

MASTERY TRANSCRIPT

— CONSORTIUM —

— Questions Members Often Receive —

Why are we doing this?

We are part of a growing movement—a global conversation—in education to reinvent the high school experience for the betterment of students. MTC is informing, defining, and leading this discussion.

Is this approach better for students?

Yes. Schools today are thinking about how to teach students 21st-century skills, but are often confronted with the reality that the current system of transcript production limits their ability to best serve and represent the students in their care. The current transcript encourages the separation of disciplines in an increasingly interdisciplinary world, focuses on the acquisition of information rather than the making of meaning, and largely ignores noncognitive skills and character traits. Educators want to engage and enlighten students, but find themselves tasked with sorting and ranking students and reducing them to simple numbers and letters.

We believe a Mastery Transcript will better reflect the unique skills, strengths, and interests of each of our students. It will also support us in facilitating the rigorous, interdisciplinary curriculum that we believe will best prepare our students for college, career, and life. Extensive research shows us that the use of mastery learning can have exceptionally positive effects on student learning. Students engage in authentic learning experiences that are deeply personalized and differentiated.

How will the new transcript work?

The Mastery Transcript will be a digital, interactive, and searchable portfolio of a student's work during high school, whereas a traditional transcript is a static, flat, summative snapshot. The Mastery Transcript will credit demonstrated achievement of mastery credits, rather than letter grades and student time spent in single-subject courses. Each school will define its own credits,

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likely with a mix of both traditional academic and broader skills (collaboration, communication, leadership, etc.). Students will submit evidence of achievement (including academic work, performance recordings, written evaluations from internships, and other examples) to the system, which will be stored in a portfolio for college admission officers and prospective employers. Importantly, students will be able to highlight credits and work they are particularly proud of for their future college applications and beyond. The Mastery Transcript will comply with IMS standards for Open Badges and Comprehensive Learner Records.

Do we have to get rid of letter grades?

We anticipate that the student-centered advantages of the Mastery Transcript will ultimately lead to full adoption of the new model by many schools and the eventual elimination of letter grades. Schools will work at their own pace in adopting the new transcript. Once the new transcript is developed, schools will have the choice of fully adopting the Mastery Transcript as their reporting form to colleges and employers or using it initially as an alternative option for students, for instance in a lab school or school-within-a-school model. An individual student, however, will not be able to use both transcripts at the same time.

How do you plan to work with colleagues in admissions?

Ensuring that we meet the needs of college admissions officers is a critical part of our work. College admissions officers will be highly involved in the development of the Mastery Transcript. MTC is developing a higher-ed working group, comprised of admissions colleagues, educators, and leaders from a mix of colleges and universities throughout the country. The working group is tasked with interacting with and providing feedback on key features in the Mastery Transcript prototype, taking part in planning toward a rollout strategy, and helping to advocate broadly for the need for change within the high-school transcript and college admissions processes. MTC is also looking ahead to future collaborations with professional organizations and employers who have also expressed interest in the Mastery Transcript.

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Will colleges adopt and accept this new transcript model?

Yes. We will make sure the Mastery Transcript works for them. We have heard directly from college admissions officers that they simply want an efficient, clear, and consistent way to read, differentiate, and know each applicant in about two minutes. A mastery-based transcript actually enhances a student's personal profile and brings it into a digital, multidimensional format, while differentiating their individual strengths when compared to a traditional transcript. While the standards and credits on a Mastery Transcript will be unique to each school, the format of the transcript will be consistent to make it as easy as possible for college admission officers to read. We believe this will help students in college admissions while also creating a better learning environment in high school.

How does this impact teaching and learning?

We are part of a growing movement, led by educators, to reinvent the high school experience. The traditional transcript focuses on the acquisition of information, ignores non-cognitive skills, and reduces a complex human being to simple numbers and letters. Allowing teachers to focus on moving each and every student toward mastery is inspiring. Teachers follow their hearts into the classroom to encourage growth and a passion for learning in their students, and the Mastery Transcript will support them in this work. We believe that the Mastery Transcript will be a catalyzing force for the innovation educators bring to their classrooms every-day, helping to cultivate the creativity happening in their schools and opening up new opportunities for all students and teachers.

Will this require additional hiring or staffing?

No. As the Mastery Transcript is developed, tested, and implemented, MTC will work closely with member schools to support and train faculty and staff with the skills they will need. No new oversight or position staffing will be necessary. In addition, you will have support from the MTC's vast network, comprised of hundreds of educators and colleagues in independent and public schools throughout the country and world. Together we bring a wealth of resources to share with one another as we adopt the Mastery Transcript. We also bring collective wisdom, influence, and a powerful voice to help make this change happen.

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What is the timeline for the new transcript?

Member schools are currently involved in planning and design work with MTC and will adopt the new Mastery Transcript as soon as their community is ready to roll it out. Version 1.0 of the new Mastery Transcript will be available for testing in member schools by the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Each school will have an opportunity to provide feedback and make adjustments to the transcript before adopting it.

If we move toward a Mastery Transcript model, can we remain “independent” in our own school’s curriculum?

Yes. Each member will define the mastery credits that meet its school’s objectives for graduates, including credits, evidence, and level. These definitions will be viewable by students, parents, and college admissions officers. As we develop a transcript readable for college admissions officers and others, there will need to be a reasonable degree of consistency across MTC schools. The general presentation format—just as with the traditional transcript—will be consistent. But what each school chooses to emphasize and celebrate in its educational approach will remain fully independent and individualized.

Where do I go if I have other questions?

Please contact your school’s Site Director for questions about your school’s efforts or for access to some of the research and resources that support this work. If you have further questions about mastery learning and the Mastery Transcript, please visit mastery.org and consider subscribing to the MTC Connect newsletter for regular updates on our network.