

MINUTES
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 20, 2016

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman DeMordaunt, Vice Chairman VanOrden, Representatives Shepherd, Wills, Boyle, Clow, Gestrin, Harris, Mendive, McDonald, Dixon, Kerby, Pence, Kloc, Rubel

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** None

GUESTS: Jennifer Poon, Stephen Bowen, Council of Chief State School Officers; Superintendent Sherri Ybarra, Michelle Taylor, State Department of Education; Carlie Foster, Lobby Idaho; Blake Youde, State Board of Education; Clark Corbin, Educational News; Harold Ott, Idaho Rural Schools Association; Helen Price, Idaho Association of School Administrators; Ann Farris, Lisa Roberts, Amy Kohlmeier, Boise Schools; Kevin Murphy, Rhonda Johnson, Shelby Harris, Abigail Crawford, Stephanie Crawford, Kuna Schools

Chairman DeMordaunt called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. He welcomed the speakers and Superintendent **Sherri Ybarra**.

Superintendent Ybarra introduced the presenters from CCSSO, and explained that they would provide a national perspective on mastery-based education and a concrete view of how it looks in classrooms.

Jennifer Poon and **Stephen Bowen** of CCSSO said their presentation would describe what mastery-based education means, and why the country is seeing so much movement towards it, and answer the question of what the state's role is in moving the model forward.

Ms. Poon said the Idaho definition of mastery-based learning can be found in **H 110**, which says "An education system where student progress is based upon a student's demonstration of mastery of competencies and content, not seat time or the age or grade level of the student."

Components which are important to ensure the success of mastery-based learning are the following: a program anchored in high expectations based on real-world knowledge and skills, student agency, personalized learning geared to students' interests and needs, a comprehensive system of support, learning extended past the classroom, performance-based learning, world-class knowledge and skills, and performance-based learning. If students are working at different paces, the comprehensive systems of support are important.

To support mastery-based learning, states should define and systemize college and career readiness consistent with deeper learning, enable personalized learning, and prepare the educator workforce, so that all students can succeed. States should establish balanced systems of assessment to meaningfully measure college and career readiness, and anchor accountability in college and career readiness. States will also need to develop seamless pathways to college and career.

Mastery-based learning is compelling, because students are neither lost nor bored. Learning is optimally paced and provides what each student needs. Students aren't passed along grade to grade, despite missing large swaths of information. They are asked to keep working until they can demonstrate mastery of each concept. Students' learning gaps are not ignored. By using real-time data and technological supports, students and teachers know exactly what students have and have not mastered. Students take greater ownership and investment in their education, because learning is relevant and connected to their interests. They don't just learn academic facts. Instead, they develop skills such as problem solving, collaboration, communication, initiative, and self-determination.

In response to questions from the committee, **Mr. Bowen** said in the mastery-based learning model, learning concepts is important, not the time spent in a class or grade level. Additional flexibility is needed. For example, one principal wants to eliminate the bell schedule. The grading is not a traditional letter grade or a pass-fail grading system. Instead, a measurement of one to four is used, with three being complete mastery of a concept. In the current grading system, a C- in algebra may mean some concepts are mastered, but others are very weak, or it may mean that the student has a slightly weak grasp of all of the concepts. In the mastery-based learning model, students work until they attain a grade of three on a concept.

In response to questions from the committee concerning evidence that this model works better, **Ms. Poon** said a study by the Rand Institute using charter organizations which use this model found tremendous outcomes. A school district in California is also tracking the success of students after graduation.

In response to questions about students who struggle, **Mr. Bowen** said that there does need to be support structures in place to support them, but the number of students identified as having learning disabilities plunged in schools adopting a mastery-based learning model. He believes learning disabilities may be related to the pacing of instruction. **Ms. Poon** added that students who study in traditional systems accelerate faster and don't have to repeat an entire course, when only some pieces were not mastered. Students who were prone to disturbing class don't in this model.

In response to a question regarding how the model affects curriculum design, **Mr. Bowen** said curriculums do not have to be completely re-designed. However, schools must work on getting concepts in the right order and aligning them with the state standards. Teachers spend more time teaching the students, not the content. He used the comparison of an air traffic controller.

In response to questions regarding state funding and attendance tracking, **Mr. Bowen** said this model is more about learning, not time in school. However, schools still need to know where a student is at any given time, and one principal thought student IDs could have bar codes which would be scanned as they entered each area of the school. He added that funding is based on the district level, not a class level, but it is still based on a student's presence at school.

Kevin Murphy, Kuna Middle School, spoke regarding his team's mastery-based learning program within the school. He and three other teachers work as a team, and present their students with questions which combine several subjects. He hears from parents that their children are excited about school. Although there are some elements of a lecture-style class, it is only part of the many structures used.

Shelby Harris, Kuna Middle School, said that some believe technology will put a barrier between the teacher and student. Actually, technology helps teachers be more of a mentor to each student, and discipline is less of an issue when students are engaged in meaningful work which addresses their individual needs.

Abigail Crawford, Kuna Middle School Student, says she likes the Synergy Program at her school, because projects are ones she is interested in, and she has more ownership of her learning and works at her own pace.

Stephanie Crawford added that her oldest daughter was the first in the program. She saw so much growth in learning skills, and the Synergy Program has given her daughter the skills to succeed, such as time management and group collaboration. She likes the individual component of mastery-based education. Her oldest is now back in a traditional high school and is bored in areas she already knows, and some of her friends are struggling when the class moves ahead, and they are not ready. She is a strong believer in mastery-based education.

Rhonda Johnson, Kuna, said she has six children who have gone through Kuna Middle School, and her youngest is in the mastery-based learning program. The students are enthusiastic about learning, and learn skills such as collaboration, presenting information to others, research, and confidence. Parents can click on a link to hear their children's mentor meetings, where the students meet with the instructors to evaluate their learning.

In response to questions from the committee, **Kevin Murphy** said that the Kuna School District is trying to extend the mastery-based learning program to the high school level, but it is difficult for the high school teachers to take time out of their classrooms to observe classes at the middle school. The Kuna School District has also reached out to several other districts, inviting them to observe classes. The students in the program were purposely selected to see how the model works with students who normally disrupt class, and those students do much better in this model.

Vice Chair VanOrden remarked that she had visited a school in Idaho Falls using this model, and it does feel chaotic, but the parents say they love it.

Mr. Murphy explained that the Kuna Middle School administrator told the teaching teams they could do whatever they wanted, if they could find the money for it. His team applied for a grant for money to cut holes in the walls between their classes, and his team ignores the school bells. The Synergy Project is a mastery-based education program within the middle school. The ISAT scores from this group are considerably higher than others in the school and state, so another team at the school has started the program. He believes this is the way kids learn the best. Parents are allowed to choose which program they want their child to be in.

Chairman DeMordaunt urged the presenters to reach out to the committee for support. He added that the reason the presentation was scheduled was because of legislation passed last session.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Representative DeMordaunt
Chair

Jenifer Cavaness-Williams
Secretary