



# Supporting Mastery-based Learning

## 2021 Legislative Request

Washington State has launched work to transform our education system and close opportunity gaps through mastery-based learning (MBL). The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the advantages of MBL and the need to accelerate this work. Developing a clear policy framework to support implementation is essential. This request expands research on graduation pathways to incorporate student voice, extends the charge to the MBL Work Group to develop a Washington Profile of a Graduate, and ensures a cohesive system of graduation requirements that align with MBL.

**Mastery-based learning** is an approach where students advance upon their mastery of content as measured by meaningful, authentic assessments tied to state learning standards. At its core, MBL is **personalized learning** where students take ownership and receive differentiated support based on their interests and needs. This model of instruction, which honors students' assets and cultural backgrounds, has been shown to help close opportunity and achievement gaps. (See this [MBL brief](#) for more information.)

**“MBL can serve as a salve to the dual pandemic of the coronavirus and systemic racism, because it recognizes that learning takes place in many places through many experiences, and not just in a classroom. MBL builds on the knowledge students bring rather than focusing on deficits or learning loss.”**

**– MBL Work Group 2020 Report**

## ***Proposal for Supporting the State's Transition to Mastery-based Learning***

To support progress on the state's transition to MBL, the State Board of Education (SBE) is proposing legislation with three components:

- **Center student voices in graduation pathways research:** Recent legislation (2019 E2SHB 1599) tasked SBE with conducting a survey regarding potential additions and modifications to the graduation pathway options, with findings summarized in a report submitted to the Legislature this summer. SBE believes student voices should be centered in this research and proposes expanding the list of parties to be surveyed to include students and recent high school graduates. SBE would summarize the results in a report to the Legislature by December 2022.



***Students at Olympia's Avanti High School practice hands-on, personalized learning.***

- **Charge the MBL Work Group with developing a Profile of a Graduate:** Our proposal adds a teacher preparation program representative and extends the Work Group through December 2021, with a charge to develop the *Washington State Profile of a Graduate*.
- **Align the graduation requirements framework:** SBE would adopt the Profile of a Graduate and then propose rules by December 2022 to allow time for legislative review. The rules would align graduation requirements to support implementation of the adopted profile. In developing the rules, SBE shall consider what should be included in the core subject area requirements, flexible credits, and non-credit requirements; the relationship between credits and core subject area requirements; and how the three diploma components – High School and Beyond Plan, credits, and pathway – work together as a system.

**A Profile of a Graduate is a richer depiction of the 21st century skills all students should acquire by the time they reach graduation. It is a promise to students, and to the community, that—regardless of grades achieved or the particular pathway completed—students will develop the self-agency and critical thinking skills across a variety of disciplines that will help them problem-solve and succeed after high school. The Profile would be the bridge between the two routes to a diploma (credit based and mastery-based)—it would convey that every student is meeting the same standards.**

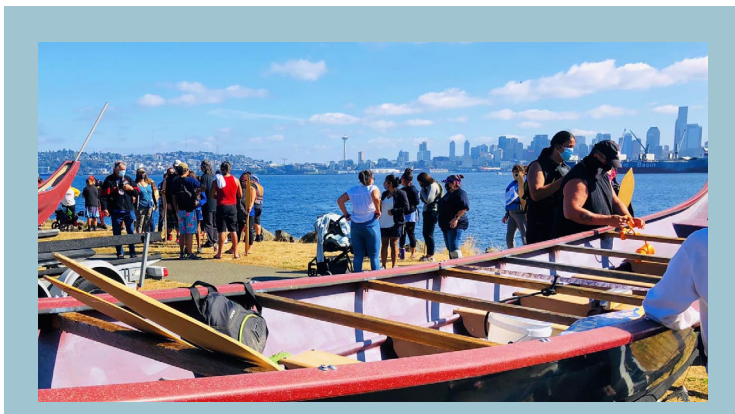
Implementation will require strong state level policy support. The one-time funding provided for MBL policy support must be extended to support further progress on this critical work. The Governor’s budget proposal for the 2021-2023 biennium includes \$290,000 to support the state’s transition to MBL. We ask that the Legislature maintain this funding in the final budget.

## **Background**

Established by the Legislature in 2019, the [Mastery-based Learning \(MBL\) Work Group](#) examined opportunities to increase student access to relevant and robust mastery-based academic pathways aligned to personal career goals and postsecondary education, and reviewed the role of the High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) in supporting mastery-based learning. The group’s recommendations are highlighted in the [2020 report](#) (see [report summary](#)).

**“Mastery-based learning allows students and teachers to build relationships... Students flourish in environments where learning means they are empowered to take ownership over their education; and educators thrive when they can apply meaningful ways to gauge their students’ progress. It is time to consider how mastery-based education can make real change for our students, our schools and our future.”**

**– Mandy Manning, 2018 National and Washington State Teacher of the Year**



### **Student feature from the MBL report:**

Enumclaw School District provides credit through Indigenous pedagogical courses. Enumclaw student, Adam Miller, embarked on canoe journeys. The policy allowed Adam to utilize these cultural experiences for graduation requirements, aligning the cultural learning to core learning standards. Upon graduating high school, Miller obtained his dream job at an environmental agency.