

## **MASTERY-BASED LEARNING WORK GROUP MEETING**

**October 28, 2021 Meeting Agenda**

**1:00-5:00 p.m.**

*Location: [Zoom meeting](#)*

### **Agenda: Record**

**1:00-1:10**

#### **Welcome**

Alissa began the meeting with a native land acknowledgement then gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

**1:10-2:10**

#### **Learning from Institutional Education Settings**

- Larry Gardner, Principal, Spokane Juvenile Detention School Programs
- Kathi Tribby-Moore, Lead Teacher and Elisa Vanhoff, Teacher, Success Through Academic Connections (SAC) Day Reporting School
- Tavyon and Rob, Students at SAC

The students introduced themselves and shared their favorite thing about their current school and about the success they have had at their school.

Favorite things about current school:

- Teacher support—their current teacher never rushes them to complete assignments.
- Completing their GED and attaining a high school diploma.
- Getting caught up in credits—a student had 11 credits when he came in. With the help of teachers, the student earned 10.5 credits in a 9-month period and is now on track to graduate on time.
- Choosing courses of interest to meet credit requirement.
- Student entered with 7.5 credits—in 5 months he earned 7 credits.

Challenges encountered in public school system:

- Student didn't receive adequate support and was reluctant to ask for assistance at the risk of being perceived as mentally challenged.
- Big class sizes
- Struggling with assignments and feeling overwhelmed with amount of work and speed of curriculum

What can we learn from our current school to improve traditional system:

- Schools should sit down with every student to develop an individual plan.
- Keep classes small so students can get the help needed to understand the topic.
- Students should be able to work at their own pace.

The Profile of a Graduate handout was shared, and students were asked what should be added.

- Students approved of the draft but wanted more focus on life skills and individualized career goal planning.
- Noted that if post high school plans are unclear, it is hard to stay engaged.
- Students excel in environments where class sizes are small.

The students and staff then engaged in Q&A with work group members:

- Students were asked what they envisioned for their future careers and whether they felt that adequate preparation was given.
  - Student's goal is to be a youth counselor to help troubled youth like himself. Pointed out that it's never too late to make changes in life. His backup plan was to go to college for mechanical engineering.
  - Another student wants to be an author and write books to help youth like himself. His backup career would be as an electrician.
- Elisa Vanhoff has been a teacher in the juvenile detention system for 25 years. She noted the following:
  - Education system starts to lose at-risk students by 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - In middle school, credits are available for algebra and languages, but typically kids who succeed are already excelling academically with a lot of supports.
  - Can we think more outside the box about getting kids engaged in middle school so that they don't "check out" in high school?
  - Can they earn high school credits in middle school that are not so academic, but will still keep them motivated and ahead of the game credit wise by 9<sup>th</sup> grade?
  - Profile of a Graduate needs to be created as an opportunity—not an added burden.
- A work group member noted that the Profile of a Graduate work is based on scaffolding for K-12 to support development of these skills.
  - Student noted that before coming to SAC, he was a dropout who entered his senior year with only 11 credits. He agreed with teachers and stressed that most of the students in their class don't believe in themselves—what they have experienced in life is not typical of most people. Student's dad and mom were in prison, and student believed that he could not do better. He struggled with behavior issues from elementary school onwards.
- When asked how much support they had at home, students reported the following:
  - Student's mom was very supportive, but she couldn't help with academics.
  - Student was already behind, so he didn't see a point in trying. However, once he experienced "a taste of victory" at SAC, then he wanted to engage.
  - Teacher noted that the Profile of a Graduate is positive because it is about mastery of objectives and skills. It allows the teacher autonomy and the ability to differentiate. It still has an end goal but allows the student to show mastery in a creative way. It allows teachers to help students achieve that victory concretely but also gives teachers the ability to be creative.
  - Student agreed with teacher and noted that the pretests for each new unit would tell them what they had mastered and then tell them the things to work on. Although there are parts of algebra the student struggles with, he is good at other aspects of the subject and likes that he wouldn't have to worry about that.
- The students were asked what they have learned in SAC regarding changing behavior and how that helped them focus on school.
  - Student stated that this school environment helped him be a more positive person as staff are always supportive and don't let them dwell on the negative. They have positive SEL groups and cultural diversity groups, showing the student that all students make mistakes

- and deserve equal treatment. Student feels that he is maturing, realizing that his actions and choices in the past weren't a way to live. He now has the motivation to change.
- The students were asked if they were taught skills or provided tools to be able to make those changes.
    - Student said that he was taught skills, such as a practice similar to dialectical behavioral therapy. They learned how to be resilient, humble, and change their negative communication cycles, along with thinking positively and critically.
    - Larry Gardner spoke about a recently finished collaborative project where they worked with a nationally known poet who helped them operate "Poetry Zooms" and "Art Zooms" virtually.
    - Student said that this project taught them different, positive ways to express anger joy sorrow through art, poems and more.
    - Follow-up question: if you were provided this kind of learning, offered earlier on, might have prevented the behaviors that resulted in their detention center schooling.
    - Students responded by noting that this school helps you focus on your future and helps you make a plan to get there. Ideally, the middle school system could help kids work toward their dreams and identify steps needed to achieve those dreams rather than "throwing whatever" at them by the end of the week. It is hard to engage if you don't like the work or see the point.
    - The teacher remarked that they teach these skills explicitly and on a continuum, never assuming the skill is attained. Every day we talk about SEL skills, cultural sensitivity, health and wellness, mindfulness, goal setting, and hope.
  - The Work Integrated Learning Advisory Committee was brought up and how the focus is on helping students understand how academic learning applies to their future goals. She also mentioned life skills—learning to open a checking account and how to calculate if you're getting a good deal on your mortgage, credit cards, and how to engage social media. She asked if they taught those life skills, and did the students already know that before being here?
    - Principal was excited to see that listed on the Profile of a Graduate. They've been teaching this for 20 years as a transition class: how to find a job, how to fill out job applications, and how to live independently. They also started Dave Ramsey high school curriculum, a Virtual Job Shadow, and other ways to do an interest inventory. They have a new aptitude test and videos from over 1000 jobs they can use to do a virtual field trip to different job sites and careers.
    - The teacher stated that credit card agreements, rental agreements, etc. were all taught in their financial literacy curriculum. One of their Title I goals as a school is the life skills piece. If students don't graduate, at a minimum, they need to be able to access appropriate resources and engage in the community.
    - Students read the paper every morning, analyze an article, and look for critical thinking errors. Teacher would like to see critical thinking taught very early on in school. This is media literacy— addressing questions about the source and if it is accurate.
  - A work group member expressed enthusiasm for multiple goals, noting that everyone has had multiple goals and paths change over time. He was curious about where there were spots to have better supported the students. Could the education system have stopped the student's trajectory, or could it have put students on a better track earlier?
    - The student reiterated that being able to work at their own pace and understand an assignment before moving on to the next would be important. In public school, students receive lots of assignments in one week and are expected to complete them. If there was material that students were supposed to learn in middle school but didn't, then catching

up becomes very hard and students fall behind. Being able to work at your own pace would be very helpful.

- In what grade should this intervention start?
  - Student recommended starting by 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Students started losing hope about completing school then.
  - Student again mentioned getting lost and behind, and not wanting to ask questions for fear of appearing mentally challenged. The teacher would get annoyed if the student was off task. Again, smaller classes would also help.
  - Students said that 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade needs more motivational teachers dedicated to helping. Even after school programs are difficult because there is only 1 teacher for 15 kids, and teachers can't spend the time necessary to explain the whole lesson.
  - Larry mentioned that it seems like there were more alternative schools 25 years ago, but they're disappearing. In Mead School District, there was an awesome alternative school, but due to funding, it closed. The skill center has a waiting list because it's so popular, and they do operate an Open Doors program. He noted that we need more of such programs. They have a hard time placing their kids when they finish SAC—they have to be able to go somewhere, but traditional schools don't want to take them back.
  - The teacher noted that until we design programs that allow students to be successful, nothing will change.
  - The student said that he was denied by many schools because of his school behavior track record.
  - Teacher believes that schools are trying, but for high schools with 2000 kids, it is hard to engage in restorative practices. We only ever see a discipline file, not a "good job" file for these students. We need to find the reasons for the behavior. Their kids don't have computers or food or clean clothes, and the behaviors match the difficult life situation. We have to continue to push teaching staff about restorative practices. You can hold people accountable with the restorative piece by making amends in order to come back to your community.
  - Supports for families are also needed. We can't discount parents—they're the critical piece. They have to know how to advocate for their child and be welcomed into the school, even without knowledge of the education system.
- A work group member asked if there was anything missing from Profile of a Graduate. Related to that—one frustration of the system is that we're all in siloes. Through the K-12 system, in order to have Mastery-based Learning (MBL) be across the board, what do we have to do to ensure students can go through the whole system and be supported without having to jump through a separate hoop each time? Are you working with higher education systems?
  - Even within 1 school district, you have at least 3-6 systems. We have Pre-k through 6th, 7th-8th, then 9th-12th. Those aren't connected.
  - Student was always told that it doesn't matter until you get to high school.
  - Teacher added that students pass through 7-8, then show up to high school not knowing that they have to earn credits. They don't catch on until it's too late.
  - Another teacher remarked on school models that are the community hub—there's a laundromat and community health etc. There's no reason for a child not to go to school because that's where they get all their services. In our school, if they're taking the bus, they won't get to most of that out in the community—so we case manage and bring folks with services into school to connect to kids. If we could look at school more holistically, the whole person, vs. just academic achievement, which this is doing, then we can streamline a lot of those activities.

- On Sustaining Wellness—we need to talk about diet and exercise more. They're under-exercised and eating a poor diet. Glad kids now have breakfast and lunch in school. If you're not getting enough food, you'll have behaviors that match. One idea is to give YMCA passes since kids hate PE.
- Student believes schools need to focus more on individualized goal planning and preparation—and what steps can you take to achieve those goals. More life skills are needed too, that students can take with them after graduating high school.
- Principal noted that special education has been ahead of the game with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). It's more work but sure would be nice if every kid from kindergarten on had their own individual program.
- Student said that everybody learns differently and is different. He didn't do well in big crowds because of ADHD—he needs smaller classes and less chaos.
- Student emphasized life skills, resume building, and goal planning. Kids want to work part-time.
- Teacher liked that Profile of a Graduate isn't just about academics—it embraces the whole student. They worry about high school just trying to crank out 24 credits. Students can't see the connection to that. This gets us closer and shows that for students to engage in the curriculum, we have to develop all of these skills. We're pleased with the beginning of this work—but we need to just go even deeper. The students like the Profile of a Graduate draft, and they thought it was pretty encompassing—but they wanted examples and next steps.
- A work group member noted that one of the challenges and frustrations she is experiencing now is that we are trying to transform the system. We are trying to create a system where no one is behind, and everyone is advancing at their own pace—which is the whole point of MBL. Part of the challenge is that the system is so tied into credits. I recommend if SAC staff read our report when we're done. It would be helpful to our group and the State Board of Education (SBE) to hear what ideas you have about how we create the interchangeability of a credit-based system with MBL. How do you create a transcript that recognizes that mastery that isn't based on credits?
- A work group member remarked that some students do okay, some need a little help, and some don't succeed at all. She has never said to herself that we'll create a system around those who don't succeed at all and then others can adapt—it's a shift. These are the kids we heard from today—and these kids are who we should build our system around.

## **2:10-3:10                      Review of Draft Report**

Alissa thanked the members who had sent suggestions over email from the last draft. Alissa encouraged members to again send specific language suggestions over email by the end of next week on the draft report.

We have been sharing the draft Profile of a Graduate graphic during stakeholder meetings over the last month. We have received really positive feedback on the draft graphic. The majority of concerns shared, understandably, have been about implementation—particularly how we are going to ensure equitable implementation.

Members spent time reviewing and refining the draft recommendations in the three big categories of the draft report around the following: Profile of a Graduate implementation, MBL implementation, and recommendations to the SBE for their consideration as the Board begins the process to develop recommendations for the Legislature to align graduation requirements to the Profile of a Graduate.

Members discussed the relationship between the Profile of a Graduate and MBL. The Profile of a Graduate is not a new assessment system—it's a vision for changing the focus of our system to developing the whole child and a framework for prioritizing the most important skills students need to develop during their time in K-12. The Profile of a Graduate is the bridge between traditional schools and MBL schools. MBL is a new approach to assessment—but with the same level of rigor and expectations as our traditional system (since it teaches the same learning standards).

### **3:10-3:25                    Public Comment**

No public comment was provided to the work group.

### **3:25-4:25                    All Means All: Proven Transition Models to Connect Students with Disabilities to Employment**

Tania May, OSPI, Director of Special Education

Rod Duncan, DDA Employment Program Specialist

Brian Nichols, Spokane County, Human Services Program Manager

Jason Stariwat, Spokane County, Transition Specialist

Mary Crago, DVR, Deputy Regional 1 Administrator

Alexandra Toney, OSPI, Special Education Program Supervisor

Raymond Lloyd-Owen, Former School To Work Student

Vivian Maxson, Raymond's Parent

This segment focused on spotlighting the School to Work program that helps students with disabilities successfully transition into employment.

Rod Duncan, Developmental Disabilities Administration, noted that King County has been doing School to Work the longest. School to Work is funded through local dollars at the county level, so it is only in 7 counties.

The program engages students a year before they leave school to help students get jobs before school ends. Job Foundations brings employers into the schools 2 years before graduation and helps students with a work readiness assessment and gives them actionable steps.

The work group engaged with Raymond, a former School to Work student, and his parent, Vivian. Raymond and Vivian answered a number of questions from local program staff and work group members:

- Raymond heard about the School to Work (STW) program from teachers. He decided to participate because he was anxious to get a job and money of his own.
- Before participating in STW, what plans did you have for after high school?
  - Raymond wanted to be a security guard, but food and nutrition worked better for him.
- During your time in STW, what changed your mind about what you'd do with your future?
  - Student's mother stated that the student had a job coach; he explored different options available and made trips to jobs during the application process. He got a feel for what would work for him.
- What job did you settle on?
  - He works in a kitchen making sandwiches at the children's hospital. STW is housed at Providence Medical Center—there's where they meet their job coach and have their class. It was nice for him to do his interning at Sacred Heart.

- Can you describe some of the challenges you had to overcome during your STW time? How did you make the switch to being more in adult mode? Is there any achievement you are especially proud of from STW time?
- What does getting a job mean to you?
  - Raymond noted that it helps him because he has made new friends. He doesn't just stay at home in front of the TV bored but has a good experience and learns something new each day.
- What are you doing at work now and how did STW prepare you?
  - Student said that STW taught him how to prepare to work, be on time, and be ready to work. He added that it was hard to do the paperwork to be an adult and start a job, but it was all worth it.
- From a parent perspective, how did STW prepare Ray for a successful transition?
  - Mother said that the teacher and job coach worked in tandem— they said “we’re here, this is your son’s last year, we’re here to be help your son find a job and fill out applications.” Mom said that was wonderful and a great experience. She was hoping that he’d get a job at Sacred Heart because it’s a safe place for someone with a disability. It was the best outcome possible that happened. The friends he has that were in the program—the ones that did get jobs that senior year—they still have their jobs. The ones who didn’t get jobs during school don’t have a job still. One of his friends has a job coach but only gets to meet the coach every two weeks.
- Is this a job you want to stay in, or do you want to learn different skills for a new job?
  - Yes, I like it and plan to stay here.
- I appreciate STW focusing on how they prepare every student for life after high school. How can we support every student? What would be different about our education system? What are the components of the job foundation or STW program—how does that work? How is it embedded in K-12 system? Second question: as a WILAC member, how do you get your employer partners? Who takes responsibility?
- Rod Duncan noted that we are challenged when we rely on schools to make referrals (and why we said all means all). Schools don’t see employment as an opportunity for everyone. Schools track, and those who can work get referred to STW, but those who they don’t think can work don’t get referred. We want everyone who wants to work. Employment is a high priority for DDA.
- To what extent life skills are addressed in this program?
  - The focus on STW and job foundation is employment. There are other curricula available in public schools that help prepare students for real life tasks.
- Vivian was asked if the student received the other skills he needed through the school, such as life skills.
  - She said that he did, and that every student with a disability is different. Some kids can do their own bank accounts. She has guardianship, so she’s in charge of everything. For the kids that can take advantage of that—yes they get some of that. To her knowledge, DDA does the housing piece. Because her student has the disability, he has he could not avail himself of that.

**4:25-4:40**

### **Higher Education Feedback on MBL Transcripts**

Christine McMullin, Director of Advising and Entry Services, Pierce College

Cezar Mesquita, Director of Admissions, Western Washington University

Dale E. Milam, Director for Admissions, Walla Walla University

Paul Seegert, Director of Admissions, University of Washington

Higher education partners had a chance to briefly highlight the most important message to K-12 from their organization's letter to the work group. (See the joint letter from [Council of Presidents and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges](#) and the separate letter from the [Independent Colleges of Washington](#) in the [Google Drive folder](#) housing MBL Work Group materials.)

Paul Seegert noted that most in higher education would support the values spoken about today. Time-based classes don't work best for learning, and K-12 isn't just about getting kids ready for higher education. It's about human development. If there's a way to do everything spoken about and still translate this to 4.0 scale, that would be best. Paul emphasized that they do this for a living; they're assessing college readiness, and when they get it wrong, students incur debt for no reason.

University of Washington (UW) admissions can translate California's 5.0 scale to a 4.0 scale as the "currency" is common enough to translate back as needed. The 4.0 scale is still the best predictor of success. The UW's holistic review is a better predictor of success than just grade point average (GPA), but grades are an important part of the holistic review. In colleges, talking about "GPA" means talking about grades. UW Admissions considers the courses students are taking, the depth of courses, progression, etc. They're not "misusing" the GPA by just admitting students who have the best grades. They're admitting students whose grades aren't as high (GPAs that are below 3.0), but who have the minimal amount of preparation for us to know they'll be successful and they've overcome so much. For example, first generation college students and low-income students are just as impressive as students with higher grades in our holistic view, though it is still important to have that base information from GPA.

Cezar Mesquita echoed everything Paul said. Looking at preparation, rigor, trend of student progress, selection of coursework, extracurriculars - all in addition to the 4.0 are essential to demonstrate efficiency. In terms of student eligibility for scholarships and placement in honors programs, if there's not something translating to a rubric that we can understand vis-à-vis the mastery transcript, then I see admissions folks gravitating toward the 4.0 admissions standard. If they don't see a GPA, then they go to SAT, or something quantifiable. This puts students at a disadvantage if there's not a GPA. The admissions office tries to put a "thumb" on the scale in the right way if they see GPA, but can't always.

Dale E. Milam agreed with what's been shared. In the past, he has been involved in secondary education and private schools using mastery transcripts. Many in higher education believe and support the innovation, as this type of learning can be a real asset to many. He appreciates the opportunity to provide input. We have to have some clear way to make decisions in the kind of time we have available—and that quantifiable number of GPA helps. He has talked to a number of people, and the feedback was that if there was no GPA, then they were going to require SAT or ACT. He talked to the MTC and appreciated what they said. Although it goes against their ideology to provide a GPA as they want to provide something more holistic, they don't want to do their students any harm. In reality, a GPA will need to be provided until a rubric or other metric can be developed to help higher education understand what's happening. One idea could be to have both a mastery-based learning transcript along with a GPA for 5-6 years. He is not sure how long it will take to collect the data to be comfortable about making decisions without GPA.

Christine McMullin used to work in admissions at Evergreen State College. She defers to her baccalaureate friends regarding the higher load they'll have to bear around this. For community colleges, mastery transcripts are used for placement. They'd be more ready to accept this than their four-year partners, though.

Work group members shared that they had hoped to hear from UW and others about how they are preparing for the transition knowing that MBL is on the horizon in the state. One member asked whether schools should be structured so that if a student leaves after 2 years from the UW, they can have an AA degree.

One work group member expressed that she has never been more disappointed. She asserted that it sounded like higher education wanted K-12 to do the work for them around efficiency. Linda Darling-Hammond said this whole system of education was built on a notion of sorting and selecting students for the suitability of the school system. If we mandated a mastery transcript for K-12, they would figure it out. Your institutions are awarding credit based on prior learning, therefore you have to put your elbow grease into it and discover who the student is. She stated that K-12 was not doing away with traditional transcripts. Higher education would be missing out on students from MBL schools who will add to the diversity of your institutions. It goes to show in her mind that when we talk about K-12, it is that open door practice. K-12 brings in every student who is eligible, and every student is eligible. There is something wrong when your practice doesn't follow what you preach.

Paul echoed what others had said about needing a period of transition time. He agreed that if higher education only had mastery transcripts, they'd figure it. He also agreed that mastery could be the better way in the end. If that's what happens, he would look forward to having additional information in the end. However, it would be helpful to have a bridge to transition.

Christine noted that students can come in college ready, but they just have to change how they teach and provide supports (rather than having students languish in developmental education courses).

Paul said that the UW admits some students that are sure to need support at the university (determined partially from their grades). It's not that they think students won't be well educated; it's that they need to translate that into selecting students for college in a way that will be good for the students.

Dale remarked that Walla Walla has sister schools that are looking at using MBL, and that they are partnering with these schools to come up with a system to be prepared to accept their students as they come. They just don't have experience with it at this time.

**4:40-5:00**                      **Discussion: Debrief the Day**

**5:00**                                **Adjourn**