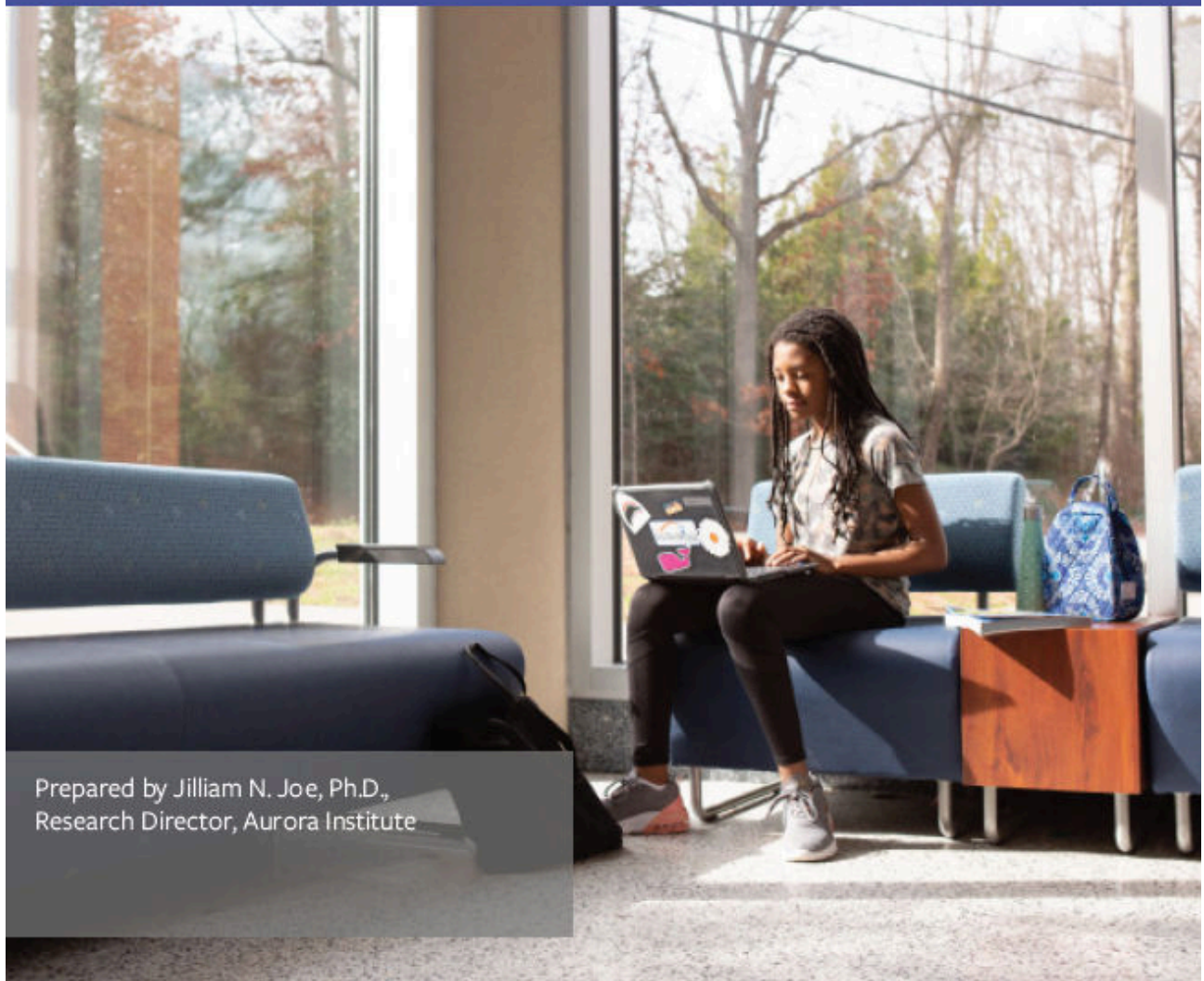




Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative: Cohort 2, Year 1 (SY 24) Report

July 2024



Prepared by Jilliam N. Joe, Ph.D.,
Research Director, Aurora Institute

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....3

Introduction.....6

Methods..... 10

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-based Learning Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors..... 12

Planning and Support Activities..... 15

Policy Factors in Implementing Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-Based Learning.....26

Conclusion and Recommendations.....32

Appendix A – School Team Survey.....36

Appendix B – School Team Interview..... 42

Appendix C – State Leader Interview.....45

Appendix D – Professional Learning Provider Interview.....49

Executive Summary

The Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (MBLC) is a demonstration project taking place in 47 schools in Washington State led by the Washington State Board of Education (SBE). The schools are receiving funding and participating in professional learning and a statewide network to support implementation of mastery-based learning (MBL) and culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE), both of which will be described in greater detail later. The initiative's overarching goal is "to inform future policy by helping decision makers better understand what quality mastery-based learning looks like, how long it takes to implement, and what resources are necessary."

The Aurora Institute is evaluating the initiative for the SBE. The evaluation is intended to contribute to the identification of effective policies, practices, and system changes that can support MBL and CRSE implementation throughout Washington's K-12 education system. The evaluation questions are:

1. What do evaluation participants report as the MBLC's benefits for schools?
2. What school conditions helped or impeded MBL implementation?
3. Was participation in the MBLC associated with changes in educator practice?
4. What was the quality of implementation of MBL at the selected schools?
5. To what extent did evaluation participants report that implementation of MBL had a positive impact on learning conditions?
6. What implementation practices or conditions contributed to the reported impacts or lack of impact?

The MBLC comprises 23 schools from an initial cohort that began in December 2021 and a second cohort of 24 schools that began in January 2024. Cohort 2 initially comprised 23 schools, representing a range of sizes, racial and ethnic demographics, geographic locations, and school types. These include traditional public schools, charter public schools, and alternative schools. Following an initial exploration and planning phase, one school team concluded the collaborative was not a suitable fit and exited the initiative. The SBE then filled the vacated spot by admitting two schools from a waitlist of six schools, increasing the cohort size to 24 and maintaining the diversity of representation.

This report presents evaluation activities and findings for the first year of Cohort 2, representing the planning stage of the MBLC initiative.

Key findings from this report include:

CRSE and MBL Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviors

The first year of the MBLC program brought encouraging signs from Cohort 2 schools. There was strong alignment between schools and MBLC objectives, owed in large part to the significant SBE investment in pre-screening interested schools. Among the second cohort of

schools was a strong belief in the potential benefits of MBL and CRSE, with schools expressing high levels of motivation to continue improving their implementation. This positive outlook suggests a fertile ground for growth within these schools.

However, while most MBLC school team-leads perceive that their colleagues are familiar with the core principles of MBL, only a small minority (25%) believe their schools are deeply implementing these practices. Also, while 70% of MBLC school team-leads agree or strongly agree that their colleagues are familiar with CRSE principles, only 50% report their schools are deeply implementing it. These findings indicate a potential gap between awareness, motivation, and practical application that requires additional resources and strategies to progress toward deeper implementation.

Professional Learning

In terms of developmental support, the SBE and Professional Learning Providers provided more than 14 hours of professional learning and 262 hours of personalized coaching to support schools' Year 2 work plan development. Coaches averaged seven interactions with each school team in addition to reviewing and providing feedback on each school's work plan. This personalized approach, combined with a refined CRS MBL implementation tool to self-assess their current CRS MBL practices (developed by the Professional Learning Providers), supported schools in identifying priorities for both CRSE and MBL.

Several schools had already begun implementing strategies to address CRSE and MBL priorities during Year 1, not waiting until Year 2 as would be expected according to the project timeline. This is a positive indicator of a maturing MBLC infrastructure and a highly bought-in group of schools that are committed to disrupting traditional practices to achieve success for every student.

Policy and Non-Policy Factors

This report also explores a range of policy and non-policy factors influencing CRSE and MBL implementation. For example, 60% of schools identified a lack of access to high-quality CRSE curriculum materials as a moderate or major challenge. Less than half of the school teams agreed or strongly agreed that educators are provided sufficient resources, time, and supports to pursue deeper cultural proficiency. This underscores the need for continued policy changes, funding, and partnerships that support the development and mobilization of resources to deepen CRSE implementation.

Schools viewed [credit waivers](#) as well as legislation such as [House Bill 1599](#) (passed in 2019) and [House Bill 1308](#) (passed in 2023) that make way for multiple pathways to graduation as key enablers of CRSE and MBL implementation. Some MBLC schools see the performance-based pathway to graduation, in particular, as a potential solution to the current limitations of CTE pathways. These limitations are especially challenging for rural schools with limited access to CTE options in their communities.

Beyond policy, several existing mindsets and structures present challenges to CRS MBL implementation. For example, 40% of schools believed that opposition to varied or responsive pacing could pose a moderate or major challenge to implementing MBL deeply. Another 35% indicated their colleagues are not currently in favor of developing practices that center student socio-cultural identities. Also, 65% of schools identified the lack of transportation for out-of-school activities such as community- and work-based learning (a key component of CRS MBL) as a hurdle. Additionally, the traditional A-F grading system can clash with the focus on mastery in MBL.

The report identifies a need for the SBE to play a more active role in navigating these policy hurdles. By providing guidance and advocating for policy and structural changes that align with CRS MBL principles, the SBE can create a more supportive environment for schools pursuing these innovative learning models.

The report also acknowledges the existence of systemic hurdles that extend beyond the purview of individual schools. For instance, there are mismatches between MBL and traditional grading systems, CTE, and limitations related to the recognition of mastery-based transcripts in college admissions requirements across Washington's higher education institutions (public and private). Addressing these systemic issues will require collaboration across different stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and higher education institutions.

Recommendations for the SBE

1. **Expand Strategic Partnerships.** Expanding strategic partnerships to include organizations that specialize in building local capacity for training and development in cultural responsiveness, and that collaborate with communities to create sustaining conditions where every learner feels seen and heard in their learning environment.
2. **Develop a Comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy.** Guide schools in building and creating the structures for strong community partnerships to leverage diverse voices, resources, and community- and work-based learning opportunities. Advocate for improved local infrastructure to ensure students' transportation access for these experiences.
3. **Support Policy Navigation.** The SBE's current role in mediating discussions at the request of schools and districts is valuable. To further support schools in navigating the complex policy landscape of CRS MBL implementation, additional guidance and tools should be developed for districts and schools. For example, as more evidence emerges about state and local policy enablers and implementation pathways, the SBE can lead in developing a policy roadmap that helps schools and districts build a shared vision for transformation. Such a roadmap could also foster reciprocal partnerships to ensure that resources are both accessible and used effectively to realize that vision. Combined with the SBE's continued willingness to help mediate policy roadblocks, additional resources to help school leaders and practitioners navigate policy challenges will provide clarity

and strategies to manage the interplay between state, district, and school CRS MBL policies.

4. **Optimize Support for Growth.** The personalized coaching model holds promise, but its scalability for a wider program requires exploration. As MBLC attracts more interest, the SBE may need to find cost-effective ways to deliver similar support while maintaining program reach.

Introduction

The Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (MBLC) is a demonstration project taking place in 47 schools in Washington State. The schools are receiving funding and participating in professional learning and a statewide network to support implementation of mastery-based learning (MBL) and culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE). The initiative’s overarching goal is “to inform future policy by helping decision makers better understand what quality mastery-based learning looks like, how long it takes to implement, and what resources are necessary.”

The Washington State Board of Education (SBE) is leading the MBLC, with executive sponsorship from SBE, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). The objectives of the initiative include:

- Establishing a statewide infrastructure to provide needed professional development, policy, and communications support to enable school districts and schools to implement MBL.
- Demonstrating that schools can successfully implement MBL with student learning and assessment that are authentic, engaging, and culturally connected and sustaining.
- Documenting the key steps that states, districts, and schools must take to transition to MBL successfully.
- Positively impacting student engagement and progress toward learning goals.

The state defined mastery-based learning in 2019 E2SHB 1599 as follows:

- Students advance upon demonstrated mastery of content;
- Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students;
- Assessments are meaningful and a positive learning experience for students;
- Students receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.¹

The MBLC initiative also emphasizes CRSE, due to the recommendations of Washington’s Mastery-Based Learning Work Group, which was enlisted by the state legislature to provide recommendations for removing barriers and increasing capacity for MBL in the state. In the Work Group’s 2020 report, they explain the need for CRSE in relation to “students who have not been well served by our education system because of the historical and present-day institutional racism perpetuated by society and reflected in our schools” (p. 6) and that MBL provides “an

¹ Adapted from Sturgis, C., Patrick, S., & Pittenger, L. (2011). It’s not a matter of time: Highlights from the 2011 Competency-Based Learning Summit. iNACOL. https://www.aurora-institute.org/wpcontent/uploads/iNACOL_Its_Not_A_Matter_of_Time_full_report.pdf

outstanding opportunity to develop culturally relevant, or sustaining, instructional practices that embed recognition of students' cultures in the learning process" (p. 8).²

The initiative defines CRSE in reference to the New York State Department of Education's framework, which lays out a vision of an education system in which all students (1) experience academic success, (2) develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (3) develop a critical lens through which they challenge inequitable systems of access, power, and privilege.³ Initially, the initiative named MBL and CRSE separately, and the evaluation was designed around that framing. Subsequently, the initiative has also used the acronym "CRS MBL," or culturally responsive-sustaining mastery-based learning, to emphasize their interconnection.

The Aurora Institute is evaluating the initiative for SBE. The evaluation is intended to contribute to the identification of effective policies, practices, and system changes that can support MBL and CRSE implementation throughout Washington's K-12 education system. The evaluation questions are:

1. What do evaluation participants report as the MBLC's benefits for schools?
2. What school conditions helped or impeded MBL implementation?
3. Was participation in the MBLC associated with changes in educator practice?
4. What was the quality of implementation of MBL at the selected schools?
5. To what extent did evaluation participants report that implementation of MBL had a positive impact on learning conditions?
6. What implementation practices or conditions contributed to the reported impacts or lack of impact?

The MBLC comprises 23 schools from an initial cohort that began in December 2021 and a second cohort of 24 schools that began in January 2024. Cohort 2 initially comprised 23 schools, representing a range of sizes, racial and ethnic demographics, geographic locations, and school types. These include charter public schools, traditional public schools, and alternative schools. Following an initial exploration and planning phase, one school team concluded the collaborative was not a suitable fit and exited the initiative. The SBE then filled the vacated spot by admitting two schools from a waitlist of six schools, increasing the cohort size to 24 and maintaining the diversity of representation.

This report presents evaluation activities and findings for the first year of Cohort 2, representing the planning stage of the MBLC initiative. See [Cohort 1 Year 3](#) report for a discussion of the expanded evaluation to include a fourth year for Cohort 1 and the four years of Cohort 2. Table 1 shows the relationship among the MBLC school years, cohorts, and dates.

² Muller, A. (2020). Mastery-based learning in Washington state: 2020 report. Olympia, WA: Mastery-Based Learning Work Group.
<https://www.sbe.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/2020%20MBL%20Work%20Group%20Report.pdf>

³ New York State Education Department. (2018). Culturally responsive-sustaining education framework.
<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/crs/culturally-responsive-sustaining-educationframework.pdf>

Table 1: Timeframe of MBLC Cohorts One and Two

School Year	Cohort 1 Year	Cohort 2 Year	Dates
SY22	Year 1		Dec 2021 – Jun 2022
SY23	Year 2		Jul 2022 – Jun 2023
SY24	Year 3	Year 1	Jul 2023 – Jun 2024
SY25	Year 4	Year 2	Jul 2024 – Jun 2025
SY26		Year 3	Jul 2025 – Jun 2026
SY27		Year 4	Jul 2026 – Jun 2027

The rest of this report refers to Cohort 2 schools and activities unless Cohort 1 is specified.

For most schools in the early stages of CRS MBL implementation, Year 1 of the MBLC focused on planning and creating the conditions for CRS MBL success, as shown in Figure 1 below. Other schools that are more advanced in their practices may focus their planning efforts on the second and third steps. The SBE provided initial supports to individual schools, continued developing the statewide network, and implemented a process for each school to develop customized plans to move deeper into the work and identify indicators of progress over time.

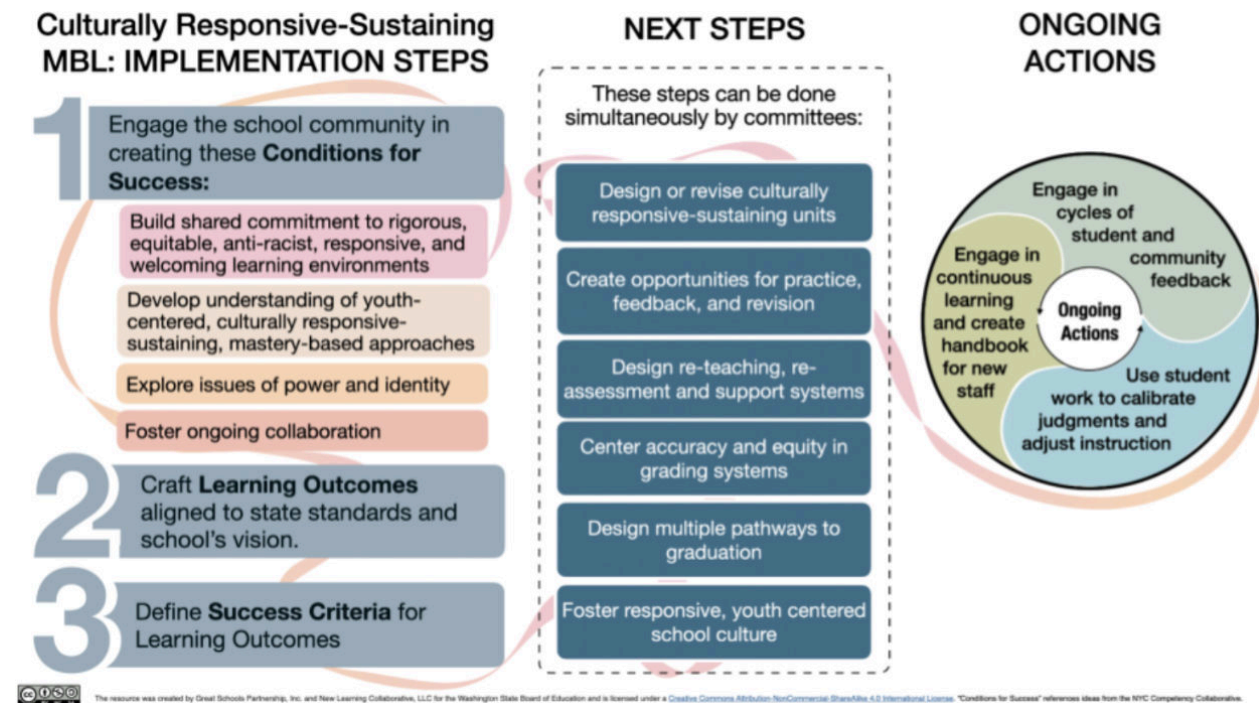


Figure 1. The figure illustrates the stages of CRS MBL implementation used as a central MBLC framework.

At the outset of the initiative, the MBLC schools represented a wide range of MBL implementation, from beginners to well-established MBL schools. Each school’s next steps on planning, professional learning, and implementation were therefore tailored to their local needs and goals in relation to MBL and CRSE. Each school has an MBLC school team consisting of 3-6 teachers and one or more school leaders who lead the school’s MBLC planning and implementation. Some schools also request input and support from youth advisors.

Washington’s biennial budget for SBE for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 included \$5 million to implement mastery-based learning in school district demonstration sites for the purpose of addressing learning recovery and other educational issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional funding was appropriated by OSPI (through ESSER funds) and the state legislature for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. Funding for fiscal years 2026 and 2027 will depend on the state’s next two-year budget. These funds pay for school grants, professional learning, project evaluation, and administration.

Methods

Year 1 data collection activities and the evaluation topics they addressed are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Evaluation Topics and Data Collection Activities

Evaluation Topic	Data Collection Activities – Year 1				
	School Team Survey	School Team Interview	Observe Cohort PL Activities	PL Partner Interview	State Leader Interview
Planning Activities	✓	✓		✓	✓
Progress Facilitators, Challenges, and Needs	✓	✓		✓	✓
Professional Learning Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enabling School, District, and State Policies	✓	✓		✓	✓
State Structures and Support Activities		✓		✓	✓

School Team Survey. The school team survey was drafted by Aurora and modified with input from SBE. It was designed to capture MBLC school team perspectives on the policies, practices, supports, and beliefs that may influence CRS MBL implementation. Each MBLC school was asked to submit one survey response, completed by a single school team member

or by multiple members responding together. The survey (Appendix A) was administered using SurveyMonkey. It was intended to be open for two weeks, beginning in early-March, but was extended by a week to achieve a 100% participation rate with one email reminder from the Aurora Institute. Responses representing 24 schools are included (one combined response for two schools and a partial set of responses from another). The two schools that joined the collaborative after the survey administration are not represented in the data.

More than half (52%) of the school team surveys were completed by multiple team members responding together, with all of those responses including a school administrator as a contributor. Teachers comprised 14% of team survey contributors, while guidance staff and special education support staff participated in a smaller number of collaborative responses.

School Team Interviews. Aurora and SBE developed a schedule for interviewing all 24 MBLC schools across the three-year evaluation, including virtual school-team interviews (Appendix B) in 2024 and in-person school visits in 2025 and 2026, with seven or eight school visits taking place each year. The schedule was designed to maximize variation in each year's interviewees along dimensions including grade levels served, geography, student race or ethnicity, and family income. The 2024 interview included eight schools of varying sizes, geographic region in Washington, setting, student demographic characteristics, and stages of CRS and MBL.

Observation of Cohort Professional Learning Activities. The series of MBLC professional learning activities were reviewed to understand the aims of the initiative's professional learning activities, such as building community, building expertise about MBL and CRSE, creating inspiration, sharing successes and challenges, and identifying resources. Activities during the events were documented through observation and document review to facilitate understanding of study questions related to the MBLC's benefits for schools and whether and why participating in the MBLC was associated with changes in educator practice. Coaching reports were also examined to gain a deeper understanding of the full scope of strategic support provided to MBLC schools.

Professional Learning Partner and State Leader Interviews. The interview protocols (Appendix C and D) were drafted by Aurora and modified with input from SBE and the PL partners. The interviews were conducted via Zoom. The PL partner interview was conducted with Joy Nolan, Director of the New Learning Collaborative, and Kate Gardoqui, Senior Associate at Great Schools Partnership. It was one hour long and took place on April 5, 2024. The state leader interview was conducted with Seema Bahl, Senior Policy Analyst at SBE; Alissa Muller, Director of the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative at SBE; and Randy Spaulding, Executive Director at SBE. The first part of the interview was an hour long and took place on April 5; the second part was 45 minutes and took place on April 9, 2024. Qualitative analysis of the school team, state leader, and professional learning partner interviews focused on a set of codes or themes drawn from the study's evaluation questions and was coded with Dedoose.

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-based Learning Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors

To help understand MBLC schools' current needs and eventual outcomes, the school team survey asked about each school's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to CRS MBL. For questions that asked about the school's staff collectively, respondents were asked to answer to the best of their knowledge or judgment.

Overall, the results suggest a positive outlook on CRS MBL implementation, with strong belief in its potential benefits and a high level of motivation to continue improving CRS MBL practices across stakeholders. The responses in Table 3 suggest strong support from educators, school leaders, superintendents, and boards of directors for implementing MBL deeply. Educators and school leaders also believe that doing so can improve schools' ability to prepare students for successful futures, achieve equitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized groups, and improve school culture and climate.

There are also opportunities to improve educator understanding of CRS MBL principles and deepen its implementation. As might be expected at the outset of the MBLC, a small minority (25%) believe that their school is already implementing MBL deeply. Also, only 65% agree or strongly agree that their school staff are familiar with MBL principles. Once school staff become more familiar with these principles, it would be valuable to ask again about the perceived depth of their school's MBL implementation and its benefits.

A few respondents reported that their colleagues do not believe in MBL's potential to improve student outcomes (10%) and school culture (15%), and that they are not motivated to implement MBL at progressively deeper levels over the next three to five years (10%). Table 4 shows stronger evidence of possible resistance to one aspect of MBL, where 40% believed that opposition to varied or responsive pacing could pose a moderate or major challenge to implementing MBL deeply. We have limited insight into why this is the case for these practitioners, but similar challenges were alluded to during our interviews (p. 31) and have emerged in other implementations. Varied and responsive pacing in some cases falters when students have not been adequately supported in gradually taking responsibility for managing their time and instructional deliverables. In other cases, varied pacing is hindered when technology is either limited or not meaningfully integrated into instructional routines, particularly technology that helps educators support students who are working at different paces and with varying needs. In the case of Cohort 2 practitioners, their perceptions of resistance may simply reflect a need to develop a clearer mental model of what varied pacing looks like in practice. This is a theme we will continue to explore in our evaluation of Cohort 2 schools' implementation.

Table 3: Mastery-Based Learning Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors (N=20)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly Disagree				Disagree				Agree				Strongly Agree											
1. Our district Superintendent and Board of Directors support our school's intention to implement MBL deeply.					0%								35%								60%			
2. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's ability to prepare students for successful futures.					0%								50%								35%			
3. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's ability to achieve equitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized groups.					0%								55%								35%			
4. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's culture and climate.					0%								45%								40%			
5. Most educators and school leaders at our school are motivated to implement MBL at progressively deeper levels over the next three to five years.					5%								55%								35%			
6. Most educators and school leaders at our school are familiar with the main principles of mastery-based learning.					0%								45%								20%			
7. Our school is already implementing MBL deeply.					10%								20%								5%			

Table 4: Attitudes About Mastery-Based Learning (N=20)

To what extent do the following issues pose a challenge for your school to implement MBL deeply?	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge
Some teachers and/or school leaders oppose developing practices that enable students to make progress in their learning at different, individualized paces	30%	30%	25%	15%

The responses in Table 5 suggest that most educators, school leaders, superintendents, and boards of directors support implementing culturally responsive-sustaining education deeply and believe that doing so can improve student outcomes, equity, and school culture and climate. Most (70%) agree or strongly agree that their school staff are familiar with the main principles of CRSE. However, only half of the schools say they are already deeply implementing CRSE. Table 6 presents insights into educator perspectives regarding further CRSE development. Notably, 35% of respondents indicated their colleagues are not currently in favor of developing practices that center student socio-cultural identities. Following further MBLC participation with targeted professional learning, coaching, and cross-school collaborations, revisiting perceptions of CRSE implementation could inform our understanding of the levers that are necessary to influence systemic cultural shifts that advance equity.

Table 5: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors (N=20)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Our district Superintendent and Board of Directors support our school's intention to implement CRSE deeply.	0%	5%	26%	68%
2. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's ability to prepare students for successful futures.	0%	5%	30%	65%
3. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's ability to achieve equitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized groups.	0%	5%	30%	65%
4. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's culture and climate.	0%	5%	50%	45%
5. Most educators and school leaders at our school are motivated to implement CRSE at progressively deeper levels over the next three to five years.	0%	10%	55%	35%
6. Most educators and school leaders at our school are familiar with the main principles of CRSE.	0%	30%	45%	25%

Table 6: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE; N=20)

To what extent do the following issues pose a challenge for your school to implement culturally responsive-sustaining education?	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge
Some teachers and/or school leaders oppose developing practices that center students' diverse identities, build cultural competence, or increase critical consciousness.	45%	20%	20%	15%

Possible areas to deepen CRSE are informed by the findings in Table 7. The highest levels of agreement were for statements that students feel a strong sense of belonging and a welcoming environment (100%), strong relationships between teachers and students from diverse groups support learning (100%), an equity-focused mission and vision drive school policies and practices (100%), and there are opportunities for students to take on leadership roles in the classroom and school that include proactive outreach and support to students from historically marginalized groups (90%).

The lowest levels of agreement were for items about providing curriculum and materials that support culturally responsive pedagogy and opportunities for families and community members to provide substantial input and serve in significant roles toward fulfilling the school's mission and vision. More than half of the school teams agreed or strongly agreed that their schools were

doing well in these areas. However, less than half of the school teams (48%) agreed or strongly agreed that educators are provided sufficient resources, time, and supports to pursue deeper cultural proficiency.

Table 7: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education and School Culture (N=20)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. An equity-focused mission and vision drive school policies and practices.	0%	0%	48%	52%
2. Curriculum and materials provided to educators support culturally responsive pedagogy.	0%	45%	50%	5%
3. Educators are provided sufficient resources, time, and supports to pursue deeper cultural proficiency.	0%	52%	38%	10%
4. Students feel a strong sense of belonging, supported by a welcoming environment.	0%	0%	48%	52%
5. Strong relationships between teachers and students, including students from historically marginalized groups, support learning.	0%	0%	33%	67%
6. The school fosters high expectations for all students, including students from historically marginalized groups.	0%	19%	43%	38%
7. There are opportunities for students to take on leadership roles in the classroom and school that include proactive outreach and support to students from historically marginalized groups.	0%	10%	52%	38%
8. The school has opportunities for families and community members to provide substantial input and serve in significant roles toward fulfilling the school's mission and vision.	0%	38%	48%	14%
9. The school uses data to implement rigorous plans to address inequitable access to opportunities.	0%	15%	70%	15%
10. The school uses data to implement rigorous plans to address inequitable outcomes.	0%	25%	60%	15%

Note. The N for items 2, 9, 10 equals 20.

Planning and Support Activities

This section focuses on Year 1 goals and activities, which started with the pre-application interview between the SBE and schools, initial school activities, initial professional learning activities, and development of Year 2 plans.

Pre-application Interview. Setting schools up for success started at the very beginning: selecting the right participants. To identify schools with the strongest potential for success in the

initiative, the SBE implemented a new pre-application screening process for this second cohort. This process involved SBE interviewing interested schools as the first step before schools prepared an application. This interview helped identify schools whose goals were more closely aligned with the MBLC's objectives, focusing on candidates who demonstrated characteristics such as a strong mindset for strengthening equity through CRS MBL. Previously, in Cohort 1, the SBE relied on a webinar and general Q&A session before applications were submitted. Interviews were then conducted with shortlisted candidates. Two state leaders and a professional learning provider separately observed that the pre-screening interviews improved the overall school-to-initiative fit of the applicant pool by identifying school teams possessing the mindsets and readiness to commit to the professional learning, coaching, and CRSE requirements.

The pre-application screening process implemented in Cohort 2 exemplifies the SBE's ongoing efforts to refine its infrastructure (i.e., processes and resource efficiency) for the MBLC initiative. One professional learning provider lauded the application process as "more rigorous and clear." However, as the number of schools applying in future cohorts might increase, it is important to consider the scalability of this pre-application screening approach. The SBE will need to weigh the benefits of improved application quality against the resource investment required for these interviews.

Initial School Activities. Many schools recognized the importance of forming a strong team as the foundation for their MBLC work. These teams were intentionally designed to be multidisciplinary, bringing together staff from various departments and roles (teachers, counselors, administrators) to ensure diverse perspectives. One school went a step further by including an external family resource organization to foster even broader collaboration with families in doing this work. Recognizing the ongoing nature of this initiative, several school leaders expressed their intent to expand their teams in the coming years. Also, as part of their early planning effort, several schools reviewed and aligned their curriculum with MBLC goals. Others began developing shared learning outcomes and assessments—demonstrating a more advanced focus on CRS MBL implementation.

MBLC Network Professional Learning Activities. The state contracted with Great Schools Partnership (GSP) and New Learning Collaborative (NLC), two professional learning providers with deep expertise in promoting MBL and CRSE. They were selected in 2022 through a request for proposals and a review process led by the SBE and a panel of reviewers. The state's decision to continue its work with GSP and NLC was informed by strong positive feedback from the first cohort of schools and the providers' reputation of coaching schools through their transformation journey with positive outcomes.

From January to May 2024, the MBLC delivered more than 14 hours of targeted professional learning designed to build school leaders' and educators' mindsets, knowledge, and skills for effective implementation of CRSE and MBL. The collaborative offered an array of learning opportunities:

- **Monthly Webinars (4):** These hour-and-a-half sessions provided a platform for knowledge sharing, expert insights, and ongoing professional learning. Topics covered focused on the following:
 - *Inclusive instruction for every student:* Experts unpacked key concepts related to CRSE, MBL, and inclusive instruction, ensuring a strong understanding of these essential frameworks.
 - *Using data to select an equity focus:* Participants explored strategies for leveraging data to identify student needs, promote equity, and make informed instructional choices within the CRS MBL framework.
 - *Crafting & utilizing school-wide outcomes:* The sessions addressed aligning school culture with CRS and MBL principles. This included fostering a culture that prioritizes and integrates student and family perspectives into a shared vision for CRS MBL implementation outcomes
 - *The power of co-teaching:* Participants gained insights into implementing co-teaching models within a CRS MBL system, ensuring effective support for all learners.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs; 5):** Held monthly, these facilitated sessions (also lasting 1.5 hours) fostered collaboration and peer-to-peer learning among educators.
 1. *Welcome & Intro to MBLC.* The PLC sessions provided a space for ongoing professional learning and knowledge sharing among educators. The opening session of the five-part PLC series served as a welcome event and set the stage for the work school teams were to engage in during the MBLC. The New Learning Collaborative professional learning provider co-facilitated this session with three practitioners: a Computer Science/Information Technology teacher representing an MBLC Cohort 1 school, and one instructional leader and one school leader representing the NYC Competency Collaborative. The session transitioned into a community-building exercise. In breakout groups, schools delved into deeper introductions, fostering connections among participants. Next, the facilitators led the whole group through an overview of the MBLC program, including its core principles of CRSE and MBL. To conclude the PLC session, a second breakout session provided an opportunity for school teams to share their specific goals for participating in this collaborative initiative. This exchange allowed for mutual learning and fostered a sense of shared purpose within the MBLC community.
 2. *Principles & Practices of Learner-centered CRS MBL.* Building on the first webinar's focus on inclusive instruction, the second PLC session delved deeper into CRSE and MBL practices. As the session occurred in February, the facilitators thoughtfully transitioned to acknowledge Black History Month. This acknowledgment likely connected to the broader theme of equity, which was then explicitly addressed. The session then explored how the MBLC initiative, through its focus on CRSE and research-based practices, aims to advance educational equity for all students. To kick off the active learning portion of the PLC,

participants engaged in a community-building exercise within breakout groups. Schools reflected on a critical question: "To foster cultural competence in learners, what expertise and awareness do we need ourselves?" This reflection prompted educators to consider their own role in creating culturally responsive learning environments. Following the breakout session, the facilitators led the whole group through a comprehensive overview of CRSE and MBL principles and practices. This provided a shared foundation for understanding these key frameworks. To conclude the PLC session, a second breakout session offered a menu of focused topics related to CRSE and MBL. Topics like "learners at the center" and "transparency" allowed participants to choose an area of particular interest. Within these breakout groups, educators had the opportunity to share their thoughts and engage in deeper discussions.

3. *MBLC Implementation Steps.* The third session in the PLC series focused on the practical roadmap for implementing MBLC. Reflecting the spirit of Women's History Month, the session's visuals celebrated the rich contributions of women throughout history. The session incorporated breakout sessions where participants gained valuable insights from experienced practitioners. These practitioners shared their firsthand experiences progressing through each MBLC implementation step. This facilitated exchange allowed participants to ask questions and learn from the successes and challenges encountered by their peers. Following the breakout sessions, participants had the opportunity to share their school's plans for the current implementation step, or pose any lingering questions they had. This exchange fostered collaboration and ensured clarity around the MBLC implementation process. The session transitioned to an overview of a tool to guide schools in self-assessing their current CRS MBL practices (developed by the Professional Learning Providers), an important step required before schools begin work on their action plans. To conclude the PLC session, participants were presented with a choice for the final breakout session:
 - **Facilitated Conversation:** Engage in a guided discussion with practitioners, focusing on specific self-assessment indicators of interest.
 - **Independent Review:** Conduct a self-directed review of the self-assessment indicators at their own pace.

Upon returning to the main room, participants were invited to set personal intentions for the implementation steps or self-assessment indicators they planned to tackle over the following month. This goal-setting exercise ensured a focused and action-oriented approach moving forward.

4. *Crafting your MBLC Work Plan & Budget.* Following the opening introductions, land acknowledgments, and community norm review, the fourth PLC session delved into the practical details of crafting MBLC work plans and budgets, which captured the vision, goals, and timeline for an individual school's implementation. The facilitators kicked off the session by guiding participants through an exercise to identify their school's "implementation sweet spot." This self-reflection activity

helped schools pinpoint areas where they could make impactful progress within the MBLC framework. With the work plan deadline approaching, facilitators provided a timely reminder and encouraged teams to allocate sufficient time for completion. To ensure clarity, the session then transitioned into a step-by-step walkthrough of the work plan template. The final breakout session offered participants a choice to delve deeper into one of three key outcome areas:

- **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining MBL:** This session explored strategies for integrating CRSE principles effectively within the MBL framework.
- **Schoolwide Professional Learning:** This session focused on creating a robust and collaborative professional development plan for all educators.
- **Meaningful/Ongoing Youth Input:** This session addressed strategies for establishing and maintaining meaningful youth engagement in the MBLC implementation process.

By providing an opportunity for focused discussion within these areas, the session empowered participants to tailor their learning to specific needs and goals.

5. *School-to-School Share Out.* The culminating session of the PLC series provided a platform for participants to showcase their schools' MBLC work plans for the upcoming year. The facilitators began the session by grounding the group in the core principles and practices that underpin MBLC implementation (MBLC implementation steps and CRS MBL principles). This ensured everyone was on the same page when sharing plans. Next, participants received valuable guidance on crafting effective presentations to share their team's MBLC work plans. This included access to helpful tips, templates, and even real-world examples. The facilitators provided two presentations from their own experiences with CRS and MBL, offering practical models for crafting clear and compelling presentations. Following the instructional portion, participants were given dedicated time (20 minutes) to prepare their presentations, allowing them to refine their message and ensure a smooth delivery. Teams spent approximately 40 minutes in small groups, sharing their planned MBLC work for Year 2. This opportunity for peer-to-peer learning fostered collaboration and provided valuable insights as schools embarked on the next phase of CRS and MBL implementation.

The PLC and webinar session guides, presentation slides, and recordings (webinars, only) are available on the [MBLC community website](#). This ensures continued access to these resources beyond the initial live sessions, empowering educators to revisit key concepts and deepen their understanding at their own pace.

- **Youth Advisor Sessions (Optional):** Designed specifically for team members and youth advisors, these sessions provided them with dedicated time to developing a deeper understanding of CRSE and MBL.
- **Full-Day Site Visits (Optional):** MBLC schools embarked on a series of in-depth local and national site visits to observe mastery-based learning communities in action. These

visits provided valuable opportunities to learn about successful implementation of CRSE and MBL practices. The journey began with visits to four NYC middle and high schools in the [Competency Collaborative](#). MBLC school teams met with staff, leaders, and students, gaining firsthand insights into their approaches to CRSE and MBL. Additionally, two focused visits were conducted with WA MBLC schools:

- **Choice Academy:** This visit explored the concept of collective staff efficacy, a crucial element for successful school improvement.
- **Innovation Lab High School:** The focus here shifted to learner-centered school design, showcasing innovative approaches to putting students at the heart of the learning experience.

By participating in these site visits, MBLC schools gained knowledge and inspiration to inform their own implementation journeys. One school leader highlighted the immediate influence these visits had on their strategic planning: "The New York site visits were truly eye-opening for me. Seeing mastery-based learning in action at these schools spurred thinking about big buckets of growth and change [opportunities for our own school]." The leader then elaborated on their school's existing mastery-based program and their focus on developing learning progressions (rubrics) to define clear expectations for students. However, they identified a need for improvement in using these rubrics effectively for instruction. "So now we have rubrics that help us calibrate our understanding and teaching [and] we're sharing with students, what does it mean to be competent at blank. [However], we haven't gotten effective at teaching with it," they explained. The leader concluded by emphasizing the importance of learning from the observed best practices. Seeing teachers in New York effectively utilize these progressions throughout the school solidified the need for his school to adopt similar strategies in their own instruction and assessment practices.

- **In-person Gathering:** MBLC fostered a collaborative learning environment through in-person gatherings for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools. The MBLC Spring Gathering in May served as a vibrant kick-off to year-round collaboration. This event included a Youth Advisor Panel where students offered valuable insights and perspectives on their school experience, enriching the implementation process for all schools. It also featured informal school share-outs where schools exchanged ideas and emerging best practices for CBE implementation.

The professional learning provider, drawing on learnings from Cohort 1, shared in their interview several best practices they implemented across all professional learning activities to support Cohort 2 schools. These enhanced practices centered around:

- **Learner-Centered Design** - Interactive sessions with clear goals. Redesigned sessions to address the needs that were identified during their coaching interactions with the previous cohort of schools.
- **Student-Centered Focus** - What will benefit students' learning and wellbeing?

- **Continuous Improvement:** Using feedback from Cohort 1 to continuously refine content and facilitation methods.
- **Equity and Modeling** - Explicitly centering equity in all practices and modeling strong professional learning approaches.
- **Implementation Guidance** - Providing clear steps for implementing MBL and CRSE practices, along with indicators for measuring progress at each stage.
- **Learning from Practitioners** - Actively incorporating learnings from experienced CRSE/MBL practitioners and schools.
- **Balancing Theory and Practice** - Ensuring a strong balance between theoretical grounding and practical application in all training sessions.
- **Anticipating Challenges** - Proactively addressing potential difficulties to what PL Providers refer to as "the CRSE Pillar One syndrome," proficiency scale misuse, and overly technical approaches that hinder a liberatory learning environment. They are referring to the three pillars of CRSE, that "(1) Students must experience academic success; (2) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (3) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order."
- **Common Questions and Pitfalls** - Preparing to address frequently asked questions, common missteps, and potential pitfalls encountered by schools during implementation.
- **Motivation and Focus** - Understanding how to leverage questions, metaphors, and challenges to keep participants engaged and motivated.
- **School Networking** - Facilitating connections between schools with similar contexts (e.g., MS 217 and MLC, NYC iSchool and ILHS).

Many schools proactively expanded their professional learning early in the planning phase, which included CRSE-focused training. An example is Methow Valley Independent Learning Center, whose team, at the time of our interview in April 2024, had already applied its grant funds to training staff and youth advisors on student-led restorative practices. They had also begun work with their feeder school (a comprehensive traditional high school) to develop a unified approach to disciplinary practices through a restorative justice approach. This instance exemplifies the swift progress some Cohort 2 schools are making towards deeper implementation of both CRS and MBL.

Developing Year 2 Work Plan. Similar to the first cohort, Cohort 2 schools were required to submit plans for their MBLC work for Years 2 and 3 (July 2024 through June 2026). SBE and the PL providers created two templates for schools to use to develop their plans. The main template was a shortened, more concise 13-page version of the 21-page template used in the first cohort. The second template was for the budget and budget narrative of how schools will spend their funding of "up to \$100,000 for Year 2" and an undetermined amount in subsequent years, pending State Legislature approval of additional funding.

The main template asked schools to reflect on their school-wide stance toward educational equity, culturally responsive-sustaining education, and mastery-based learning. They were asked to describe their school's capacity and infrastructure "to create a schoolwide, shared

understanding of, value in, and commitment to educational equity” and MBL, as well as efforts the school had already begun to enable student voices from historically marginalized groups to be heard. Schools identified their current strengths in MBL practices and the areas where they aimed to grow during their MBLC participation. Additionally, the template provided space for schools to outline their identified needs related to CRSE and MBL implementation.

The next section of the Year 2 plan asked schools to discuss intended goals or outcomes related to each of the four MBLC goals for schools: MBL and CRSE, coronavirus recovery, schoolwide professional learning, and meaningful ongoing youth input that informs the MBLC team’s work on CRSE and social-emotional learning. For each goal, schools were asked to take into account their MBL and CRSE self-assessments from earlier in the work plan, build on existing strengths and challenges, have a specific focus on improving learner-centered culture and practice, create a substantial yet achievable goal, develop success criteria, and generate shareable evidence. For the schoolwide PL goal, they were asked to share a plan that gets the full school community involved, incorporates PL opportunities provided by the state, and is supplemented by local activities.

Part 3 of the plan asked schools to explain the action steps that their school will take to leverage their strengths, and outline concrete strategies for addressing needs and achieving the outcomes they listed above. To further emphasize the importance of equity, the plan explicitly required schools to demonstrate how their proposed action steps would directly support educational equity within their school environment.

Part 4 of the plan asked schools to outline their school’s approach to achieving the desired outcomes with the assistance of the state-provided PL supports and to describe the school’s approach to sustaining MBL after grant funding ends. Part 5 asked schools to “demonstrate commitment to MBLC work within your school and in the MBLC member community” by checking boxes next to seven statements describing active involvement in local and statewide MBLC activities. The titles of the seven statements were “a collaborative learning approach,” “effective communication,” “regular in-school meetings,” “a practice of input/feedback and reflection,” “active and consistent participation in the MBLC community,” “engaging our whole school community in the work,” and “authentic partnerships with community-based organizations.”

A more refined self-assessment process emerged as a key innovation in the planning support provided to schools. The professional learning provider designed the self-assessment instrument collaboratively with the SBE and other subject-matter experts. It guided MBLC schools in gathering baseline data and assessing the depth and breadth of their current implementation of CRS MBL practices against early-stage (fewer than two years) implementation indicators. An early version of the self-assessment survey was included in the work plan for the previous cohort. However, feedback suggested that the self-assessment was often completed by a single individual on the school team responsible for completing the work plan, not inclusive of multiple perspectives. To address this limitation, the SBE encouraged Cohort 2 schools to engage a broader range of school community members in the survey

process. Additionally, the professional learning provider developed professional learning to support schools in improving their use of self-assessment data to inform Year 2 planning.

The professional learning provider analyzed each school's self-assessment data and presented schools with customized findings in two separate slide decks. The first deck focused on areas for improvement. This included aspects where the school's staff reported low implementation ("low weighted average items") and missing ratings, which potentially indicated a lack of awareness. The second deck highlighted areas where the school's staff reported full or partial implementation. This provided a sense of existing strengths and assets on which to build or deepen CRS MBL practices. One school leader described a key realization: "[This data analysis] around culturally responsive work was an 'Aha moment' for me. We all have the same language, but we may not have the same vision for what's possible. We have so much room to grow. [It was] good insight for me as a leader." The self-assessment results served as the basis for initial coaching conversations between school planning teams and their MBLC coaches, with the goal being to identify key priorities for Year 2 work.

MBLC Cohort 2 schools averaged seven coaching interactions during work plan development, totaling 153 coaching interactions and 262 hours of documented coaching support between February and June 2024. This collaboration varied in frequency across schools, with some schools connecting less frequently (fewer than five interactions) and others collaborating as often as thirteen times. The interactions themselves encompassed a range of formats:

- Sharing resources and guidance via email.
- Brief meetings (30 minutes) with school leaders to discuss team goals.
- Full-day in-person meetings with the school team and staff to review work plans.
- In-person sessions with youth advisors focused on brainstorming desired outcomes.

Table 8 highlights the most frequent types of coaching interactions during the first year. Meetings with school leaders were the most common activity (43%), followed by sending resources and coaching via email (28%). These findings demonstrate the coaches' commitment to providing accessible and ongoing support to school teams.

During school visits, coaches typically conducted classroom observations, interacted with students, held one-on-one interviews, and met with staff. Although in-person coaching was not the most frequent form of support, it appeared to be impactful. One MBLC school team leader emphasized its particular value for their team, noting that their geographic isolation made in-person coaching especially meaningful. The leader emphasized the value of having "outside folks come in": "We're a very, very rural, very isolated place. We don't get out much." They went on to share that the perspective offered by the external coaches was instrumental in supporting the team's planning process. "They come here with totally fresh eyes...and then give us feedback about what they observed...and how they might be able to help us reach some of our goals."

School visits proved to be mutually beneficial. One of the coaches interviewed described the transformative experience: "[Even after prior visits], I learned something new each time." These

visits helped the school see connections within their own work, for example, how a seemingly simple act of offering student choice could become a powerful learning opportunity for a whole class." The professional learning provider was particularly impressed by a situation where "a whole giant class of kids worked independently, very comfortably, determining how they'd demonstrate their knowledge. I would never have seen this without the visit." This quote underscores the value of these in-person interactions for both schools and coaches, fostering a two-way learning experience and strengthening the collaboration.

Table 8: MBLC Coaching Activities (N=153¹)

Coaching Activity	N	%
Meeting with MBLC team and/or full staff, departments	23	15%
Meeting with school leader/leaders	66	43%
Meeting with school leader/leaders and MBLC team	12	8%
Meeting with school leader/leaders, team, staff, and school visit	3	2%
Meeting with school leader/leaders and youth advisors	3	2%
Sending resources and coaching through email	43	28%
Workshop with district staff	2	1%
Final review of work plan and FY25 budget	1	1%

¹ N=153 represents the total number of coaching interactions documented in coaches' meeting reports.

Most schools indicated an internal meeting cadence of twice per month between March and June 2024. However, responses varied, ranging from one to two meetings in total during that period to a more frequent schedule of twice monthly. Similarly, the estimated duration of these meetings ranged from focused 20-minute sessions to more in-depth discussions lasting two hours, with the most common response being one hour.

Following the strong collaboration within school teams and between coaches and teams, a professional learning provider supporting six Cohort 2 schools observed a positive trend in work plans: these schools identified well-balanced sets of priorities, with equal focus on mastery-based learning and culturally responsive-sustaining practices. Importantly, the professional learning provider observed how the self-assessment fostered a shared language for discussing their CRS MBL work, evident in their draft work plans.

Furthermore, the provider highlighted the benefit of the self-assessment process and consistent coaching cadence. The combined approach ensured schools maintained a consistent focus on work plan development, avoiding the typical last-minute scramble to complete them before the fiscal year's end. The provider hypothesized that this data-driven and measured approach will lead to more focused and impactful work for the coming year.

The scalability of this coaching model requires further exploration. As the MBLC program grows and the demand for hands-on guidance increases, it will be important to determine the most effective ways to deliver this type of intensive support while maintaining its reach and impact.

Additional Support Needs. When school teams were asked what else they need to make their transition to MBL most successful, their responses included:

- More exposure to successful MBL implementation across their staff. “Loved the school visits to NYC and wished I could take my whole staff to see it in action!”
- Support for integrating anti-racism and Ethnic Studies into CRS MBL. “Today's education needs to move beyond just culturally responsive-sustaining education, for healing we need to look at Ethnic Studies and recognize antiracism as a practice that is much more than being culturally responsive.”
- Professional development to shift mindsets for MBL
- User-friendly technology tools for MBL. “Getting a strong software program that makes it easier for teachers to implement. Right now I think it's overwhelming for them.”
- Sharing best practices within specific contexts such as CTE and Elementary schools. “We need access to more ideas in Elementary Schools. It is difficult to promote this idea with staff when we don't have examples.”
- Guidance to address inconsistencies in plans and outcomes

The school team survey identified a need for CRSE curriculum and resources, and time for educators to pursue CRSE-focused professional learning, among other findings. To gain further insights, we asked schools to elaborate on the additional support they require to make the transition to CRSE. Their responses included:

- Support in building the school team's foundational understanding of CRSE. Also, schools need support in creating understanding and buy-in for CRSE within the broader community, especially among potentially resistant groups.
- Support in finding the balance between personalization—meeting individual needs—and ensuring clear communication of standard goals and practices.
- Guidance on developing assessments that align with CRSE and MBL principles, while still promoting inquiry and going beyond standardized tests.
- Professional learning that goes beyond personal cultural awareness to examine systemic issues and create structures that support CRSE implementation.
- Access to CRSE-aligned curriculum resources that are adaptable and user-friendly, particularly for virtual and hybrid schools.
- Data collection and analytics that go beyond traditional metrics and are appropriate for a CRS MBL environment. Technology should also streamline assessment processes for teachers.

Policy Factors in Implementing Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-Based Learning

To facilitate the successful expansion of CRS MBL in Washington, a clear understanding of state and local policies that either enable or hinder implementation is important. Many insights shared by school teams and the SBE centered on the benefits and challenges of a range of policies (or lack thereof) that advance mastery-based learning such as credit waivers and college admissions that support mastery-based transcripts. However, it is important to acknowledge that not all school teams possessed a clear understanding of policies impacting CRS MBL implementation. This finding highlights the potential need for additional support in helping schools navigate the policy landscape and its connection to CRSE and MBL. The SBE often acts as a policy advocate and intermediary between schools and districts, ensuring schools have the necessary policy support to implement MBL effectively. The recognition of the need for more policy support extends beyond this one example. One state leader acknowledged this need, indicating it is on the SBE's radar. Determining how to offer this support at scale and sustainably is an ongoing effort.

Items from the school team survey shed light on schools' perspectives related to several of the mastery-based learning policies discussed in this section (Table 9). The area rated by at least half of the schools as a moderate or major challenge to implementing MBL deeply was the lack of transportation for out-of-school activities (65%). Also rated as moderate or major challenges by a substantial minority of schools were assessment policies that prevent students from demonstrating mastery in diverse ways (45%) and accountability to state standardized tests leaves too little time for other important learning that aligns with the goals of MBL (45%).

Interestingly, a comparison with the first MBLC cohort reveals a potentially positive trend. While both cohorts identified accountability to standardized testing as a time constraint, the percentage of Cohort 1 schools citing it (55%) was higher than those in Cohort 2 (45%). Additionally, the issue of credit for out-of-school activities, a challenge for 50% of Cohort 1 schools, although not as significant of a challenge for Cohort 2, is still a high-priority policy barrier that must be addressed.

Another critical lever to driving equity through mastery-based learning is the focus on culturally responsive-sustaining practices. Items from the school team survey shed light on schools' perspectives related to CRSE policies (Table 10). The areas rated by more than half of the schools as a moderate or major challenge to implementing CRS deeply were access to high-quality curriculum and materials that represent culturally responsive-sustaining education is limited (60%) and teachers and/or school leaders lack training and professional learning in culturally responsive-sustaining practices (60%). Also rated as moderate or major challenges by a substantial minority of schools were policies that prevent granting credit to students who demonstrate mastery of required competencies through cultural experiences that take place outside of school (35%).

A school leader emphasized the lack of resources for discussing race in rural areas with mostly white populations. They pointed out that common online resources do not consider the specific situations in these communities. While racism exists there, microaggressions or subtle biases often go unnoticed by the community as a whole. Most people would deny any racial problems exist. The leader is actively seeking knowledge but has not found helpful tools or professional development specifically designed for rural communities with diverse demographics. They expressed a strong desire to connect with educators working on similar issues in similar settings.

These results suggest that schools need better access to resources, targeted professional learning for educators, and potentially revised policies that allow for the recognition of culturally-based learning experiences outside the traditional classroom setting.

Table 9: Policy-Related Factors in Implementing Mastery-Based Learning (N=20)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge
1. Assessment policies prevent students from demonstrating mastery in diverse ways.	30%	25%	25%	20%
2. Policies prevent granting credit to students who demonstrate mastery of required competencies through activities that take place outside of school.	30%	30%	25%	15%
3. Accountability to state standardized tests leaves too little time for other important learning that aligns with the goals of MBL.	20%	35%	35%	10%
4. Students lack the broadband internet access and/or technology infrastructure to fully participate in learning opportunities that take place outside of school.	30%	60%	5%	5%
5. Students lack the transportation to fully participate in mastery-based learning opportunities that take place outside of school.	15%	20%	40%	25%

Table 10: Policy-Related Factors in Implementing Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (N=20)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements	Not a Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge
Assessment policies prevent students from demonstrating mastery in identity-affirming ways.	45%	30%	15%	10%
Policies prevent granting credit to students who demonstrate mastery of required competencies through cultural experiences that take place outside of school.	45%	20%	20%	15%
Access to high-quality curriculum and materials that represent culturally responsive-sustaining education is limited.	5%	35%	30%	30%
Teachers and/or school leaders lack training and professional learning in culturally responsive-sustaining practices.	5%	35%	45%	15%
Some families oppose culturally responsive-sustaining education.	20%	60%	15%	5%

Policies that Facilitate Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-based Learning

This section will describe policies schools identified as facilitators of CRS MBL. It explores more deeply policy awareness among schools, potential changes in state or local policies regarding credit and assessments. In addition, it will describe other policy areas that may impact CRS-MBL implementation and potential areas for policy revision or development.

Credit Waivers Policies. Consistent with the previous cohort, several Cohort 2 schools mentioned credit waivers as a state policy that enables or will enable their implementation of CRS MBL. They explained that Washington has rules that allow schools to apply for a waiver from credit-based graduation requirements. At least one school leader recognized how this policy created a pathway for them to “pursue interest-based learning” and internship programs.

Mastery-Based Credit Retrieval. Mastery-based retrieval policies for credit recovery in later semesters was identified as a key complement to CRS MBL. It aligns with the principles of CRS MBL by recognizing that students learn at different paces. For students who need to recover credits to meet the graduation requirement, the flexibility of “anytime, anywhere” learning offered by CRS MBL (e.g., work-based learning) is transformative. One MBLC school team member highlighted the impact: “Students can... retrieve credit for the first semester... That’s been a game changer for [our] students.” This is particularly beneficial given the pressure of core credit requirements.

Curriculum Flexibility. Districts that allow schools autonomy in curriculum adoption and adaptation were seen as beneficial. This flexibility empowers schools to tailor their curriculum to better align with MBL principles. As one team shared, a less rigid process where schools can

"run these pilot projects in pilot curricula, without a lot of curricular oversight or approval right away" fosters innovation. However, it is important to acknowledge that this approach can have drawbacks, particularly in larger districts. Without a strong central framework, there is a risk of inconsistency across schools. Finding the right balance between flexibility and coherence is key.

Multiple Pathways to Graduation. The state-developed policy promoting multiple pathways to graduation ([House Bill 1599](#), passed in 2019) generated cautious optimism among some schools in the MBLC. The bill offers flexibility for students to demonstrate college and career readiness beyond standardized tests. While some MBLC schools expressed concerns about potentially lowering expectations, they also see this flexibility as an opportunity to create pathways that cater to diverse student needs. Schools like those in the MBLC can design options that cater to diverse student needs. However, some worry that the new pathways might inadvertently lower academic expectations. One school leader summarized this tension: "We appreciate the multiple pathways, but are we compromising on rigor?"

House Bill 1599 laid the groundwork for [House Bill 1308](#) (passed in 2023). There were two steps before schools could offer the performance-based graduation option. First, the SBE needed to create specific rules following a new state law. Then, each school district needed to design their own plan (through adoption of a local board policy and procedure) based on those state rules. Most schools looking to implement this will likely be ready by the graduating class of 2025. In February 2024, the SBE published [implementation tools](#) to guide schools in the process.

Some MBLC schools see the performance-based pathway to graduation enabled by this bill as a potential solution to the current limitations of CTE (described in the next section). These limitations are particularly challenging for rural schools with limited access to CTE options. One school leader explained:

"The new performance-based pathway, it aligns well with the work our students are already doing. We just need to ensure we're documenting it properly to meet the new requirements. CTE pathways are used by most people who can't access the state testing pathway. Those are a little bit harder for the small rural schools like ours, because the kids don't always have access to the combination of CTE classes that they'd have to take in order to satisfy that pathway. So I'm excited about the performance based pathway."

Policies that Challenge Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Mastery-Based Learning

This section addresses two key challenges faced by MBLC schools: the alignment of MBL with career and technical education (CTE), and the difficulties of transitioning to competency-based grading and transcripts while navigating within traditional district or state systems. No one raised policy challenges related to CRSE.

CTE Requirements. During our interview with MBLC school teams, some reflected on, what they perceived as, an unnecessary divide between CTE and MBL. The state's CTE model was criticized for being outdated and siloed. One school team member emphasized this disconnect:

"I'd love to see the state really rethink what can qualify as CTE... Our students do internships and real-world work that aligns with CTE, but it doesn't fit the rigid credit and framework requirements. This limits their access to pathways that could benefit them."

The sentiment suggests a need for a broader definition of CTE that acknowledges the valuable learning experiences offered by MBL programs, such as internships, even if they do not conform to traditional credit structures. Another MBLC school team leader raised a similar concern:

"So career and technical education in Washington state is tied to the Carnegie unit and the issuing of credit. And so my school is called *[redacted]*, and yet I cannot offer a CTE pathway to graduate. And so it doesn't make sense. I don't understand why my students can't be granted [CTE credit]. I'm not the only competency based program or *[redacted]* school that's happened [to] with CTE."

The challenges these MBLC practitioners presented are not new to the field. Achieve and NASDCTEc (2015) emphasized the need for states to intentionally integrate siloed academic competency-based systems and CTE, providing recommendations for achieving this goal:

"Addressing those barriers can include removing roadblocks to ensure that leaders responsible for [competency-based pathways] CBP and CTE within state agencies are connected and collaborating. Policymakers also can use legislation to provide clear direction and support for an integrated system by including deliberate language about the role of CTE in laws and policies guiding CBP" (p. 9).

Grading Policies. The other key challenge faced by MBLC schools were grading and transcript policies. MBLC school teams highlighted the incongruence between the traditional letter grade system and their focus on mastery learning. The emphasis in MBL is on tracking a student's progress and assigning credit based on the degree to which they demonstrate mastery of standards-aligned competencies , One MBLC school team member described the challenge of transitioning to a competency-based grading system while also having to maintain traditional grading policies, stating

"The biggest assessment challenge is the A-F grading system. We use a four-point rubric for internal assessment, but ultimately have to translate that into grades for transcripts. We're considering a two-point system (meeting standard or exceeding standard) to better reflect mastery, but the official transcript still requires a traditional A-F grade."

A leader from a single-site charter school within MBLC highlighted the benefits of having an independent board aligned with the school's CRSE-MBL focus. This autonomy, in their case, allows for easier implementation of practices like competency-based grading policies tailored to the MBL approach, compared to navigating larger district structures.

Another MBLC school team described the challenge of balancing responsive pacing with a grading policy that lacks strict deadlines. While mastery-based learning allows students to progress at their own pace and receive ongoing feedback, some schools have observed that students may delay their work until the last minute. This can hinder opportunities for revision and may lead to grade inflation. "I think what's happening is the teachers feel, because they didn't have a chance to redo it, they just give them a grade and let them pass." *It's important to note that this reflects a common early-stage implementation misconception or application and does not represent mastery-based learning in its truest form.*

To address this issue, schools will need to implement strategies to encourage adequate progress towards mastery with meaningful assessment opportunities⁴. Schools can also continue to foster the development of transferable skills like time management, which will not only help students meet their immediate academic goals but also prepare them for the demands of college and the workforce.

Transcript Policies. As the one MBLC school team member pointed out, the traditional high school transcript does not adequately capture the competencies, skills, and dispositions learners develop through a mastery-based learning system. Some MBLC schools are transitioning to mastery transcripts with support from organizations like [Mastery Transcript Consortium](#). Others continue to balance both approaches by converting mastery-based grades to letter grades for traditional transcripts. For those schools that have adopted mastery-transcripts, the lack of clear guidelines for structuring mastery transcripts and established college admissions practices for recognizing mastery transcripts were common challenges. One MBLC school team leader described the challenges of being one of few mastery-based high schools in the district and navigating the limitations of traditional transcripts.

"I need more structural support for transcripting. Because our transcript that honors state law doesn't represent the competencies adequately. So we have added our own version, but I'm not confident it's good enough for college admission. All students deserve a university competitive transcript. They need a transcript that will give them that competitive opportunity."

Another school team highlighted this concern: "Another challenge is that our state offers guaranteed admission to certain universities based on GPA. However, our MBL program doesn't use GPAs, so our students can't access this pathway. This inconsistency is concerning." While

⁴ Here is an [example](#) of how one Massachusetts school used micro-attainments to ensure responsive pacing within a structured and supportive schedule.

the state's criteria for guaranteed admission could be more flexible to support innovation in how learners document what they know and can do, Washington's public four-year college and universities have [adopted policies](#) that recognize mastery transcripts in the general admissions process. It is also important to note that at least one MBLC school reported that their students have had success with mastery transcripts in college admissions, even without guaranteed admission to state schools.

Other Policy and Non-policy Considerations

Funding emerged as a concern. School leaders worried about potential volatility in funding, especially during budget shortfalls. As one leader explained,

"Our district has made a significant financial commitment beyond state funding to create a program with individualized attention for students with diverse needs. This commitment allows us to have three full-time teachers and a part-time administrator for just 38 students, compared to the state's typical one-teacher-per-30-students model. Without this additional funding, our program would struggle to meet the unique needs of our students."

They went on to suggest that "even with a supportive leadership team, a change in administration or tight budgets could jeopardize our MBL program, which might be seen as an 'extra' during cuts."

Furthermore, schools highlighted the need for local policies that complement state and district initiatives. This might involve developing grading practices that align with mastery-based learning or establishing procedures for implementing flexible learning opportunities. Schools acknowledged the ongoing need to develop and refine their policies as they navigate the MBL implementation journey.

One school highlighted that the rigidity of teacher credentialing procedures makes it difficult to recruit and retain qualified educators, especially those with experience in alternative approaches like MBL. More flexible pathways into teaching could address the current shortage and support innovative programs.

In addition to funding and local policies, clear communication emerged as another critical factor for successful MBL implementation. Schools underscored the importance of clear communication with students and families when implementing policies that support MBL practices. This transparency helps manage expectations and ensures everyone involved understands the approach and its goals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The SBE and professional learning providers strategically applied learnings from the first MBLC cohort to optimize the experience for Cohort 2. This resulted in a more efficient and impactful approach. Further, by investing in infrastructure and refining resources and processes from Cohort 1 such as the self-assessment, the program enabled Cohort 2 schools to expedite their entry into the planning and implementation phases. These efforts to streamline and strengthen the MBLC ensured a stronger fit between schools and the goals of the initiative and that participating schools could focus their time and energy on putting MBLC principles into practice more quickly with targeted professional learning and coaching.

While the current school pre-screening approach and coaching model have shown significant promise, their scalability and long-term sustainability require further exploration. As MBLC expands and the demand for intensive support increases, it's crucial to identify the most impactful ways to deliver this guidance while maintaining program reach and effectiveness.

There is overwhelming support from educators, school leaders, and boards for deeply implementing MBL. However, some educators remain apprehensive about practices that center student identities, build cultural competence, and encourage critical thinking alongside individualized learning paces. Most educators, however, are receptive to strengthening their culturally responsive-sustaining instructional practices, but lack the instructional and professional learning resources and tools to do so. Following further MBLC participation with targeted professional learning, coaching, and cross-school collaborations, revisiting perceptions of CRSE implementation could provide valuable insights into the levers needed to drive systemic cultural shifts that promote equity. School interviews revealed a commitment to adaptation and learning from experience, a strong indicator of a positive path forward.

While policy changes, educator mindsets, and pedagogical shifts are creating momentum for CRS MBL, supporting systems, structures, and technologies are struggling to keep pace. For example, school funding, grading practices and platforms, transportation networks, and community partnerships for out-of-school and work-based learning need to be adjusted to fully support deeper CRS and MBL implementation.

Expand strategic partnerships. To strengthen MBLC's capacity to support CRSE, expanding strategic partnerships to include organizations that specialize in developing LEAs' capacity to lead local CRSE training and implementation are recommended. MBLC coaches provide valuable just-in-time resources, but NEP's expertise can address deeper CRSE needs. They offer contextualized professional learning, coaching, and leadership development, tailored through collaborative needs assessments. This equips educators to facilitate conversations about race-based educational inequities with the broader community and create equitable learning environments for all students. Next steps for the SBE might include assessing local CRSE expertise and exploring a NEP partnership to develop a customized plan for each district.

Strategy for community engagement. Community engagement emerged as a critical factor for successful CRSE implementation. One school leader highlighted the importance of

creating spaces for students to have ownership over their cultural identities and fostering community involvement and reciprocity:

"This is a very white, middle-class community, but our student body reflects a wider range of experiences. We need to create platforms where students feel empowered to share and shape their cultural identities. Our students spend time in the community, so for CRSE to be truly responsive, we need the community in our schools. We currently rely on our own networks, which can perpetuate existing structures. Engaging the broader community allows us to bring in diverse voices and expertise, shaping who we are as a school."

The need for community engagement in MBLC schools went beyond fostering cultural understanding. Schools also saw it as a way to address resource limitations and provide real-world learning experiences for students. One school leader highlighted the challenges faced by a smaller school with limited resources:

"We struggle to offer a variety of courses and electives due to staffing limitations. Recently, we lost our German teacher and can only offer one language class. Additionally, our location presents a transportation barrier; the nearest bus stop is a mile away from the school. This makes it difficult for students to access resources outside the school."

This leader emphasized the importance of community partnerships, citing organizations like [Thurston Together](#) that connect students with valuable resources.

In another case, an MBLC school has forged a strong partnership with a local non-profit offering after-school care and mentorship. Mentorship and community service can enhance student learning and connection to the community. Collaboration with external organizations can inform curriculum development and provide real-world learning opportunities. Stronger community ties can lead to increased support for this MBLC school and their CRSE efforts. The school is also exploring partnerships with the community college to bring professors to the high school and connect students with local non-profits aligned with their graduation requirements. However, integrating external organizations into the school schedule remains a challenge. Exploring flexible scheduling options is a priority.

A consideration for the SBE is how to support MBLC in developing a comprehensive community engagement strategy alongside internal CRSE capacity building. An even more critical consideration is finding ways to advocate for stronger local infrastructure to ensure transportation to community-based learning opportunities.

Policy landscape navigation. As part of a more formal professional learning offering, the SBE can provide guidance on how state and district policies affect CRS MBL implementation. Also, the SBE can more formally mediate discussions between schools and

districts to address policy roadblocks related to grading policies or other implementation hurdles identified through the school's self-assessment.

Scalability of personalized support. The current, personalized coaching model offers a promising approach to supporting MBLC schools and best practice for engaging with districts and schools endeavoring to deepen their CRS MBL practice at various stages of the implementation journey. However, its long-term sustainability requires careful consideration, particularly the coaching load and the number of school teams a coach can reasonably support at the current level of on-demand, formal and informal, engagement. Scaling up this level of support as MBLC expands will necessitate building the SBE and MBLC capacity. Exploring alternative delivery methods for intensive coaching support is important to ensure continued reach and impact.

Similarly, the pre-application screening process, though valuable for selecting highly qualified schools, may require adjustments for future cohorts. The SBE will need to find a balance between maintaining application quality and resource efficiency for this screening process.

The positive momentum generated by the MBLC, coupled with the commitment to continuous improvement evidenced by participating schools, paints an optimistic picture for the future. By prioritizing these recommendations, the SBE can empower schools to further deepen their CRS MBL implementation and create equitable learning environments for all students.

Appendix A – School Team Survey

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this survey about your school and your involvement in the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative (MBLC). The survey aims to understand the policies, practices, supports, and beliefs that may influence the implementation of mastery-based learning (MBL) and culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) in your school and across Washington.

We are NOT evaluating you, your students, or your school. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will help the MBLC support the success of your school and other MBLC schools.

Completing the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Your school should only submit one survey, which may be completed by a single School Team member or by multiple members who respond together.

To support the MBLC's work, **we need your response by March 29**. Your responses will be confidential. Only the research team will be able to view your individual responses. Reports will aggregate school responses in ways that do not allow you or your school to be identified. Any reporting that could identify you or your school would only happen after first securing your permission.

Thank you for your input!

MBLC School Team and Planning

1. Please select your school from the list below:

- Catalyst Public Schools
- Gibson Ek High School
- Nespelem High School
- Rainier Valley Leadership Academy
- Sno-Isle Skills Center
- Dishman Hills High School
- Hudson's Bay High School
- Methow Valley Independent Learning Center
- Envision Career Academy
- Summit Virtual Academy
- Cottonwood Elementary School
- Career Academy at Truman High School

- Open Doors Youth Reengagement (1418) at Truman Campus
- Open Doors at Heights Campus
- Tumwater High School
- Tulalip Heritage School
- Nova High School
- Discovery Elementary
- Minter Creek Elementary
- Purdy Elementary
- A.G. West Black Hills High School
- Lopez Island School District
- Legacy High School

Each MBLC school has a School Team that leads the MBLC planning and implementation work in your school. The following questions are about your **MBLC School Team**.

2. From March through June of 2024, how often, on average, will your MBLC team meet to lead your school's work on planning and implementing mastery-based learning?

- Never
- Once per month
- Twice per month
- Once per week
- Twice per week
- Other (please specify _____)

3. What would you estimate is the average duration of these meetings? ____ minutes [numeric; range 0-500]

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Our MBLC School Team participates actively in a professional learning community to build our school's capacity for implementing mastery-based learning. [strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree]

MBL Supports and Needs

Schools in the MBLC are working toward deeper implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining mastery-based learning. In mastery-based learning (MBL), students are able to advance at different paces when they master knowledge, skills, and dispositions tied to state learning standards. They demonstrate mastery through meaningful, authentic assessments. Students take ownership of their learning and receive timely, differentiated support based on their needs and interests.

5. How important will the following supports be in enabling your school to implement mastery-based learning deeply? [not important, a little important, moderately important, very important]

- a. Being an active participant in the MBLC's statewide network of schools.

- b. Professional learning supports from the MBLC to deepen our work in mastery-based learning.
- c. State funding from the MBLC.
- d. Visiting schools that are already implementing mastery-based learning deeply.

CRSE Supports and Needs

Schools in the MBLC are also working toward deeper implementation of culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE). The aim of CRSE is to elevate historically marginalized voices and affirm racial, cultural, and linguistic identities. CRSE prepares students for rigorous learning, connecting across differences, and becoming agents of positive social change.

6. How important will the following supports be in enabling your school to implement CRSE deeply? [not important, a little important, moderately important, very important]
- a. Being an active participant in the MBLC's statewide network of schools.
 - b. Professional learning supports from the MBLC to deepen our work in culturally responsive-sustaining education.
 - c. State funding from the MBLC.
 - d. Visiting schools that are already implementing CRSE deeply.

Culturally-responsive MBL Enablers, Challenges, and Beliefs

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. For statements that ask about your school's staff collectively, answer to the best of your knowledge or judgment. [strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree]

- a. Our district Superintendent and Board of Directors support our school's intention to implement MBL deeply.
- b. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's ability to prepare students for successful futures.
- c. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's ability to achieve equitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized groups.
- d. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing MBL deeply will improve our school's culture and climate.
- e. Most educators and school leaders at our school are motivated to implement MBL at progressively deeper levels over the next three to five years.
- f. Most educators and school leaders at our school are familiar with the main principles of mastery-based learning.
- g. Our school is already implementing MBL deeply.

8. Culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) sees many types of diversity as assets for learning and explores how inequalities shape how students access and succeed in their education. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. For

statements that ask about your school's staff collectively, answer to the best of your knowledge or judgment. [strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree]

- a. Our district Superintendent and Board of Directors support our school's intention to implement CRSE deeply.
- b. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's ability to prepare students for successful futures.
- c. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's ability to achieve equitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized groups.
- d. Most educators and school leaders at our school believe that implementing CRSE deeply will improve our school's culture and climate.
- e. Most educators and school leaders at our school are motivated to implement CRSE at progressively deeper levels over the next three to five years.
- f. Most educators and school leaders at our school are familiar with the main principles of CRSE.
- g. Our school is already implementing CRSE deeply.

School, District, and State Policies

9. To what extent do the following issues pose a challenge for your school to implement MBL deeply? [not a challenge, minor challenge, moderate challenge, major challenge]

- a. Assessment policies prevent students from demonstrating mastery in diverse ways.
- b. Policies prevent granting credit to students who demonstrate mastery of required competencies through activities that take place outside of school.
- c. Some teachers and/or school leaders oppose developing practices that enable students to make progress in their learning at different, individualized paces.
- d. Accountability to state standardized tests leaves too little time for other important learning that aligns with the goals of MBL.
- e. Students lack the broadband internet access and/or technology infrastructure to fully participate in learning opportunities that take place outside of school.
- f. Students lack the transportation to fully participate in mastery-based learning opportunities that take place outside of school.

10. To what extent do the following issues pose a challenge for your school to implement culturally responsive-sustaining education [not a challenge, minor challenge, moderate challenge, major challenge]

- a. Assessment policies prevent students from demonstrating mastery in identity-affirming ways.
- b. Policies prevent granting credit to students who demonstrate mastery of required competencies through cultural experiences that take place outside of school.
- c. Some teachers and/or school leaders oppose developing practices that center students' diverse identities, build cultural competence, or increase critical consciousness.

- d. Access to high-quality curriculum and materials that represent culturally responsive-sustaining education is limited.
- e. Teachers and/or school leaders lack training and professional learning in culturally responsive-sustaining practices.
- f. Some families oppose culturally responsive-sustaining education.

11. We welcome any additional comments about school, district, or state policies that will enable or challenge your implementation of culturally-responsive mastery-based learning. [open-ended]

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Policies and Practices

12. To what extent do you agree that the following statements reflect current schoolwide practices in your school? [strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree]

- a. An equity-focused mission and vision drive school policies and practices.
- b. Curriculum and materials provided to educators support culturally responsive pedagogy.
- c. Educators are provided sufficient resources, time, and supports to pursue deeper cultural proficiency.
- d. Students feel a strong sense of belonging, supported by a welcoming environment.
- e. Strong relationships between teachers and students, including students from historically marginalized groups, support learning.
- f. The school fosters high expectations for all students, including students from historically marginalized groups.
- g. There are opportunities for students to take on leadership roles in the classroom and school that include proactive outreach and support to students from historically marginalized groups.
- h. The school has opportunities for families and community members to provide substantial input and serve in significant roles toward fulfilling the school's mission and vision.
- i. The school uses data to implement rigorous plans to address inequitable access to opportunities.
- j. The school uses data to implement rigorous plans to address inequitable outcomes.

Conclusion

13. How many school team members contributed to the responses in this survey? (There is no better or worse response here; we just want to have a sense of who is responding.) [numeric; range 0-99]

14. What are the role(s) of the school team member or members who completed this survey? (Check all that apply)

- a. School leader/administrator
- b. Teacher
- c. Guidance staff

- d. Paraprofessionals
- e. Other roles (specify _____)

15. We welcome any additional comments about factors that will enable or challenge your school in implementing culturally responsive mastery-based learning. [open-ended]

16. We welcome any additional comments that would help the MBLC understand or support your school's efforts to implement culturally responsive mastery-based learning. [open-ended]

This is the end of the survey.

Thank you very much for sharing your opinions and experiences!

(Attribution: The 10 items above on equity and cultural responsiveness are adapted from the Center for Collaborative Education's *Building for Equity School Self-Assessment Tool*.)

Appendix B – School Team Interview

Before Interview

- Click LIVE TRANSCRIPT (sometimes this is showing; other times it's in the MORE menu)
- Uncheck ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO REQUEST LIVE TRANSCRIPTION
- Click ENABLE LIVE TRANSCRIPTION

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today about [Career Academy] participation in the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative.

Introduce myself: Research Director at the Aurora Institute, an organization that works to advance mastery-based learning, and I'm leading the evaluation of the MBLC.

The purpose of the interview is to understand your school's experiences and needs related to moving deeper into mastery-based learning and culturally responsive-sustaining education. It will also help support the success of all MBLC schools and other schools in the future. The purpose is not to evaluate you, your school, or your students. There are no right or wrong answers.

We do hope to share some of your experiences and practices anonymously through our reporting, but if you prefer for certain comments to remain confidential, please let me know before or after or while you're saying them, and we'll make sure to keep them confidential and not report on them in ways that could identify you, your school, or anyone you mention.

I'd like to record the interview to facilitate our work on this later. Do I have your permission to record the interview?

- Zoom – Click RECORD button (may be in MORE menu).
- Zoom – Click RECORD ON THIS COMPUTER
- Parrot – Click microphone button under “0:00” and above “Timed Recording”
- I'm speaking with [name(s)] at [school] on [date]. I need to ask you again while recording: Do I have your permission to record the interview?

Planning Activities

1. As you know, the purpose of the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative grants to schools is to jump start a long-term shift to mastery-based learning and culturally responsive-sustaining education. I know it's very early in the initiative, but could you start by telling me about what your team has done so far to plan and launch the MBLC work in your school?

Professional Learning Experiences

I'd like to hear about any involvement your school has had so far with professional learning activities or supports related to the statewide MBLC network.

2. As you may already know, the professional learning provider for the MBLC initiative is the Great Schools Partnership. Have you had any contact with them so far? [If yes] Please describe the nature of this contact and in what ways if any they have influenced or supported your school's efforts to implement culturally responsive-sustaining mastery-based learning.
3. Have you worked with any other professional learning providers related to your work in the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative?
 - o [If yes] What has been the nature of the collaboration, and in what ways has it supported your efforts to implement mastery-based learning?
 - o [If yes] In what ways has the collaboration supported your efforts to implement culturally responsive-sustaining education?

State Structures and Support Activities

4. Are there other supports your school has received related to MBLC, including culturally responsive-sustaining education, such as from the State Board of Education?
 - o [If yes] What were these supports and in what ways have they supported your efforts to implement mastery-based learning?
 - o [If yes] In what ways have the supports facilitated your efforts to implement culturally responsive-sustaining education?

Enabling School, District, and State Policies

5. An important part of transitioning to mastery-based learning is the role of policies. I want to ask you about school, district, and state policies that either enable or present challenges to implementing mastery-based learning, including culturally responsive-sustaining education, deeply. First, what if any school, district, or state policies are helpful for implementing culturally responsive-sustaining mastery-based learning, and in what ways are they helpful?
6. What if any school, district, or state policies present challenges to implementing mastery-based learning, and what challenges do they present?
7. What if any school, district, or state policies present challenges to implementing culturally responsive-sustaining education, and what challenges do they present?

Progress Facilitators, Challenges, and Needs

Moving away from policy issues, I want to ask about other factors in your school that are helpful or challenging for your implementation of mastery-based learning.

8. What conditions, resources, or other factors in your school have been helpful in advancing your transition to mastery-based learning so far?
9. What conditions, resources, or other factors in your school have been challenging in advancing your transition to mastery-based learning so far?
10. A central goal of the MBLC is for mastery-based learning to be culturally responsive and sustaining. As I said earlier, I know it's still early in the initiative, but if your MBLC team has already developed plans or taken actions to go deeper towards this goal, could you talk about those plans or actions, as well as any supports you need?

If Time Permits

11. In addition to what you have mentioned already, what else do you need, if anything, to make your transition to mastery-based learning most successful?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share with the MBLC about your school's mastery-based learning journey?

Conclusion

That is the end of the interview. Thanks so much for sharing so much valuable information about your experiences today. It was great to meet you, and I look forward to continuing to work with [school] on the MBLC evaluation. If you have any questions about the evaluation, feel free to be in touch.

BEFORE ENDING THE ZOOM MEETING

- Press STOP RECORDING [may be in MORE menu]
- Save transcript
 - Get the full transcript showing on the screen – this happens in different ways depending whether on full screen mode
 - Press SAVE TRANSCRIPT

AFTER ENDING ZOOM MEETING

- Do file management to save file backups
 - Zoom – transcript, audio, and video
 - Parrot – audio

Appendix C – State Leader Interview

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today. The purpose of the interview is to understand your work and perspectives from Year 3 of the MBLC initiative as they relate to both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2. We plan to share what we learn, but if you prefer for certain comments to remain confidential, please let us know, and we will honor that. We'd like to record the interview to facilitate our work on this later. Is it OK if we record the interview?

- [Start recording] We're speaking with ___ from the Washington State Board of Education on ___ [date].

State Structures and Support Activities

To begin, we want to ask you to describe SBE's activities over the past year in relation to overseeing the MBLC. We're going to start by asking you about your work with each school individually and then move on to your work with the PL providers and the schools as a network.

1. First, we want to learn about your interactions with each school individually. Let's start with Cohort 1. Are there ways that SBE's work with the Cohort 1 schools changed during this school year based on what you learned from the previous two years of the initiative?
2. Now moving to Cohort 2 – are there ways that your work with the Cohort 2 schools was influenced by what you learned from the first two years of work with Cohort 1?
 - What was the school application screening process for Cohort 2? What changes if any did you make from the RFP and screening process for Cohort 1? What were the goals of these changes, and how well did the new process achieve these goals?
 - Our understanding is that SBE met with some or all of the Cohort 2 applicants before selecting grant recipients. Please explain the purpose of these meetings, how they went, and whether all schools or a subset of schools participated. During these meetings, were some schools asked to clarify or expand the commitments made in their proposals as a condition for joining the MBLC? Explain.
 - What are you hoping Cohort 2 schools will accomplish during their first year, meaning from January through June of 2024?

Questions About Both Cohorts

3. During the current school year, what supports has SBE provided to each school – for example, what planned communications, meetings, on-demand supports, etc.? Are these supports differentiated based on cohort, prior CBE experience, or some other characteristic?
 - Beyond what the PL providers are doing, what guidance or supports if any has the state provided or plans to provide about what schools' work plans should contain?

- Beyond what the PL providers are doing, is SBE playing a role in helping sites develop and strengthen their Year 2 plans, and if so, what strategies are you using for that?
4. In addition to the evaluation findings, are there ways that SBE is assessing the extent to which both cohorts are implementing their work plans? The extent to which Cohort 1 schools are deepening their MBL/CRSE implementation?
 - What were SBE's stated expectations if any for schools to demonstrate their progress toward MBL/CRSE implementation? Are there points of accountability? For example, did schools have to commit to certain levels of activities in their work plans? Will schools be expected to demonstrate that they followed through on those activities?
 - What are the constraints on accountability, and what are the implications of those constraints for the best strategies for the state to help school's succeed in MBL/CRSE transformation?
 5. A recommendation emerging from last year's interviews with SBE and the PL providers was to revise the work-planning process to require more tangible goals, help schools locate their progress in relation to specific implementation milestones, and provide menus of suggested SMART goals that align with well-known phases of MBL and CRSE transformation, such as those in the MBLC's Implementation Steps document and graphic. Was there any discussion of this, and if so what were the conclusions and any changes that might have resulted for either or both cohorts? What are you learning from any changes?

Professional Learning

Next we want to discuss your work with the MBLC as a statewide network. Let's start with the professional learning providers and activities.

6. With about two years of the professional learning work now complete, what do you think is going well with the professional learning?
7. What challenges are you seeing related to professional learning?
8. Have there been any changes to the professional learning offerings from last school year to this school year? If so, can you describe those changes and why they were made?
 - Last year some schools participated in MBLC events and coaching at a lower rate than the minimum level that SBE had specified. Were there ways that SBE responded to that? Did this result in any changes for the current school year for either or both cohorts?
 - The Year 2 evaluation report recommended assessing the balance of virtual versus in-person PL activities, as well as the balance between large-group events versus small-group coaching. Was there any discussion of this, and if so what were the conclusions? What are you learning from any changes?
 - Are there any additional changes to professional learning opportunities that SBE is advocating for or would like to see?
9. Has the PL providers' work been helpful in preparing Cohort 1 schools for deeper MBL and CRSE implementation in the current school year? How are you assessing that?

10. Has the PL providers' work helped the Cohort 2 schools prepare for deeper professional learning (and possibly initial implementation) during the next school year? How are you assessing that?
11. Are there any other lessons learned from the first two years of MBLC professional learning activities for future years with these two cohorts or for future cohorts?

Enabling School, District, and State Policies

Next we want to ask you about school, district, and state policies that either enable or present challenges for implementing MBL and CRSE deeply. We already discussed this the past two years, so in particular we're interested in any policy enablers or challenges that have changed in the past year or so that you may have new insights about based on your experiences with the MBLC schools.

12. What policy enablers or challenges related to MBL and CRSE implementation, if any, have changed in the past year or yielded new insights? Possible probes:
 - In what ways will these policies be helpful?
 - What challenges will these policies present?
 - In what ways if any do you plan to contribute to and shape these discussions?
 - What do you see as the prospects and timelines for these changes?
 - What are your thoughts about [Senate Bill 6264](#), from the 2024 legislative session, as an enabler or challenger of the MBLC's goals and MBL in Washington more generally? Were there ways that the MBLC initiative influenced the emergence of this bill?

Progress Facilitators, Challenges, and Needs

Moving away from policy issues, we want to ask about other factors that you anticipate will be helpful or challenging for the implementation of MBL and CRSE in the MBLC schools. We already discussed this the past two years, so in particular we're interested in any enablers or challenges that have changed in the past year or so that you may have new insights about based on your experiences with the MBLC schools.

13. Aside from the policy issues that we've already discussed, what conditions, resources, or other factors do you think will be most helpful in advancing the MBLC schools' transitions to deeper implementation of mastery-based learning and CRSE?
14. Aside from the policy factors we've already discussed, what conditions, resources, or other factors do you think will be most challenging in advancing the MBLC schools' transitions to deeper implementation of mastery-based learning and CRSE?

Conclusion

15. What changes should be made, if any, to make the MBLC initiative as successful as possible?
16. Is there anything else you'd like to share about how the MBLC has evolved since its inception and how those changes have affected MBL and CRSE in Washington?

If Time Permits

17. Is there anything else you'd like to share that you think would be valuable to inform the evaluation of the MBLC initiative?

That is the end of the interview. Thank you for sharing so much valuable information today. It was great to see you, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on the MBLC evaluation. Feel free to be in touch.

Appendix D – Professional Learning Provider Interview

Before Interview

- Click LIVE TRANSCRIPT (sometimes this is showing; other times it's in the MORE menu)
- Uncheck ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO REQUEST LIVE TRANSCRIPTION
- Click ENABLE LIVE TRANSCRIPTION
- Enable SCREEN SHARING FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us today. The purpose of the interview is to understand your work, your plans, and your perspectives about the Mastery-Based Learning Collaborative. We will focus on your involvement with educators and school leaders in both cohorts. Please feel free to share any materials that will help us understand your activities better. The purpose is not to evaluate you, and there are no right or wrong answers.

We do hope to share some of your work and your perspectives through our reporting, but if you prefer for certain comments to remain confidential, please let us know and we'll make sure to honor that. We'd like to record the interview to facilitate our work on this later. Is it OK to record the interview?

- Zoom – Click RECORD button (may be in MORE menu).
- Zoom – Click RECORD ON THIS COMPUTER
- Parrot – Click microphone button under “0:00” and above “Timed Recording”

We're speaking with Kate Gardoqui and Joy Nolan on April 5, 2024. I need to ask you again while recording: Do I have your permission to record the interview?

To give you a sense of the level of detail we have time for, I want to mention that we have about 90 minutes and about 16 questions, some of which may have follow-up questions. Of course your responses to some questions will be longer than others, and we may circle back at the end if we have extra time.

Professional Learning Activities

1. Could you start by giving us a brief overview of the work you are doing and plan to do with the Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools during the current school year?
2. What specific learnings or best practices if any from your experiences with Cohort 1 did you incorporate when designing the professional learning activities for Cohort 2?

3. Are there ways that your work with the Cohort 1 schools changed during this school year based on what you learned from the previous two years of the initiative?
 - If not addressed: For either cohort, were there changes to the balance of virtual versus in-person activities or between large-group events versus small-group coaching. What prompted any changes and what are you learning from them?

Progress Facilitators, Challenges, and Needs

We want to ask about factors that are helpful or challenging for the implementation of MBL and CRSE in the MBLC schools. We already discussed this the past two years, so in particular we're interested in any enablers or challenges that you may have new insights about based on your experiences with the MBLC schools in the past year.

4. Based on what you have learned from the MBLC initiative so far, what conditions, resources, or other factors do you think have been or will be most helpful in advancing the MBLC schools' transitions to deeper implementation of MBL and CRSE? Possible probes for:
 - Factors related to school and district leadership, culture, demographics, finances, families, communities, and other.
 - If not explicitly addressed, ask about factors that have been or will be most important in achieving deeper implementation of CRSE and if there are lessons we can learn for future years with this cohort and for future cohorts.
 - Specific examples and stories that illuminate these factors, including actual changes they have observed related to implementation or preparation for implementation.
5. Based on what you have learned from the MBLC initiative so far, what conditions, resources, or other factors do you think will be most challenging in advancing the MBLC schools' transitions to deeper implementation of mastery-based learning and CRSE? Possible probes for:
 - Factors related to school and district leadership, culture, demographics, finances, families, communities, and other.
 - If not explicitly addressed, ask about factors that have been or will be most challenging in achieving deeper implementation of CRSE and if there are lessons we can learn for future years with this cohort and for future cohorts.
 - Specific examples and stories that illuminate these factors, including actual barriers or challenges they have observed or inferred.

Enabling School, District, and State Policies

Next we want to ask you about school, district, and state policies that either enable or present challenges for implementing MBL and CRSE deeply. We already discussed this the past two years, so in particular we're interested in any policy enablers or challenges that have changed in the past year or so that you may have new insights about based on your experiences with the MBLC schools.

6. What policy enablers or challenges related to MBL and CRSE implementation, if any, have changed in the past year or yielded new insights?

Possible probes:

- In what ways will these policies be helpful?
- What challenges will these policies present?
- What role if any do you see for GSP or NLC in advancing some of the favorable policies or addressing some of the policy challenges you mentioned?

Professional Learning Supports

7. What are your impressions about the schools' responsiveness to your professional learning supports and their investment in implementing MBL and CRSE deeply?
8. What do you see as the highest-impact strategies for your organizations to use to help the MBLC schools and network move to deeper practice of MBL and CRSE?
9. MBLC schools in both cohorts have shown a wide range of readiness and understanding about how to move toward deeper practice of MBL and CRSE. Are you playing a role in helping sites develop and strengthen their work plans, and if so, what strategies are you using for that?
 - Probe: Based on your comments during last year's interview, a recommendation in the evaluation report was to revise the work-planning process to require more tangible goals, help schools locate their progress in relation to specific implementation milestones, and provide menus of suggested SMART goals that align with well-known phases of MBL and CRSE transformation, such as those in your Implementation Steps document and graphic. Was there any discussion of this, and if so what were the conclusions and any changes that might have resulted for either or both cohorts? What are you learning from any changes?

Engagement with MBLC / Transformation to MBL and CRSE

10. What is your sense of how the MBLC initiative is going so far for the Cohort 1 schools in terms of catalyzing deeper implementation of MBL and CRSE?

11. What is your sense of how the MBLC initiative is going so far in terms of its goals to support Cohort 2 schools in preparing to implement MBL and CRSE or to deepen their existing MBL and CRSE practices?
12. What is your sense of the level of schools' participation and engagement in MBLC's professional learning activities? What's going well, and what are your concerns, if any?
Possible probes:
 - What strategies have you used this year to encourage participation, and how has that worked out?
 - Last year – that is, the 2022-23 school year – SBE set requested and minimum levels for school participation in coaching and network activities. Now during the current school year, the expectations seem less specific, at least for Cohort 1. What are your thoughts about whether any expectations or requirements should be set for participation and why?

State Structures and Support Activities

13. Please talk about how you have been collaborating with the State Board of Education and any other Washington state agencies up to this point, and how that collaboration is advancing your work and the goals of the initiative.
14. What do you see as key next steps if any for making your collaboration with the state as effective as possible in advancing the goals of the initiative?

If Time Permits

15. Is there anything else you'd like to mention about what will make your professional learning supports as effective as possible in advancing the MBLC's goals?
16. Is there anything else you'd like to share that you think would be valuable to inform the evaluation of the MBLC initiative?

Conclusion

That is the end of the interview. Thank you for sharing so much valuable information today. It was great to see you, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on the MBLC evaluation. Feel free to be in touch.