called the Collection of Evidence that was portfolio-like. It was graded by the state and was very costly. However, data from the COE showed that it was very successful for some students that are in the gap.
- How can we better align pathways with a student's HSBP?

3:00-3:15   Public Comment
No one provided public comment.

3:15-3:55   Discussion: Debrief the Day
Work group members had a chance to offer reflections:

- Several members expressed excitement and feeling like progress is being made toward the group's goals.
- The more we can do to make education work for everyone, the better off we'll be as a society.
- One of the things I like is the conversation around HSBP/MTC's transcript—might be some synergy between those. I think the mastery-based transcript will be the key link to four-year higher education. Areas where I have questions: the pedagogy...having faculty members who are really good at delivering MBL. Same for double counting credits (in reference to SBE rule proposal around a single course being eligible to meet more than one subject area graduation

requirement.) Regarding educator supports—PESB made it seem like there's a good core there. I'd like to hear more about it at the retreat—to feel comfortable that our faculty will have this in their quiver so to speak. Curriculum we need to come back to at a subsequent meeting.

- Concern that some SDs/educators might see MBL as one more thing they have to do—we have to think about a buy-in process. We have to be strategic about how we deliver the message: that MBL is complimentary to the work they're currently doing. Additionally, concerns around the potential impact/how to maneuver with coronavirus crisis.
- I'm often taken back to the scene in the matrix where he says: free your mind. We can struggle from the constraints of education we are familiar with as learners and educators. The question I think about is fundamental to the process of design thinking—you get outside of the box so you can come back to the box with a potential solution that you wouldn't have found if you had stayed in the box. How might we challenge ourselves by thinking about decoupling credits from mastery—to have an authentic conversation, we need to start thinking from learning separate from the Carnegie unit. How do we use the essential standards to define mastery? What should be loose and what should be tight?
- In the field of special education and inclusion, I would be interested in us examining how can we approach / how do we ensure that we create a system for all learners in Washington? We need to plan for ensuring those who experience learning challenges aren't a barrier—you create a more universal beneficial effect, otherwise known as the Curb-Cut Effect
- MBL seems less elusive now, then before the last few months. I've been encouraged, during the crisis, by us having a conversation about grading at the statewide level (we have never done that before). Essential standards—how do we assess those standards about what they're able to know and do (and not if they were late to class/didn't get their homework in). The notion of creating multiple access points of how students can demonstrate what they know—how do we do this? I'm thinking about learning standards and how we narrow down/how we assess students on those standards.
- I think the retreat sounds worthwhile and good—it's good to be thinking about what we need to do for children. Our staff and families are going to need a lot of grace as we go forward with coronavirus.
- Regarding standards and content—the standards do not need to change. The way they are delivered changes. I want us to think about that. And, I want us to continue to think about how we view cultural competency/responsiveness/implicit bias—one of the things we think about is when we provide a laptop to every student—we could do this, but can they use it? Do they have the internet capability/have people who can help them use it? For HSBP—it's based on the transcript. The transcript imports into HSBP and their credits—there is a lot of work students do, career inventories, etc. it's not just about the courses they've taken—there's a lot of prework that needs to be done. How is the transcript going to import into Skyward or other platforms— parents like Skyward. We have an opportunity to shift education to where kids are focused and involved in their education. We have Options Learning in K-8—it's integrated learning. We could have a teacher come in and present about this. It's a start of piloting MBL.
- There is a group of students who would adapt to any system because they have so much support. But there's a group of students that we've let go and we haven't engaged—this is an opportunity to make it work for all students and give them opportunities—that starts with where the student is and what they bring to the table.

3:55-4:00   Next Steps

Members expressed interest in using a "flipped classroom" model for the retreat, so staff will be sending out a presentation and materials to review in advance of the retreat. We will send these to you on July 10.

The consensus of the group was to have the next meeting (after the retreat) in September, so staff will send a Doodle poll.

4:00   Adjourn