

**Certificate of Mastery Study Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2000**

Committee Members Present

Gary Gainer, Patrick Patrick, Rosemary Fitton, Gay Selby, Carly Cyr, Andy Wheeler, Dennis Wallace, Marv Sather, Robert McMullen, Gary Kipp, Barbara Clausen, Nick Brossoit, Lynn Fielding, Don Hanson, Denny Hurtado

State Board Staff Present

Pat Eirish, Patty Martin

Guests Present

Linda Carpenter, Cathy Hardison, Sue Shannon, Bill Moore, Cheryl Mayo, Rainer Houser, Brian Barker, Kyra Kester

Introductions

Mr. Gary Gainer, Committee Chair, brought the Certificate of Mastery (CoM) Study committee meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. Individual participants introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Patrick Patrick moved to approve the June 30, 2000 meeting minutes. Mr. Dennis Wallace seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Next Steps

- Review Washington Administrative Code (WAC) rules and consider if amendments need to be made as the committee moves forward.
- Continue to focus on the education reform movement by working with all members of the education family. Mr. Patrick Patrick indicated the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission is working on tasks related to the Certificate of Mastery and it is very important to pull together, communicate and share information as we move forward to make the best decisions for education in Washington State.
- The Certificate of Mastery study committee's job description is to determine if the assessment system is valid and reliable. List of talking points.
- Need to arrive at a definition of validity.
- Need to identify committee purpose and target.

Ms. Cheryl Mayo, Deputy Superintendent for Learning and Teaching, Ms. Rosemary Fitton, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and Ms. Kyra Kester, Director of Secondary Education and Career Preparation all from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), made presentations providing the CoM study committee with information resources.

The presentation was divided into three parts. Ms. Fitton discussed the legal aspects of assessment and CoM. Ms. Mayo shared the communication aspect of assessment and

Certificate of Mastery information. Ms. Kester discussed the necessary steps to take and how to get the process started in school districts.

Presentation by: Rosemary Fitton

The CoM committee needs to research reliability issues in other states and how they are moving toward a Certificate of Mastery. The Washington Assessments of Student Learning are valid and reliable, but are they valid and reliable for the CoM?

Test access, test opportunities, and curriculum alignment is areas that may generate legal issues.

- Accessibility (accommodations) - A key legal issue is students need to have access to take the test. Accessibility is crucial. Need to understand whether accessibility becomes a modification. This is what we need to concentrate on the next couple of years.
- Retaking the Test – The number of times a student will be allowed to retake the test and how that will be accomplished. There is a feeling that students should have a minimum of three opportunities to retake the test and make that available twice a year. We need to think carefully about the number of retake opportunities.
- Alignment – Are standards in the classroom and are students being taught in a way that they will be able to answer the kinds of questions that are on the test.
- Property Right – the diploma is a property right. The committee needs to make sure nothing stands in the way of this property right, especially if CoM becomes a graduation requirement.
- Systemic – We are raising the question of system ability to get all students over the bar. Isn't this an indictment of validity and reliability? How will we know? The burden of proof lies with the school districts. Very little testing has been done. There is not a lot of evidence of how to deal with this once it becomes a graduation requirement. What do you do with students that have not been consistent over the years? If students are not likely to pass the test, then the focus needs to change. We need to assist students achieve at a higher level. Maybe there should be another vehicle to evaluate student learning goals.
- Appeal process – A process that is on a student-by-student basis, as in the case of the diploma being a property right.
- Connection – We need to determine the best way to make sure the connection between graduation requirements and the Certificate of Mastery is valid and reliable.
- Alignment of Essential Academic Learning Requirements needs to be made in schools
- There needs to be open and fairness in testing

Questions/Comments

If we don't iron out issues now, there will be more issues later. How can you test every Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR)? Will the test change every year, will it eventually cover all EALRS. If the test is the same every year, people are only going to teach what is being tested. Will they pass the test, or reach the benchmark? If tests are different, you will have teachers teaching to the EARLS. We need to determine what is appropriate in testing students and what are the appropriate stakes for those tests.

How can this committee deal with all of these areas? How can we approach each item for the State of Washington with precision? We need to research what works and evaluate what is learned over 3-4 years.

Alignment issue – districts are involved in alignment with the EALRS. Some are coming to OSPI asking for a statewide curriculum and others want local control. There needs to be consistency across the state. The issue goes beyond watching districts go through alignment grade but how in depth to teach in each of the EALRS. There is a need to continue in the process of developing classroom assessments that do temperature checks so there are no surprises at the 4, 7, or 10 grades. There is a concern that with completing the CoM at the tenth grade that all the EALRS have not been addressed.

There is a need to support administrators and teachers to make sure there is alignment with EALRS and standards. Schools need a document of evidence of aligning with EARLS and go beyond by developing a coordinating parent piece stating what the child will learn. Teachers will need documentation to provide to parents on what was EALRS were covered and taught.

Alignment has multiple definitions. Instruction alignment is when it is appropriate to the child. This touches on access to the test. The legal concern is about not whether we know the student didn't learn to read but whether adjustments were made for the individual student. With all the things a classroom teacher has to do, it is an overwhelming waterfall of what needs to be done to adjust to each student. What is the curriculum for the class that is teaching students that don't pass the 10th grade WASL? Are they teaching to the EALRS? If the test is just a cornerstone, science must be integrated.

Mr. Patrick indicated there is an attempt to bring resources into the districts. The commission has met with legislative members to see what money is available to help students.

What is necessary is curriculum that aligns with the EALRS; the instructional piece - training of staff; and the outcome – are students learning something as a result of being taught.

There needs to be an emphasis on curriculum and instruction. The teacher needs to ask, did anyone learn what I taught so next day curriculum for those students could be determined. Assessment must be done on a regular basis, as this is the feedback piece.

Graduation to parents is not necessarily learning but a social perception. It is very important to involve parents so everyone is on the same page.

What are future tasks? What is being done? We need to have patience to allow transition into the standards based system. Perceptions are changing as a result of EALRS – reading and science go hand in hand. Apply skills to learn independently. In a standards based system, you look at students and results in detail. Assessment must line up with instruction. We need to look at assessment strategies and match instruction style.

Presentation by: Cheryl Mayo

Communication - First steps must begin with awareness of the Certificate of Mastery and make it everyone's responsibility. We need to address CoM in all school newsletters and bulletins. Parents need to know. We can start now with documentation and notification. Schools are getting smart and addressing assessment at the school activity generating the highest attendance. Brochures and question and answer sheets need to be distributed. The CoM hasn't hit home with parents of small children. Communicate with school boards and invite the media into the schools. Encourage districts to get the word out and increase awareness. Work with and get support from the business community. Encourage businesses to identify essential work standards that align with the EALRS. If businesses increase the emphasis on the EALRS, students will take learning more seriously.

Classroom based evidence needs to be developed. Temperature check assessments need to be developed so teachers are teaching appropriate instruction strategies. We need to look at professional organizations and continue efforts with higher education in teach preparation. Data analysis needs to be with school boards, parents, teachers, administrators and businesses. Communication needs to start now.

Questions/Comments

What does higher education think about education reform efforts? Higher education is always looking at K-12 and the pathway connection to higher education. There is a proposal to look at scholarships for students who pass all of the 4th, 7th, and 10th grade WASLS and accomplishes the Certificate of Mastery. Higher education has the "hello network" in place that provides citizens and students with information about what they need to know regarding admissions to college. In 2008, the Certificate of Mastery will be a requirement for students coming directly from high school to a higher education institution. It is important to ensure one group of students is not being asked to do more than another group of students in order to enter a public baccalaureate. Mr. Doug Scrima, Higher Education Coordinating Board will provide copies of admission standards at the

next CoM meeting. If you have additional questions, you may contact Mr. Scrima via e-mail at dougshecb.wa.gov.

Suggestions of what school districts need to do to start moving in the direction of CoM:

- Districts need to believe we will reach higher standards
- Discuss need to have equivalency options that relate to the WASL. There needs to be other instruments that can measure student achievement of standards that we hold as valid.
- Discuss GED and high school diploma with standards. Need to make sure the same standards are required for completion of high school diploma and GED. The Higher Education Coordinating Board will be reviewing the GED this year.

Presentation by Kyra Kester

We need to learn what is going right. We need to be careful in increasing the pace, as we do not want to harm the future of students in the middle of systems. Students are being certified in technology in association with pathways. Businesses are providing support. We still need to encourage business and parent partnerships. Parent involvement is crucial. Parents need to be part of student class registration. Parents need a meaningful job. Make registration of classes a family conversation. It is very important to answer the following questions for students: What am I learning? Why am I learning it? How will I use it? If we want students to meet the standards, we need to answer those questions and align with the EALRS. Marketing is most important! We must be a conduit of information.

There needs to be a relationship between the WASL and EALRS. How do the tests relate to the EALRS? How do graduation requirements help understand what goes beyond the CoM. This will help people understand what the first two years of high school are for and what continues in the last two years of high school. We may have until 2008 to solve legal issues, but students will be left behind if don't prepare them now.

Remediation –How do we know what is a more efficient or different approach to achieving skills. If the student has not mastered the skills, what do we do? We need to review why they didn't achieve. Was it an inability to understand the question asked was an inability to pay attention? How do these students need to learn? What environment is best for learning? If a student wants to do it, you can't stop them; if they don't want to do it, you can't start them. We need to find out what is important to these students. Tap into the work force and get business professionals help students realize what is important to be part of the labor force.

We need to look at remediation as what does it take to get back on task. Students do not receive remediation if they don't receive a driver's license. There is the potential to provide an environment for students to have the opportunity to learn.

We need to look into associating funding to student performance and take care of regulations in the process.

It is so easy for young people to get lost in big people problems. Students must see what we are trying to do. The system need to change, there is no handle on quality of output Principals can make decision if you hold them accountable for output.

Children's behavior cannot be assessed. We need to create a system to flatten the bell shape curve so management control is in the building. Learning is the priority in flattening the bell curve, but how do we get through that process?

- Are there rules that are barriers that can be adjusted?
- The goal is to get more learning to more students. How do we work together to make this happened?
- How do we turn our institutions from a teaching institution to a learning institution?
- How do we deal with the whole child?
- How do we talk to the communities so everyone is on the same page?

The mission is issue of validity and reliability as it relates to the test. We then need to step back see if the system is valid and reliable. If we miss it as a system, who is going to be hurt if we fall short? The margin at the end is the victims. If the adults cannot get it together the victims are the students. We have difficult problems that need to be solved and it feels like we are using students as leverage. The verdict is the public opinion.

In the systemic change, we do not want blame. If the test is not valid and reliable, fix it. We need to get closer to what affects the students. The focus is on the certificate, and the student needs to know that that means something. We need to clearly state the value of the certificate.

When all done it's about the teacher and the student. Success of effort hinges on who the teacher is in the classroom and what is going on. We need to look at a continuing contract law and state salary schedule for teachers. The best instructors don't necessarily work with students that need the most help.

Certificate of Mastery

- There has to be student motivation in the system
- The system has to accommodate motivation
- To get there, we must require CoM to obtain a high school diploma

Concerns

- The reform effort began because there was no quality control of graduates.
- Property right means you have a right to earn it
- High school students think we should give them a diploma.
- The alternative must be comparable to the WASL.
- Good thought needs to go into the alternate means to get the diploma
- Can't uncouple the CoM from high school graduation. The process is the problem.
- There is concern that the students career will end at 10th grade

Topics for Upcoming Meetings

- Explore alternatives- look at alternate ways that help us realize this must be for all students and at the same time not over stretch the system.
- Is the WASL a complete assessment? Is everything on the test necessary to assess?
- Pathways – life after the CoM.
- What does the classroom look like for the junior in 2009? What do you do to transition?
- Teachers need to be trained to make sure the EALRS are covered. How do we know the teachers are being taught and applying the EALRS?
- How do you deal with teacher turnover and how do you get good teachers into rural areas? Must deal with the whole child – not parents but “families”.
- The alternative system needs to have some kind of safety net. 50% of the children that don’t pass are of color.
- Discuss the possibility of creating subject-related subcommittees
- Discuss the possibility of using white papers for something an outsider can review. Suggested the legal intern can compose a white paper.
- Discuss alternative assessment options and possibilities.
- Discuss incentives for students to do well on the WASL.

Next Meeting

Mr. Gary Gainer announced the next Certificate of Mastery Study Committee meeting will be scheduled for Tuesday, November 28 at the OSPI Burien office from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.