



MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING

April 16, 2020 Meeting Agenda

1:00-4:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom meeting

Meeting Purpose: This meeting will be focused on creating greater capacity in our education system for mastery-based learning through educator preparation and professional development.

Agenda:

1:00-1:10 Welcome

Randy: Welcome Mastery-Based Learning Workgroup Members and Guests. The State Board of Education is honored to provide staff support for this important work.

Today we're hoping to begin the process of turning the workgroup toward the final report and recommendations. We find ourselves in a challenging place in our education system right now due to statewide school building closures – nearly nationwide at this point. As our system makes a pivot to continue learning in our state competency or mastery-based learning and standards-based assessment are increasingly being viewed as potential strategies to support students in our system.

This presents both an opportunity and a risk. If done well, we will see growth of policies to support mastery-based learning. However, there is also a risk that mastery or competency-based learning may be conflated with online learning and associated with the frustrations and failures.

Alissa is going to talk about some of the work SBE has been engaged in with WSSDA and OSPI to support districts in expanding or shifting to competency or mastery-based assessment strategies. Many of the more impactful teaching and learning strategies we've heard about in this group and we're hoping to foster are unlikely to happen until we can return to more authentic learning experiences but there is an opportunity to make progress toward many of the outcomes identified in the interim report.

So, welcome and thank you for taking the time to engage in this conversation – with that I'll turn it over to Alissa.

Alissa: Good afternoon everyone. In light of the coronavirus situation, the legislature gave SBE authority to implement an emergency waiver program focused on relieving pressure for credit requirements for seniors, so they are not prevented from graduating because of the school closures. In both the authorizing legislation and OSPI guidance, as well as newly adopted SBE rules, there has been a focus on helping students earn credits first and using the waiver only after options for helping individual students attain their credits have been exhausted.

In an effort to provide additional opportunity for students to attain credit during the current situation, SBE and WSSDA have both been working on ways to help school districts provide mastery/competency crediting opportunities. WSSDA has done some fantastic work creating new model policies for districts as

a way to ramp up mastery/competency crediting immediately. We are hopeful that this will be an opportunity for MBL to take hold, and that it will help teachers/communities/families/students understand MBL. For instance, MBL isn't about seat time, it's about providing an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the learning standards at a pace appropriate for the individual student.

However, parents could create negative associations around mastery/competency credit during the school closures, for a variety of reasons (e.g. trying to help their students do schoolwork while also working from home). Parents might also believe that this model happens primarily online, vs. only happening online now because of the current situation. These issues could be alleviated through clear communication from this group around what MBL is and is not.

Also because of the school closures and hoping to help students continue to earn credit where appropriate, SBE has created new guidance around mastery/competency crediting—to highlight things districts can already do within their existing authority, but that most districts do not already do (like providing competency credit for passing the SBA). This document has been added under Resources, to the MBL Work Group webpage. You will see the guidance references your work, your charge from the state legislature, and includes reference to your interim report and its discussion of authentic assessments, tied to the learning standards, that could include portfolios, presentations, and other methods.

1:10-1:30 Mastery-Based Strategies and Responses to COVID-19

Abigail Westbrook, Director of Policy and Legal Services, WSSDA

Districts must have adopted a policy to offer competency crediting. The most common subject to give competency credit for is for World Language, and WSSDA believed it might be because there is only a model policy for World Language. Consequently, WSSDA has just released seven new model policies, six of which have procedures, and are aligned with state learning standards. They are publicly available on the WSSDA website. The model procedures vary based on the subject area, and are not as robust as they can be, but WSSDA hopes to build on them over time. Some of the procedures vary with subject area—for example the concept of providing credit for passing a next higher-level course works well in mathematics, because Algebra 1 and 2 are scaffolded, and success in Algebra 2 could be a good indicator of mastery for Algebra 1.

WSSDA is encouraging wide-spread adoption of the model policies. It should also be noted the policies can be adapted in certain ways by the school district. For example, WSSDA mentions a grade of "C," but that is to highlight the issue, and districts should think about what they want and what works for their own district.

The OSPI Teaching and Learning team's content experts will have continued work around expanding the model policies' procedures high on their priority list for this coming year.

A concern was raised regarding equity of access to internet connectivity—and it was acknowledged that while mastery-crediting may be one more tool in the toolbox during this period of school closures, it does not address the larger issue.

Two requests were made of WSSDA: 1. That they continue to communicate through SBE staff to the work group around how practitioners in the field are working with these new policies. 2. That they ensure community and family voice are heard regarding the implementation of the new model policies for competency credit.

Abigail also asked that the work group help get the word out about the new model policies and share anything they are hearing back with WSSDA.

1:30-2:30

Educator Preparation and Professional Development

Dr. Tariq Akmal, Washington State University College of Education, Chair,
Department of Teaching and Learning (Current President, Washington Association
of Colleges for Teacher Education)

Alexandra Manuel, Executive Director, Professional Educator Standards Board

Joy Nolan, Director of Mastery Collaborative, NYC Department of Education

What are one or two of the biggest challenges you see for the transition of K-12 educators to MBL instructional approaches?

- Director Nolan: A change to mastery-based learning (MBL) includes an initial mindset challenge, because we tend to fall back on what we know. We have so many instructional models that don't match up with the student-centered message of MBL. First, this means having to unlearn old ways of teaching, so you can learn the new ways. Regarding the nuts and bolts of this approach: educators begin prioritizing student's own agency and active learning through a mindset shift: rather than lecturing from front of the room, there is a move to supporting students in their learning activities through moving around the room and checking in with individual or groups of students.
- Dr. Akmal: If we don't change the structures within our school system simultaneously, then the structures will drown out the change. All the tools we use tend to rely on the structure, and if the structure isn't addressed at the same time we are doomed to fail. If the structure of your day and the outcomes we measure don't change, then MBL won't be successful. It is important to recognize there is change fatigue for educators who are having to constantly adapt to new standards and the latest trends in education. We keep getting distracted from the goal because we keep adding shiny things without taking anything off of the educator's already full plate. MBL allows us to refocus in on the goal you're hoping to achieve without all the other things. In terms of education preparation programs, how do we deepen and enrich the existing programs? We already teach MBL, along multiple other student-centered teaching approaches.
- Exec. Director Manuel: There are natural connections—what does it look like for our education preparation and professional development programs to have students engage in MBL? Our standards for professional development are competency-based—so that educators are supported throughout their career.
- Dr. Akmal: As Alex said, in Washington, our professional development system is competency-based. But universities don't necessarily change when K-12 does due to accreditation issues and other factors that inhibit change. For us to be nimble, we have to do some thinking outside the lines. I like the competency approach—but as Joy said, what school should look like, universities have that issue too. When we want educators to do new things, how do we make sure to do that in service and preservice that is meaningful.
- Exec. Director Manuel: We're happy to come back and share more about the current professional development structure currently, and how when new components come into the system, what that means for educators in order for them to be confident and successful.
- Director Nolan: [Mastery Collaborative](#) is made up entirely of teachers who were trained traditionally and have made a shift. Over 5 years, it's become apparent that the change itself was hard, but once you're doing MBL, it's not more work. I've heard "I have 150 students, I can't do MBL." But it is just as possible to do MBL—you're already providing feedback on about 3-5 standards in a unit, to then combine that into a mushy grade for six weeks of work, is not helpful.

It's incredibly important to meet people where they are, and be responsive to our educators. We have created a Professional Learning Community (PLC)—because when we started schools were doing MBL in isolation, so we started Mastery Collaborative so folks can learn from one another actively. It's not about modules and completing them, it's about all learning together.

- Dr. Akmal: Where does the collaboration occur? How does the time work for teachers—are they getting planning time?
- Director Nolan: We give each member school a small bank of funding so that they can pay for substitutes for planning time or for time in the evenings where teacher participants are paid extra. In our nine living lab schools we have a really active program. One requirement is that you leave your school once during the year to go to another school and learn from them—but we give you money to do that. Even though it's hard to leave your students, the payoff and learning is immense. We pay some educators to hold "office hours" to be mentors to other educators. We also have a week-long summer learning institute. Teachers' time is so precious—we want to make it as easy as possible to partake in learning opportunities.
- Dr. Akmal: It is really important to see multiple models in action. One model is not perfectly suited to another school. As we put this all together, this needs to be urban, suburban, rural. Another question: how are you funded?
- Director Nolan: Now it is based on a spinoff of a grant. When the grant ended, we begged and and are now able to be levy-funded, but we're on a shoestring.

The panel took questions from work group members:

- How are families and communities meaningfully involved?
 - Director Nolan: We have coffee hours in schools for families. The best advocates are the young people experiencing a revolution in learning. You get a lot of anxiety/concerns brought from parents. But when you get a student explaining how their school's work habits helped her manage supporting her mom through the death of grandmother while still getting good grades/participate in extracurriculars. And we also hear from teachers that when they started using mastery approaches, everything clicked into place.
 - Dr. Akmal: The reverse of that is also true: if you don't roll this out well, so families understand this, it won't go well. Moscow, ID did this and students/families spoke out because they didn't understand MBL, so the community rejected it
- This has to be opt in, as we've learned from other states and districts. Our system currently has a focus on seat time. Our perspective is that hasn't been effective—but how do we make that shift from seat time? What are your thoughts about piloting MBL?
 - Director Nolan: What do you want your young people to be able to know and do when they leave? Should a grade be based on compliance, or "I know how to demonstrate my learning and I can show you through evidence." One school shifted to MBL because their star student failed two of their state Regents Examinations (A's in classes, F's on the Regents Examinations). She did everything the teachers asked her to do. After seeing the examination results, her principals realized they had asked her to do the wrong things.
- How is the Mastery Collaborative culturally responsive?
 - Director Nolan: We have to help teachers build capacity to be culturally responsive. We have a largely white teacher population with a largely student of color system. Students feel like school isn't for them because of structural racism. We realized we couldn't launch MBL with the goal of increasing equity for students of color/underserved students, without helping teachers. Mastery can be more equitable, but equity is not a natural byproduct—responsiveness doesn't happen automatically.

- I would also note that for a school to be a member of Mastery Collaborative, that means the whole school has made a commitment to using MBL or shifting to MBL—it has to be a schoolwide learning goal.
- Exec. Director Manuel: Washington’s professional growth plan for educators is a model that may help and work well with this kind of system change. An educator can write up a growth goal, and, they can do that with other educators. With the Paraeducator Board, paraeducators can do that too. A district can also identify a group of educators to work on a certain topic or growth plan. That work would qualify for clock hours.
- How does this pandemic change MBL?
 - Director Nolan: You should think about what would work in our state. We were considered an innovative district—and immediately started handing out devices, etc. What should you think about in Washington in your context? We just hosted a summit on living and learning in a pandemic— we have teachers who have died, we have students who have both parents sick. Students talked about all of the uncertainties they feel as well as their struggles with devices.

I’ve been doing surveys with principals and teachers as well. How prepared do teachers feel to assess work remotely? We need to uncover where the gaps are—what’s the range of experiences students are facing? Would we be grading students meaningfully if we gave them an 82 for anything after when schools closed? Inequities are being exacerbated right now. MBL schools have shifted more nimbly to an online model than others, because they’re used to giving authentic feedback on where students are in their learning. Some students are saying they’re getting more one-on-one time now than when they were in the school building.

Joe Feldman, the author of *Grading for Equity*, 2 or 3 months is really not a big deal. We need frank, honest discussions. Maybe this time is just for improving. No student should have lower scores than when schools closed. If we are still dealing with this in the fall we may have to look at things differently.

How do we take an opportunity for what we’re in now, to galvanize systems? How do we do that through a systemic process to capture the good things coming out of this incredibly unfortunate situation? For instance, I’ve heard from parents and students that they’re appreciating the one on one feedback they’re getting now.

There is a receptivity right now for a focus on the humanity and support of our students. This is a great time to listen to what students are saying, because they have suggestions for how to do education a whole lot better.

It’s also a good opportunity to make a case for a more effective grading policy and more equitable systems, given this global pandemic and that every institution in the world is being affected. Even some of the most prestigious colleges are all pass/no pass right now. Learning science tells us that how human beings learn best is in a collaborative space, not by using grades to make students compete with each other.
- The focus on student-centered learning may save money by removing barriers for students. When we adopt a student centered focus we adopt a powerful motive for moving to MBL.
- What happens when students come out of K-12 MBL situation, and go to higher education, how do they do?
 - Exec. Director Manuel: What do we value and amplify in education? Right now, when having to translate to virtual learning system—educators need support around who’s doing learning/online classes—what does this look like? Facilitating learning—what does that look like? In what ways can we build an equitable, inclusionary approach that allows for opportunities to learn/grow?

- Dr. Akmal—Students who have come out of MBL and then come to WSU—they have the ability to adapt to a large range of learning experiences because they know how to learn and be in charge of their own learning. They tend to be some of our strongest students in teacher education (even if they don't love the large classes). There is a relationship between students and the teacher: the teacher facilitates learning, but is not in charge of the learning. It's no longer about making your classroom look "orderly," the focus is on putting the authority in the hands of the learner.
We have some students come in who are bitter because they miss the MBL model, and say "why don't I have more opportunity to decide what I want to learn?"
- Are there good education preparation programs for this? Are you changing how we train our teachers?
 - Director Nolan: I think Dr. Akmal is probably better positioned to answer but the fatigue Dr. Akmal mentioned ("not another thing I'm sitting this out"), there's also a belief set around why you went into education. In MBL, the focus is more on the learning happening versus getting through all the content. There are also conscious power dynamic shifts that need to happen (a teacher is no longer at the front of the room making sure kids turn in their paper by x date...)
 - Dr. Akmal: As president of WACTE, I can speak on behalf of all higher education institutions in Washington who have teacher preparation programs: institutions do teach MBL. The hard part is that there isn't step 1, then 2, then 3, but rather that you have to do them all simultaneously. There are a lot of programs in the state focused on student centered teaching, culturally responsiveness, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), etc. Our former students have written back angrily saying: Where are the things you taught me to do? Why aren't I seeing them? I'm feeling pressure because this isn't comfortable for my school! (deskilling from "experienced" teachers saying yeah kid that's great but here's how it really works..) so they give up on the practices we've taught them, or only do it in their classroom. Another layer: some instructors think they're doing all this, but someone looking in wouldn't see it.
Oftentimes as K-12 makes these shifts, higher education is told after the fact you need to make this shift. I would recommend that as we move forward MBL in Washington, that higher education is allocated resources so that they can learn alongside K-12 teachers so that they come back to their institution and bring back what's happening in K-12.
 - Alexandra: We could identify common strategies looking at examples nationally; and also do collaborative learning in professional development and teacher training.
- What will make the transitions successful?
 - Director Nolan: Collaboration and a growth mindset. Collaboration and learning from peers is a lot cheaper than hiring some "expert" to come talk to you. Teacher-led professional development time is also way more powerful.
 - Dr. Akmal: We silo a lot of our systems in Washington. What WEA pushes for in contracts has an effect on how teacher candidates are placed/utilized. If the candidate doesn't see the practices in schools they are learning, they stop doing them.
 - Exec. Director Manuel: When we talk about demonstrating evidence of learning for our students—we want to see educators doing that too.

2:30-2:45

Public Comment

2:45-3:00

Policy Implications to Educator Preparation and Professional Development

Work group member reflections on the panel:

- The overlaps between what we are seeing in teacher education and in the goals of this group are by design (also the Work Integrated Learning work group)—there is a common goal to strengthen student learning for every student in Washington. We can't do this work in isolation, without bringing educators along with us. Otherwise we can't make sure learning is relevant for our students.
- Changing the paradigm of the education system with learning and teaching—how do we make sure families and communities (especially families of color) are meaningfully involved? We don't want to exacerbate the gap.
- We can't just assume this is going to be equitable. We have to be able to change our system to engage our learners. (Note: members would like to see the "three pillars" from Gloria Ladson Billings mentioned by Director Nolan. We need to be able to change from an industrial era education system to one designed for the information age.)

3:00-3:30 Summer Retreat Planning

As we transition to thinking about your final report due in December and the topics you would like to have recommendations around, here is a quick reminder of the topics and organizations you have heard from so far. On the slide you'll see staff recommendation of topics to cover at the June meeting, and to further explore at the Retreat.

Work group member comments:

- Generally, these topics look good.
 - We can't use change fatigue as an excuse for not moving forward. It is not only about student learners, it is about educator learners, and communities of educators working together. Notion of universal design for learning—a powerful strategy for equity, and ensuring that equity is in place for every student. We may want to look into more deeply into universal design for learning.
- Let's look at how the new WSSDA model policies for mastery/competency-crediting are working.
 - What does a credit system look like in a mastery-based system? What is the relationship between mastery-based vs. credits? Do we want to do revisit looking at credits, based on WSSDA's work?
- Sen. Wellman shared about her bill regarding the Innovative Learning Pilot: I believe a MBL student needs even more time from a teacher (not less), hence the Innovative Learning Pilot program—needed to make sure there's no negative financial impact for these schools. In this current situation—this is an opportunity (let's not waste a crisis). Let's begin the transformation now for mastery. This includes mapping everything out—if we want to move forward a big portion to a MBL system—what do we have to do? What's the roadmap look like? We have to identify the obstacles—are we prepared for them? Do we have the teachers in place? What would we have to do to move a large portion of our system to a MBL system? What do we need to incentivize, encourage, support?
- Ashley shared her view as a current student—stating that her peers are worried about what credits will look like going forward and how will they meet graduation requirements? The new model policies could really help.
- What will things look like for students getting into college, with the current situation, credits, etc.—the last few weeks have been very overwhelming. In June—let's look at the status of education based on everything that has transpired. How will next year look? It's also interesting to hear that it's been difficult to place teacher interns in schools—my experience has been the opposite.

- Next time we meet—there should be some data that schools will send into OSPI around continuous learning. We should also know more about who is using the new model policies. Schools will be different forever because of this pandemic. I’m hoping this group can promote the growth mindset. We’re hearing people want to get back to normal—but there should be a new normal. Let’s talk about that next time we’re together with that data.
- “Sometimes she’s believed as many as six possible things before breakfast.” -Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland. This has enabled us to believe in impossible things. I’m hoping we leverage this opportunity to go back to a new normal to move the system forward in all the ways we’ve imagined it. (And learn from the Moscow, ID example mentioned earlier.)

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

A summary of work group member comments:

- Reflecting on student panel in Olympia—as a work group, it’s not clear we have a concrete sense of what MBL looks like; what does a performance-based task look like? We need to translate from an abstract idea to something very concrete; if we cannot bring our families and communities along with us - if we can't communicate this with our families and communities then they will not be with us on this journey.
 - To help address this, staff are planning an exercise at the retreat of taking members through standards-based performance tasks, led by OSPI content experts or teachers.
- Inventory of trouble spots - where do we need more information?
- Regarding the process for creating a list of topics to include in the final report, as well as for drafting the report:
 - Recommendation to follow the report development protocol of the EOGOAC. EOGOAC staff regularly give us a summary of what we learned at each meeting, so we know where we’ve been. Then EOGOAC members can say this is important to highlight, the recommendations of what (topically) and specifically, is really being generated by the members themselves (not staff).
- What will we have accomplished when we are finished? What do we need to do to say that our group has been successful?
 - It would be good to examine what the legislation called for—identify the barriers, how do we develop an MBL pathway (credit/no credit), HSBP, and recommendations for expansion of MBL credit. We’re not tasked with finding the solutions to the barriers, just identifying them. To your point, Sen. Wellman—we ought not waste a crisis. This work group was created within the multiple pathways bill, it is about graduation, and about a conversation with all stakeholders about what is a meaningful high school diploma.
 - That’s a good reminder of what we were tasked with addressing. And we can do all that, with an equity lens. But also to do the work justice, we need to understand what we’re not doing or providing—so we should share that as well.

3:55-4:00 Next Steps

Our June meeting will be online. For our Retreat, we are still hoping for in-person, but we are making contingencies in case it needs to be online.

4:00 Adjourn