

MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING

February 27, 2020 Meeting Agenda

1:00-4:00 p.m.

SPSPCC Lacey Campus, Room 188

4220 6th Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503

Meeting Purpose: This meeting will be focused on hearing from higher education admissions representatives regarding high school transcripts and how they impact postsecondary admissions decisions. Work group members will also have a chance to begin planning for the summer retreat.

Agenda:

1:00-1:10

Welcome

As we enter the last year of the work group's charge, I wanted to briefly review our purpose and what we have been tasked by the Legislature to accomplish in our final report. (See slides)

During our debrief, we'll ask for any possible recommendations you'd like to include in your final report based on the presentation, so we hope the notes worksheet you have in front of you is a tool you can use to jot down ideas. We are also happy to take them at the end of the meeting.

1:10-1:25

Debrief February Webinars

Discussion focused on how particular aspects of the higher education models could work in a high school. For instance, Western Governors University has a different set of challenges working with adults, than in a K-12 setting because of the developmental growth of students (for instance, while a 9th or 10th grader may be accelerated intellectually and be academically ready to finish high school, they may not be ready in their social/emotional and cognitive development).

Work group members shared about what is happening in schools now—instead of students coming to alternative schools later, now students who are ready to come in earlier are able to do so. For students with anxiety about a large, comprehensive high school—alternative schools can be a great fit with their learn at your own pace atmosphere. At WestSide High School in Wenatchee, two students in the last nine years have finished 22 credits by the end of their sophomore year. It is more likely for juniors to graduate early—WestSide generally has between 5-10 juniors graduate each year. Additionally, the pedagogical approach should always focus on meeting student needs, especially for students with high numbers of ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) who can have a lot of anxiety.

Discussion also focused on if the assessment examples and categories of Academic Credit for Prior Learning are applicable to K-12? Some work group members like the idea of credit by testing, like in the case of students receiving credit for courses they didn't pass if they scored highly enough on the Smarter Balanced assessments (SBA). Other work group members had concerns around this method of prior learning assessment. Additionally, some school boards have challenged the practice of awarding credit based on SBA scores—and there is concern that if even this fairly straightforward practice of providing master credit is not understood, that school boards could have difficulty accepting mastery-based education.

Further discussion is also needed around the best times for families and communities of color to have a vital role in education. Currently, there is no uniform way to ensure communities of color have a critical part of the process all the way through their child's education experience.

1:25-2:40

High School Transcript and Postsecondary Admissions

Stacy Caldwell, CEO, Mastery Transcript Consortium
Dr. Thomas Green, Associate Executive Director, American Association of
Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)
Paul Seegert, Director of Admissions, University of Washington
Tonja Reischl, Dean of Students, Gibson Ek High School

Paul shared that while the University of Washington (UW) supports the efforts around mastery-based learning in high school (MBL), there is a practical reality of evaluation when they receive 43,000 applicants. Without grades, they turn more to standardized tests, which is not necessarily the direction they want to go. While philosophically they have no objection to MBL, evaluating non-standardized transcripts is a logistical challenge. For international transcripts, UW converts every student's academic record into a 4.0 GPA to facilitate comparisons. Through UW's holistic admissions process, the two most significant academic areas of rigor are the courses--how well are students preparing themselves for college with their course-taking (e.g. do they take more math than the minimum?), and how are they performing in those courses? Are they taking a break their senior year, or continuing to challenge themselves? Grades/GPA is actually the most predictive measure of success at the UW.

The Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC) was founded by an independent school in Ohio and is three years old. It has 299 member high schools nationally, of which 25-30 percent is public (two public high schools in Washington are members). MTC is piloting a digital high school transcript that allows each student's unique strengths and abilities displayed—and no grades are on the pilot transcript, only student's competencies (called "credits" on the pilot transcript). Four schools this spring are actively using the pilot transcript—and about 12 will next year. No state has completely assumed this model, but the Utah competency-based education model (which funds MTC as a technical support group) includes 23 public schools working with the MTC.

MTC is working with each of the higher education institutions receiving the pilot transcript to walk them through it. For MTC member schools, each school names their credits/competencies. Typically, the competencies are cross-disciplinary/whole child/social-emotional learning (SEL) focused. MTC is also trying to make sure quantitative credits are always in the same place for each of the member schools so admissions staff always know where to look. Of 85 higher education institutions who have used the pilot transcript for their admissions process—the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, especially if they have a 30-minute explanation from MTC staff. MTC has received some questions around how do I translate this transcript? A couple of institutions have said they're not sure this works for their admissions process. Some institutions are mandated by law to have grades for a scholarship, so MTC is working with them around that. NCAA eligibility has not yet been tested with this pilot transcript.

MTC is also working predictive validity, as well as working on a version of the transcript that is more appropriate for employers and helping students translate their transcript to LinkedIn.

Gibson Ek High School is a public choice school (through a lottery) where students are engaged in mastery-based education through project-based learning. The school currently has 180 students (200 would be maximum capacity). All learning is through individually designed projects, with internships for students two days a week. Experiences to demonstrate learning include an inter-disciplinary focus, with communication skills, quantitative/empirical reasoning, etc. Students do take all SBA tests as well as the SAT/ACT.

Of their 180 students—under five percent of the student population are students eligible for the Free and Reduced Price meal program, 45 percent are students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP)/504, and 80 percent are white students. Because it is a choice school, many of the students are opting in because of their desire for a smaller atmosphere.

Gibson Ek opened four years ago, entirely with teachers from the district (traditional backgrounds). They now have a core of 11 teachers—three have spent time in industry. Last year was the first group of graduating seniors (20 graduated, 10 are at four-year colleges). In the 2019-20 school year, there are 50 seniors using the MTC transcript. Gibson Ek is in communication with all of the colleges students have applied to, because of the use of the MTC pilot transcript. Parents have noted that the transcript feels like LinkedIn.

About half of Gibson Ek students take a Running Start course, so those students are well prepared for a more traditional atmosphere in postsecondary. However, alumni students have expressed frustration because they want to be able to have deeper learning in college and they cannot in their large, freshman courses.

Dr. Green shared a PowerPoint from AACRAO illustrating the new ways colleges are beginning to document student learning through Comprehensive Learner Records (CLR). The CLR is an official institutional record issued to students, focused on the learning that occurs through the educational experience: through coursework, co-curricular experiences, and learning experiences that may occur at the same time as the educational experience but outside the institution's oversight.

The CLR was created to help employers see evidence of student learning and includes three layers: the credential layer (validation of degree—which can be validated online/put on a student's LinkedIn), framework layer (various skills like critical thinking, written communication, discipline-specific learning), and the evidence layer (What did the student do? Courses, internship, service learning, etc.).

The CLR has a focus on self-sovereignty—students can provide the information (it does not have to be the registrar). The CLR can be put together by displaying information that is meaningful for the student, based on whatever their needs are. The data streams can be translated from college to college, college to employer, etc. AACRAO is working on how to do that transfer now, based on student privacy laws. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not prevent the student from sharing their own information, although there are some best practices around this.

A student's learning at the secondary and postsecondary level is represented by their transcript, in grades and course names. The student's true learning in both is underneath those proxies of information (transcript/grades). But, if we're going to start exchanging more information (through the MTC pilot transcript), the admissions office doesn't have the learning outcomes from the English teacher. Eventually, artificial intelligence can help us match these six competencies in secondary with higher education, leading to better success in student transition.

The panel took questions from audience members:

- Is this level of data structure (described by AACRAO) transferrable to the high school level?
 - Yes.
- Thinking about schools across Washington, what do you anticipate some of the barriers being if they wanted some students in the traditional space, some in the mastery-based learning space?
 - This would be easier in a district with multiple high schools, and would be a little harder in a single high school district. You do need more guidance in a MBL system, but teachers are not lecturing as much so they can provide this. In the MTC, one school lets students choose how they are evaluated: MBL or traditional model. Some schools are thinking about a school within a school model. There will not be grades in the MTC model transcript and you cannot provide two transcripts. If there is a grade requirement for scholarships, MTC helps schools figure out the grades for the student but does not put the grades on transcript.
 - Gibson Ek has also experienced parents asking for grades for their insurance company that will give a discount if the student has a B average, or a college needing a GPA for a financial aid package. Although creating grades from the student's competencies to meet these needs feels arbitrary, so is GPA.
- Will MBL help close the achievement gap?
 - AACRAO: It will help reduce bias. Credentials are judged by the name of the institution. If we can make the data discoverable so you don't see the institution first, you see the credential first, it helps reduce bias.
 - Gibson Ek: I left traditional education for that reason—that I'd get seniors who were brilliant, but were so behind in credits. MBL pacing differently and evaluation being different—yes, it addresses that.
 - MTC: the opportunity for addressing inequity—at its core MBL is equity work: meeting students where they are and getting them what they need. MBL helps students build on their strengths and fills in skill gaps along the way. All the things we don't make explicit for students (leadership and communication skills, etc.)—this helps our most vulnerable students build them along the way.
 - Lindsay School District in California has a majority MBL focus, and their demographics are primarily students of color. They have had a lot of success in reducing the opportunity gap. I want to hear more about MBL in diverse schools/states.
- How do the structures you put in place allow or constrain this?

- There has to be an advantage. Higher education needs to see an advantage to spending the time and resources to do something different. Medical schools have been looking at different ways of evaluating applications to increase diversity. Also, better alignment should decrease the need for remediation. Smaller institutions have less problem with reviewing more informative records.
- MBL transcript seems more equitable—it demonstrates learning outside of a classroom like taking care of younger siblings. It's more like a resume because it covers beyond the classroom. Can the MTC transcript replace the college essay?
 - Short-term--probably not, but long-term, hopefully. Plus, the college essay is very inequitable (students may not write their own, etc.)
 - Student transcripts are based on student autonomy and showcasing the credits and projects they want to highlight. At the moment, the personal stuff is in the 10-minute read (which large institution admissions offices may not think they have time to do.)
 - Probably a decade away from replacing the traditional transcript.

Additional comments by work group members:

- We should not get hung up on a transcript—we need to make sure students are learning and can demonstrate their learning. I'm not pro assessment for demonstrating their learning—I'd rather have course challenges.
- There is no ability for students to fail anymore. How do we remain aspirational and also remain practical so every child can do what they want to do? We can only control what happens in Washington—not Harvard's admission choices. How do we do both well? I do not want any child to not get to do what they want based on a decision we make.

2:40-2:55 Public Comment

No public comment was provided at this meeting.

2:55-3:25 Summer Retreat Planning

We see the retreat as a way to go deeper into each of the topics we have previously covered. Our hope is to start drafting recommendations for each topic (HSBP, educator preparation, MBL transcripts, MBL diploma framework) during the retreat.

How do we encourage growth in all three areas around MBL?

1. What does a full MBL program look like?
2. How do we award credit for MBL?
3. What do MBL strategies look like in the traditional classroom?

In preparation for the retreat:

- At our April meeting, we would like to cover educator preparation and then reserve the other half of the meeting for retreat planning.
- At our June meeting, we plan to discuss the enrollment guidelines/funding aspect, as well as begin the conversation to envision a mastery-based diploma framework.

3:25-3:55 Discussion: Debrief the Day

Work group members all agreed that based on the substantial amount of work to be accomplished by the time of the final report at the end of the year, a two-day retreat (rather than one day) would be ideal if schedules permitted.

Work group members engaged in a discussion regarding possible recommendations to include in their report, based on the transcript panel discussion. Reflections from the day and possible recommendations discussed included:

- Advocating for more resources for higher education, to help them adjust to a MBL transcript.
- School within a school model could work well.

- I am excited about how MBL can bring equity to the student experience and help students understand how to learn. We want students to get out of high school with a plan to succeed in life.
- I have to be able to see very clearly that this new system will close the opportunity gap. If some school boards do not even understand competency credit for SBA, how will communities? This system has to help most of our students (not just college bound students).
- We may be making choices so that if a student wants to do sports, they may not be eligible under MBL because of NCAA.
- I was encouraged today. As more students choose this approach, then higher education will have to adjust.
- Teacher prep has to be tackled. We also need to think more about scope: is MBL going to be whole schools? Whole districts? Just certain coursework? Currently, CTE courses are a good example of course-based MBL programs.
- We're not just talking about high school students. Diplomas that are inclusive and have soft skills built in—our systems might have to start with a hybrid model (MBL and traditional). How do we do a hybrid system to start off? I'm not sure I'm okay with either/or (MBL and traditional)—that's what I heard today and that is inequitable. Which children get in at a choice school and which don't? How do we make this equitable?
- MBL will benefit so many students—immigrants, etc. I'm sure we can change the life of so many students by reaching out to those we have traditionally underserved. I'd also like to know the number of alternative programs/schools in Washington.
- Are we just looking at small schools for MBL? Or can we make this mainstream?
- At the retreat, I want to hear from non-four year college options for postsecondary and how MBL would work for them—e.g. technical training, apprenticeships, etc.

3:55-4:00 Next Steps

Staff will send an email next week that will include notes and presentations from today's meeting, and links to Doodle polls for the June meeting and Summer Retreat meeting.

4:00 Adjourn