

Mastery Education Committee Report for the Idaho State Board of Education

The Mastery Education Committee met June 18th and 19th in Boise and began the assigned work of House Bill 110 (HB110). The goals of the committee include: identifying implementation roadblocks and possible solutions; developing recommendations related to the incubator program; assisting in conducting a statewide awareness campaign; and helping to facilitate the planning and implementation of an incubator program. The overall goal of mastery education is to let learning and performance be the measure instead of time.

The committee members represent the six regions of the state and are from a mix of rural/small school and larger districts. There are six teachers, seven administrators/superintendents, and five other representatives. The other category includes a special education director, curriculum director, board member, IDLA director, and research coordinator. Their level of experience with mastery education ranges from none at all to experienced practitioners.

The meeting started with reviewing HB110 and the associated expectations. The committee started a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) and challenges related to making major changes associated with instruction. The FAQs will be used in part when communicating with the public and will be part of the awareness campaign. The challenges are the start of the roadblocks and possible solutions discussion.

The next step was developing common definitions and language for the work to be accomplished. Mastery versus competency versus proficiency was discussed at great length, as were incubator versus pilot. The committee felt it was important to understand why the legislators chose the words they did and to make sure they can explain the difference between the various concepts they represent.

The committee reviewed the Governor's Task Force recommendations related to mastery education. They spent time discussing each recommendation and the implications of the recommendation. There was agreement with most of the recommendations; however, they felt very strongly about local control and the recommendation to mandate implementation. The committee felt state mandates would lead to failure and pushback; whereas, allowing district choice and emphasizing successful programs would encourage change.

A majority of the first meeting was spent reviewing the existing and planned mastery programs in Idaho and other states. The committee representatives starting by explaining what was happening in their school and/or district; how they arrived at the decision for mastery education; and discussed the resources they have used. They also shared the challenges they faced and their current needs. Overall, the committee was surprised at the "great number of voices" in the state implementing mastery education. There are a variety of methods for implementing mastery and it will look different in each school and district. The leaders implementing mastery said the reason for their success was their governing boards and leadership teams who provided the needed flexibility and trust to implement. Their hope was that the state would do the same.

The discussion then expanded to mastery education in other states. Committee members spoke from personal experience about other states' initiatives and research they had conducted. Each state is approaching mastery education differently and while the name may be different, the emphasis is the same. The committee discussed the roadblocks and challenges that other states have experienced. Additionally, the committee looked at the application process and materials for other states programs. The applications ranged from very short and simple to very extensive and complex (10 pages long for

the shortest to 176 pages for the longest.) The review of other states applications will be used for developing Idaho's.

The committee finished by working on awareness and communication messages. They worked in their "job-alike" groups and also by region. The entire committee decided that it will be important to share the same message throughout the state. "It doesn't matter where the students live in Idaho; we all want the best education for them." The committee suggested using students to help with the awareness campaign as a method for demonstrating what mastery education looks like.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for July 23 & 24, 2015. The committee will be working on answers for the FAQs; looking at the challenges, road blocks and possible solutions; refining a draft application for the incubator program; and discussing the financial needs for the implementation of the incubator program.

As of July 16, 2015 the committee has spent approximately \$5,000.00 of SDE funds for the committee to meet. The \$400,000.00 appropriated by the legislature will be used for the upcoming meetings, the awareness campaign, implementation of the incubator program, and resources for the schools/districts participating in the incubator program.