MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING
May 27, 2021 Meeting Notes
1:00-4:00 p.m.
Location: [Zoom meeting](#)

1:00-1:15   Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Paul Pitre welcomed work group members and acknowledged that while the work group has already done some excellent work that will have a positive impact on the state, there is still more work to do. He expressed appreciation for being a part of this group because of how unique it is in terms of its members' reach and depth across the education system.

Alissa Muller overviewed the agenda and welcomed Ron Mayberry (Bethel School District) who was appointed to the work group to represent the online learning community (per SSB 5249).

Several work group members volunteered to represent Washington via a panel discussion at the Aurora Institute annual conference in October.

1:15-2:30   Profile of a Graduate Panel
                     Syd Young, Education Specialist, Personalized Competency-Based Learning (PCBL), Utah State Board of Education
                     Andrea Stewart, Director of The Center, Iowa
                     Roman Stearns, Founder & Executive Director, Scaling Student Success (California)

The work group heard from the panelists regarding their work leading Profile of a Graduate efforts in their respective states. After the presentations, panelists and work group members engaged in a discussion about Profile of a Graduate and mastery-based learning:

- Roman Stearns shared a [PowerPoint overview](#) of the work of Scaling Student Success. The organization operates a community of practice, advocacy, and communication support for 14 school districts and 2 county offices of education. Scaling Student Success works with 10 partners to go deep with school districts around the graduate profile work and co-facilitate a community of practice. They have learned there are a lot of ways to develop a graduate profile—they are currently gathering a set of lessons learned to build a blueprint on how to operationalize a Profile of a Graduate. The way the profile is developed and implemented signals and models the principles for ongoing implementation. As part of the Profile of a Graduate work, there is a need to be intentional in increasing the capacity of educators to advance the work through establishing specific policy conditions and culture.
- Syd Young shared a [PowerPoint overview](#) of Utah's work on their Portrait of a Graduate and associated competencies. As a state, we are working to ensure there are resources available for educators and students. At both the state agency and legislative level, we want to remove barriers for implementation and create flexibility for local innovation.
  - To develop a graduate profile, start with establishing a rationale for why you're establishing it. How and what have to be incorporated into the why for all of your stakeholders—as a common why (vision for change) makes the what and how less

frustrating. Every stakeholder needs an on-ramp for change. For instance, what are the pinch points for hiring for employers?

- o Utah engaged a diverse stakeholder group to discuss what was and wasn't working in the current system. Stakeholder groups included current students, refugees, educators, school leaders, and higher education. Prison inmates were asked about what they wished their education experience would have been like as another way of informing the Portrait development.
- o Focus group participants were asked a series of questions (see resource slides). Focus group members spent time rearranging individual responses, grouping them, and honing in on what was most important. Each participant's exit ticket was to choose one, and only one, essential characteristic for the Portrait of a Graduate
- o Local school districts are welcome to adopt the state model Portrait or adopt their own, or create a hybrid Portrait based on the state's model with local feedback also incorporated. Each school community is encouraged to receive stakeholder feedback before developing their own Portrait.
- Andrea Stewart shared a [PowerPoint overview](#) of Iowa The Center's work on local Portrait of a Graduate efforts.
  - o The Center provides support for learner-centered, personalized and competency-based ecosystem as pathways to future readiness and success by looking at the whole ecosystem as opposed to just schools. We work with both schools and community partners to do this work; students are the driving force and center of everything we do. In Iowa, 15 districts are implementing POGs right now,16 drafting/designing, and 30+ are exploring.
  - o The Profile/Portrait of a Graduate (POGs) is the right work right now. However, it can't just be a vision—there has to be an action plan too (and implementation is hard). POGs should be connected to the other foundational goals of the state and existing school improvement work.
  - o We have College and Career Readiness outcomes in Iowa (customized Conley's "Four Keys for College and Career Readiness" for Iowa), as well as universal constructs as part of Iowa's core.
  - o The Center is moving away from just academics and toward the fuller set of skills and future readiness. We are measuring deeper learning capacities (via American Institutes of Research [Competency-based Education 360 Survey Toolkit](#)). There is also work to align measures—process measures and various types of data: perceptual, qualitative, and quantitative (see slides for additional details on the types of data). Students are setting goals around these competencies and identifying their areas for growth.
  - o The Center also has adult learner profile resources (where are their assets? where do they need support?) and provides training and support to crosswalk a district's Profile of a Graduate with their district initiatives as well as professional learning sessions around instructional shifts.
- What was the biggest challenge in implementation?
  - o Shifting mindsets—we are entrenched in how we have been educating kids and the outcomes we have historically valued. We need to examine the system and shift to the kinds of assets we value and deemphasize other outcomes that are more inherently inequitable.
  - o Districts think they have to have arrived before they do Profile of a Graduate. They're struggling with SEL or other issues so don't want to start this work. When really, the Profile of a Graduate helps us look at learners differently and solve other problems so it's never too soon to start.

- In Utah, two challenges come to mind: 1.) The right grain size—not going too big, but not being too granular—policy needs to be tight enough for high expectations statewide, and loose enough that there is room for local innovation. 2.) Shifting to an asset-based view of students—helping people understand and look at learners differently (not traditionally normed assets, but wider base of assets).
- Roles of Utah state education agency: 1) removing barriers and 2) creating flexibility—how are you communicating this?
  - We are developing a guide regarding all existing flexibilities available in the state (e.g. when a district needs a waiver), in both statute and rule, and what is within local control, to create context and transparency for local education agencies (LEAs). In one of Utah's grant programs, the LEAs helped identify obstacles that existed in legislative code and board rule, then the SBE looked at where they can create flexibility (sometimes occurs in waivers until code can be changed).
- What can we do to leapfrog based on recent changes (coronavirus and all that has entailed in our education system, e.g. 1) greater connectivity and the expanded virtual classroom, 2) Big Picture model 3) what should change in statute/code)?
  - In Utah, our journey toward CBE started out with a graduation taskforce around credits, which quickly turned into competencies, which are tied to funding models (need to address funding models long-term.) In short-term, innovate with what you have and strategically plan next steps. The Profile of a Graduate represents the ideal that we want for each student in our state—it has to be a big vision. But then structure, policy, and funding have to be put in place to help students get there. We changed references to CBE from "alternative" to the norm by changing language to help change the mindset—now we refer to it as "learner validated" programs. "Instructional time" was changed to "educational activity" during coronavirus—so that it could include work-based learning, project-based learning, online small groups, etc. Experiential forms of learning, such as project-based learning and work-based learning, are essential to allow students opportunities to practice the Portrait outcomes. In Utah, LEAs have a lot of control over issuing credits for graduation requirements. They can award credit for the learning students are doing outside of seat time. Students are currently learning just in time to apply knowledge (whereas the previous generations learned just in case we had to recall information at some point.) Students today have to learn about sources and which sources are accurate, etc.—the needs for the education system today are different.
  - Drivers for change and existing barriers: In California, the state university system is a huge barrier for moving forward because it is based on seat time and courses and grades. Students demonstrate competency by doing real work (not seat time). If we can get the right drivers in admissions process where students use portfolios and can demonstrate competencies, etc. that will help a lot.
  - Legislatures can also elevate the importance of measuring and reporting on skills and dispositions rather than just academic learning. What gets measured gets done is a common reality in our schools, and they focus on the compliance pieces before the competencies/skills we know the world beyond school is asking for and needs. Industry has also said portfolios are much more helpful in assessing a potential employee than a letter grade.
- What are the barriers and successes regarding assessment in a MBL system?
  - This is a big shift for educators to process. The Professional Learning Community movement has done some harm because of common assessments—every kid should have individualized assessment to value their assets. Assessment is massive when you think it's done to kids. How can students help co-construct assessment? They can build it together

with the educator. We have elementaries playing in that space as much as high school—we have to talk about the learner's role in the assessment process.

- o When students participate in the design and assessment of learning, it becomes culturally and linguistically sustaining, and therefore more equitable.
- o We are helping districts use longitudinal data such as the Clearinghouse data to help them see the gaps in long-term outcome measures (e.g. intention to enroll in a postsecondary program of some kind, graduation, enrollment, persistence, and earning a credential) and then back mapping to ensure those patterns shift. There is a small accountability piece in postsecondary data in our state system now, which motivates change...again, what gets measured gets done.
- o WHO assesses students also needs to be re-evaluated. It doesn't always need to be teachers. Assessment is one form of engaging families, after-school providers, and other youth-serving organizations. See this [blog post](#) for further exploration regarding the concept of badging.
- o Personalized, competency-based learning framework in Utah focuses on a high-quality instructional cycle. The framework takes educators through the process, utilizing Universal Design for Learning, planning and delivering of instruction and assessment (formative, interim, etc.) then responding to the data. Assessments can't be just multiple choice—they have to be performance-based.
    - ▪ Standards-based grading versus competency-based education/MBL: standards are a smaller grain size, demonstrating knowledge, not application of knowledge/skills/dispositions. When you talk about community-based learning/project-based learning, etc.—that's a way to apply knowledge/skills/dispositions in a relevant real-world context. That's what sets CBE apart.
- o Data we look at for assessment, accountability, and continuous improvement—we have to differentiate between satellite data (annual scores), map data, and street data (day-to-day discussions with students and their day-to-day work) based on the book [Street Data](#) (Safir & Dugan, 2021).
- Can you talk more about soft skills and their importance?
    - o They are essential and critical! Only 1 of Utah's 13 competencies is for "academic mastery."
    - o At The Center, our focus is the shift to "why"—why we need literacy and numeracy so students can thrive in their endeavors after high school, have a viable economic future, engage as productive citizens, etc. What practices can we shift to get these skills and dispositions to grow in kids (in service of these skills, not academic achievement)? We need to layer these skills into academic dispositions so they can apply across disciplines and scaffold. This is the hierarchy you need to get to deeper learning.

2:30-2:45   Public Comment
No public comment was given to the work group.

2:45-3:30   Athena Group: Draft Workplan Review and Discussion
Alissa introduced Gayle Johnson and Meagan Picard from the Athena Group and shared that the purpose of their work is to help inform the work group through their family and community engagement around the Profile of a Graduate. (Athena Group's work is one piece of the larger stakeholder engagement plan and feedback opportunities for Washington residents that the work group will design.) In order to make sure their work is helpful to the work group, Gayle and Meagan want to explain their engagement approach and draft facilitation protocol for the affinity group discussions.

Highlights of the Athena Group work plan include:

- Work plan is created collaboratively based on feedback from SBE staff, EOGOAC, trusted advocates from the state's ethnic commissions and disability organizations, business representatives, and the MBL Work Group
- 5 affinity orientations: African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous, Disabilities
- Separate conversations with students and parents/guardians (total of 10 meetings)
- Seeking students now completing grades 8-11
- Geographic diversity: Colville Confederated Tribes, Yakima, Seattle, Tacoma, Peninsula communities
- Seeking diverse economic conditions and student abilities in each
- Zoom meetings with captioning and interpretation as needed
- Incorporate different ways of participating and different ways of thinking about success to hear from community members regarding what is most important to include in the Profile of a Graduate
- Participants receive a small stipend for their time

Work group members provided feedback to the Athena Group as follows:

- For students, worry that some of the proposed questions won't get us the information we are seeking. Perhaps ask students questions like:
  - Do you think what you are doing now in school is going to help you get to what it is you want to be?
  - What would make your education more relevant? What skills will you need?
    - Then students can talk about what experiences they've had that were deep learning to inform the rest of their education experience.
      - Would this experience prepare you for work?
  - Ask students to talk about a time when you learned something that you think will be helpful to you in the future. How did you learn it?
- Members would also like to know participants' ideas about implementing MBL
- What data are you trying to collect with the question: how can communities help you do this?
  - The community lends support in how a child is learning/getting through school. What is the community's role?

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

Alissa provided an overview of the highlights of the draft workplan and will send out the full workplan for member review with the meeting notes. Members were encouraged to provide any feedback of the full workplan to Alissa over email or by setting up a meeting with Alissa to discuss any feedback.

Work group members discussed the following during their debrief:

- More convinced than ever that there is a need to make the change from a seat time and credit system → MBL.
- Students who struggle in school seem to lack soft skills, etc.—looking forward to prioritizing this through the Profile of a Graduate work.
- Appreciated the focus on the why in today's presentations from other states—it makes sense that as our presenters said, explaining the why helps get to how and what with the broad stakeholder groups we will engage. For instance, could ask stakeholders: did the education you receive set you up for the world today and success today?
  - In Washington and elsewhere, we have a history of pushing four years of college as the only way to go up until the Career Connect Washington announcement. In all stakeholder

engagement for this project, we need to draw the why out of stakeholders so we're not telling them the why, they're telling us the why.

- o We need people to tell us why do we need to move in a different direction? This will help us get good information about the larger MBL implementation piece, so we can explain why MBL is the future of learning.
- o I think it's also important that these conversations aren't necessarily intended to change minds, but rather to hear from community voices on what is important to them.

3:55-4:00   Next Steps

Alissa will send a confirmed date for the Summer Retreat, updated Athena Group facilitation guide, and meeting notes to members early next week.

4:00   Adjourn