



Washington's Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (MBLC) Findings & Recommendations Report to the Legislature, 2025

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October 2025 Board Meeting



Overview and Purpose

Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (MBLC) launched in 2021 as a multi-year demonstration project to pilot culturally responsive mastery-based learning (MBL) across WA.

2023 ESSB 5187:

- Board tasked with submitting a report in December 2025 highlighting findings and recommendations from the MBLC project.
- Report also addresses required elements of 2025 SB 5189 on competency-based education.





Discussion Questions to Consider

- Do Board members have clarification questions on the report?
- Do Board members have suggested edits to the vision for continued MBL work in the state?
- Do Board members have suggested edits or further refinements to the recommendations for MBL in Washington?



MBLC's Overarching Goal

The MBLC's overarching goal is to inform future policy by helping decision makers better understand what quality culturally responsive MBL looks like, how long it takes to implement, and what resources are necessary.

Demonstration project purpose:

- Designed to test and showcase new ideas, methods, or models
- Participants often at different entry points
- Focus is on exploring what works, what doesn't, and why, rather than achieving uniform success across participants.



Legislative Investments in Advancing MBL

- **2019** Legislature established the **MBL Work Group** to identify barriers and opportunities for increasing student access to MBL (E2SHB 1599)
- **2021** Legislature extended the MBL Work Group to develop the **Profile of a Graduate** and authorized the Board to make recommendations to align graduation requirements with the Profile (SSB 5249)
- **2021** Legislature provided funding to launch a **demonstration sites grant** project (ESSB 5092)

MBLC Demonstration Grant Project – Initial Investment



- **Sec. 502 of ESSB 5092:** Initial funding of \$5M for the 2021-23 biennium for implementation of mastery-based learning in school district demonstration sites. The Board provided:
 - Grants to schools
 - Professional development for school district staff
 - Implementation, policy, and technical support
- Grantees were required to:
 - Report on impacts
 - Participate in the collaborative to share best practices

Expanded Support for the MBLC: 2023-25 and 2025-27



- **Expanded Support in 2023–25 ([Sec. 502\(2\) of ESSB 5187](#))**
 - \$6.6M in funding expanded MBLC to add a second cohort.
 - \$4.3M additional funding provided in federal ESSER dollars (FY24).
 - Strengthened project evaluation and created a statewide resource suite.
- **2025–27 Biennium ([SB 5189](#))**
 - Updated language: “mastery-based learning” → “competency-based education.”
 - The bill tasks SBE with designing a process related to CBE transcripts and school designation
 - \$2M in MBLC funding (\$1M per year) to continue work, though at reduced scale.



MBL Collaborative Structure

Project Leadership:

- State Board of Education
- Additional executive sponsors: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Professional Educator Standards Board
- Collaborative Consulting Group: Informal advisory group

Participating Schools

Independent Evaluator: FullScale Learning (formerly Aurora Institute)

Professional Learning Provider: Great Schools Partnership
(New Learning Collaborative until June 2024)



MBLC Schools Timeline

	First Biennium		Second Biennium		Current Biennium	
	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26	FY 26-27
Cohort 1	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4		
Cohort 2			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4

MBLC 4 Year Model and Focus for Each Year

Year 1: Planning

Year 2: Intensive Professional Learning

Year 3: Continued Learning and Implementation

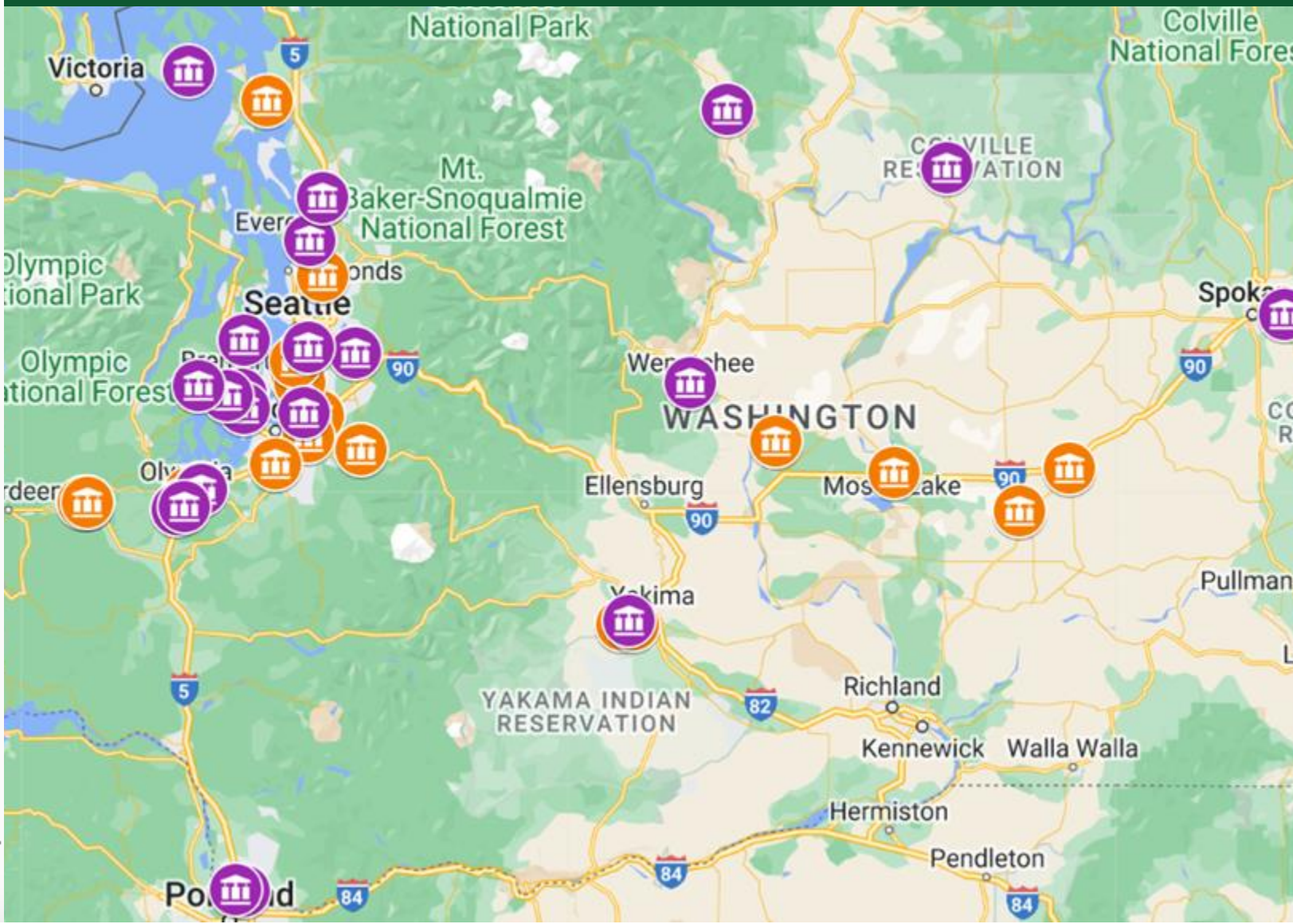
Year 4: Further Implementation Support Leading to Sustainability Model



MBLC Cohort 1

- Avanti HS
- CHOICE Academy
- East Grays Harbor HS
- Edgemont JHS
- Elma Elementary School
- Elma MS
- Enumclaw HS
- Gates HS
- Highline Big Picture HS
- Innovation Lab HS
- La Conner MS/HS
- Lind-Ritzville MS
- Lind-Ritzville HS
- Maritime HS
- Innovation Heights Academy
- Quincy Innovation Academy
- Tumwater MS
- Vanguard Academy
- West Valley Innovation Center
- West Valley Mid-level Campus

MBLC Schools



MBLC Cohort 2

- A G West Black Hills High School
- Catalyst Public Schools
- Cottonwood Elementary School
- Purdy Elementary School
- Discovery Elementary School
- Minter Creek Elementary School
- Dishman Hills High School
- Envision Career Academy
- Gibson Ek High School
- Heights Campus Open Doors
- Hudson's Bay High School
- James A. Taylor High School
- Legacy High School
- Lopez Island School District
- Methow Valley Indep't Learning Ce
- Nespelem High School
- Pinnacles Prep Charter School
- Rainier Valley Leadership Academy
- Sno-Isle TECH Skills Center
- Summit Virtual Academy
- Truman Campus Career Academy/
- Tulalip Heritage High School
- Tumwater High School



MBLC Activities and Supports for Schools

All schools:

- Receive individualized coaching
- Participate in state-provided professional learning through site visits, quarterly in-person gatherings, webinars, and more

Schools make different choices about:

- What areas of work to tackle first
- Where to target grant resources.

Additional MBLC Activities and Resources:

- Youth Advisors
- Impact Fellows program
- Living Lab schools
- Online resource bank

Findings: MBLC Network & Collaboration Successes



- **Synthesized from the project evaluation reports and the year-end 2025 reports on impacts provided to SBE by Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools:**

- **Strong Network Supports:** MBLC Network offered structure, reliability, and legitimacy for schools pursuing MBL.

- **State Support:** SBE leadership gave schools the credibility to secure buy-in from staff, families, and communities.

- **Collaboration Across Schools:** Gatherings enabled rich peer learning and sharing across diverse school contexts.

- **Funding Impact:** MBLC grant funding was essential, allowing schools to:

- Compensate educators.
- Hire in-house MBL coaches.
- Fund additional professional learning.
- Purchase culturally responsive materials.



MBLC Findings: MBLC Network Lessons Learned

Clearer Goals & Accountability: Early Cohort 1 struggles with defining outcomes led to creation of self-evaluation tools and “Implementation Steps.”

Cohort 2 Preparedness: SBE’s improved selection process for Cohort 2 ensured stronger commitment to culturally responsive MBL.

Key Enablers of Success: Strong instructional leadership and equity-driven vision; alignment with existing practices; stable leadership, cohesive school culture, and supportive professional learning.

Ongoing Barriers: Competing initiatives and large class sizes in bigger schools, political pushback on equity, budget uncertainty.



MBLC Findings: Professional Development Successes

- **Scale & Variety:** 80+ events over four years.
- **Individual Coaching as Core Support:**
 - Helped schools break reforms into actionable steps.
 - Fostered collaboration across departments and grade levels.
- **Impact on Schools:**
 - Strengthened collaboration, consistency in grading/instruction.
 - Improved alignment of competencies and instructional goals.
 - Built staff knowledge, confidence, and equity-driven culture.
 - Many schools invested extra grant funds for additional coaching.

MBLC Findings: Professional Development Lessons Learned



• **Participation & Capacity Issues:**

- Concerns about mandatory requirements.
- Schools cited scheduling conflicts and difficulty securing substitutes.
- Adjustments made: predictable monthly after-school sessions.

• **Ongoing Challenges:**

- Insufficient time for deep collaboration.
- Transition felt overwhelming.
- Staff resistance to grading shifts and equity-focused practices.

• **Structural Barriers:**

- Budget uncertainty in 2025 and beyond.
- Staff and leadership turnover.



MBLC State Policy Support: Existing Levers

- **Existing Policy Levers Supported Implementation:**
 - [Mastery-based crediting policy](#)
 - [Waiver of credit-based graduation requirements](#)
 - [Performance-based pathway \(HB 1308\)](#)
- **Partner Agency Policy Supports:**
 - **Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction:** [ALE](#) rules, [TPEP](#)
 - **Professional Educator Standards Board:** [CCDEI](#) Standards
- **Overall Impact:** Schools cited these policies as essential in legitimizing and sustaining culturally responsive MBL work statewide.



Key Policy Update: 2025 Senate Bill 5189

•5189 Updates:

- Replaced prior MBL definition with new **7-point definition of CBE** including equity (RCW 28A.255.010).
- Directs SBE to:
 - Design process to designate CBE schools/districts (RCW 28A.255.030)
 - Recommend a CBE transcript format.

•OSPI Tasks:

- Adopt rules for full-time enrollment funding in CBE programs (Sept 1, 2025).
- Update standardized high school transcript by 2026–27 (RCW 28A.255.020).
- Develop process for creating competencies aligned to state standards and cost analysis, in consultation with SBE.



MBLC: 5189 Recommendations

**CBE school designation process recommendations
and CBE transcript process recommendations
forthcoming**



Overall Shifts Toward Culturally Responsive MBL in Washington

•**Student Engagement & Belonging:**

- Higher engagement.
- Stronger teacher-student relationships in high-implementing schools.
- Increased sense of cultural representation and belonging.

•**Student Voice & Clarity:**

- Growth in students' ability to articulate goals.
- More student-led projects and input into curriculum.
- Many classrooms remained teacher-led.



Overall Shifts Toward Culturally Responsive MBL (cont'd)

•**Schoolwide & Instructional Practices:**

- Expanded use of competencies.
- Data to address inequities.
- Peer observations.
- Enrichment and personalized learning opportunities.

•**Assessment, Feedback & Pacing:**

- Shift toward performance-based assessments and formative feedback.
- Flexible pacing and differentiated supports emerging.



Draft Vision for Continued MBL Work

- **Overall Board Findings:** Deep implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining MBL is possible but requires enabling systemic conditions and sustained support.
- **Board Vision for MBL:** Ensure that 1), any interested Washington school can successfully and seamlessly transition to culturally responsive MBL through supportive, flexible structures, embedding equity at the center *and* 2), that many more schools will adopt this model, ultimately allowing students to access engaging, relevant, and deep learning experiences.

Board Recommendation Supporting Long-term Vision for MBL in Washington



•Recommended Path: Comprehensive State Support through Ongoing School Transformation and Long-term Network Sustainability

•Elements of Path:

- Ongoing grant program to support school transformation
- Statewide coordination and administration by SBE
- Funding for up to 20 school grants per year
- Continuation of Living Labs and Impact Fellows programs
- Transition of coaching to local or regional providers

•Rationale:

- Students and teachers are benefitting from this work
- Consistent with national research (7–10 years needed for authentic MBL)
- Builds on current momentum and strong demand from schools
- Protects prior investment and scales MBL equitably and sustainably
- Positions Washington as national leader



Nearer-term recommendation for MBL Work

- **Continue Demonstration Sites Project**

- Focus is on additional learnings needed to set the stage for long-term sustainability.
- For the next biennium: Provide staff support from SBE to support culturally responsive MBL statewide:
 - Coordinate implementation across districts.
 - Provide limited technical assistance to schools.
 - Ongoing work to update statewide resource suite.

- **Rationale:**

- Maintains momentum despite budget constraints.



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