



## Transcript for ABMP MBLEx Video

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**Bob:** Welcome I'm Bob Benson Chairman of ABMP. For 20 years our organization has had staff reaching out to massage schools, taking temperatures, learning about issues, and opportunities. Over the past year, one of the prevalent issues has been the MBLEx, changes in the exam, both real and perceived, and angst over pass rates. At the same time, ABMP has learned from FSMTB that some school perceptions aren't warranted. Out of ABMP'S effort to reconcile these two views was birthed the idea of providing a webinar for the school audience. We reached out to FSMTB to work together to create the *MBLEx, Concerns, Myths, Facts and Preparation Strategies*. FSMTB enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to communicate with school leaders. Their staff leader, Executive Director Debra Persinger, is representing FSMTB today. In the second half of today's presentation, we will address strategies for maximizing student preparation to take the MBLEx. ABMP's Director of Education, Anne Williams, is with us to take the lead on offering such new strategy ideas. This webinar was pre-recorded to reduce the technical stress that people often feel when trying to log into a live event. We believe that most of the questions and concerns we've heard from schools will be answered by this webinar. We will address the predominant concerns in the first section of the webinar and then answer questions that are less prevalent at the end. If your question or concern is not addressed or if you need more information, we invite you to email us at the contacts provided above. Mary O'Reilly will field questions for the FSMTB, and Anne Williams will field questions for ABMP. This webinar is an experiment, a companion presentation from two organizations with complementary but distinctly different roles and missions regarding the entry-level exam that serves as an important gateway to massage practice. FSMTB's role is to support member state massage boards in their responsibility for public protection. Possessing adequate massage knowledge as measured on the MBLEx is an important dimension of qualification for obtaining a license. FSMTB desires to work and communicate effectively with schools, but it is not FSMTB's role to advise schools on their curricula or teaching methodologies. ABMP works to support its individual members to help them build a thriving practice and regularly refresh and expand their knowledge of sound massage techniques. ABMP, for two decades has also been a strong supporter of massage schools, instructors, and students. As part of that role, ABMP has developed tools to help all three of those audiences maximize their students' learning in school and their readiness to take and pass the MBLEx. Today you will learn additional strategies schools can employ to help their students and recent graduates maximize their chances of acing the MBLEx. What our two organizations share in common is a desire to facilitate entry into the massage therapy profession by well-prepared individuals and a belief that a solidly constructed profession-entry examination plays an important part in assessing such readiness.

Our webinar today will break into four parts. First, Debra Persinger will provide a brief summary of recent MBLEx test results and she and I will offer perspective on how those test

results impact the flow of new entrants to the massage therapy profession. Second, then Debra will respond to concerns you and other school leaders expressed in a recent school survey about the MBLEx and FSMTB. The third part, Anne Williams will suggest a number of strategies schools can employ to promote student confidence about and success at the MBLEx testing experience. Finally, our participants will field further questions from you. Debra, to set the stage for our discussion, would you share the current pass rates on the MBLEx with the audience?

**Debra:** Yes, between July 1st, 2014, and June 30th, 2015, we had 19,875 people who sat for the MBLEx. The good news is that of those approximately twenty thousand people sixty-nine-point five percent passed. However, slightly over thirty percent of the test candidates failed the MBLEx on the first try. This percentage represents around six thousand people. Of those six thousand people, around four thousand took the test again. The others didn't retest, and we have to assume they may never work in the massage profession or that they delay, and they'll be captured in a different time window. Unfortunately, 67 percent of the people who retest fail again. Some do make a third or even a fourth try, but many don't try again. Last year, around 4,000 prospective massage therapists were lost to the profession or in limbo and afraid to test. This is very concerning to us. We do reach out to candidates who fail the exam multiple times. Sometimes they don't return our calls and many times they're just too embarrassed to tell their school that they've failed, and this of course limits their options to get help.

**Bob:** These are people who attended massage classes, satisfied program requirements, and may have very much wanted a career in massage. Let me share some sobering thoughts, on supply demand implications for the massage therapy profession. If we don't improve success rates for students making it through school and qualifying for licensure. The orange line shows that the number of massage therapists practicing in the United States grew from 138,000 in 1998 to 322,000 16-years later. As a result, the prevalence of massage therapists grew roughly from one for every two-thousand person to one for every one thousand, that's progress. The picture on how we got from 161,000 practitioners in 2000 up to 322,000, in 2014, is not a straight line. First of all, we had 670,000 graduates of massage school during that 15-year period and yet you can see that the total growth of the profession is only a bit over 160,000. The answer to that is that during that same 15-year period 509,000 individuals left the profession stop practicing. That's an average of 34,000 per year leaving the profession, but lately as you well know for a combination of reasons massage school enrollment and graduates have been declining. We are not quite halfway through 2016 as we present this webinar, but our still hazy crystal ball suggests that 2016 could be the year things get tipped over i.e the more people leave the profession than enter it. Thus, the stakes are high for maximizing MBLEx pass rates for all students who truly are well prepared. The profession cannot afford to have MBLEx takers underperform on the exam. In recent months, ABMP has heard from numerous schools who have shared their concerns about what they believe are dipping pass rates on the MBLEx. Many schools have seen their own pass rates drop or cited instances where academically strong students had challenges with the test. Different schools state different reasons for why so many test candidates are failing the MBLEx. ABMP found these perceptions concerning. We set out to more systematically gather school concerns, determine common issues, and facilitate needed good conversations to increase the likelihood that more candidates pass in future years. We approached FSMTB and worked with

them to create a survey we sent to all the school programs in our database. The results eliminated four key challenge areas where we want to focus today. Debra, there's a strong consensus among schools that Computer Adaptive Testing has increased the difficulty of the MBLEx. For those that may not know, can you share a little bit about how computer adaptive testing works?

**Debra:** Certainly, the CAT delivery platform allows the exam to be customized to the ability level of each candidate. The computer basically selects questions that are neither too difficult nor too easy based on the content knowledge demonstrated by each test taker. So, when candidates answer a question correctly a more challenging question is presented to the candidate. If a wrong answer is selected, then a less challenging question is then presented. Candidates must answer enough questions correctly that are at or above an entry-level passing threshold. There is a short video available on our website that explains in a little more detail.

**Bob:** Debra, now would you share why FSMTB moved to Computer Adaptive Testing for the MBLEx? What was the thinking there?

**Debra:** Well CAT reflects best practices in the testing industry and it's both a psychometrically valid and reliable measure of competence. It provides the most accurate assessment of a candidate's ability level and the precision that it offers increases the efficiency of the exam process which allowed us to move to 100 questions on the exam instead of the former 125 questions. It's also used by other primary health care professions, such as nursing to accurately measure knowledge and ability and another important benefit that Computer Adaptive Testing conveys, is reduced exam security risk due to limited item exposure.

**Bob:** Does the FSMTB share school concerns that CAT has increased the difficulty of the MBLEx?

**Debra:** No, and let's consider some data that shows why for the past several years the MBLEx pass rate has hovered fairly consistently around 70 percent. We did see a slight dip in 2010 and some of that's perhaps attributed to introducing the exam in Spanish. For the 12-month period from the introduction of CAT in July 2014 through to June 2015 the pass rate was 69.5 percent and this year so far, we are trending a couple of percentage points higher at about 72 percent. Computer Adaptive Testing uses modern technology to deliver an exam, but it does not change the difficulty or the content of the exam topics and there are many factors that can impact a pass rate. Though, such as the ability of the candidate group or item exposure changes in candidate demographics in terms of English competence, test preparation, and even cheating.

**Bob:** One thing that a number of schools have relayed to ABMP, is that students preparing for the MBLEx, see the sample reference list and complain that the school required them to purchase the wrong textbook if theirs isn't on the list. This is a valid concern for a school despite the clear explanation you've provided in the candidate handbook. Debra, can you explain why FSMTB provides a sample reference list but not the entire list of resources used to develop test questions?

**Debra:** FSMTB doesn't restrict or recommend or require that particular books be used to verify that an exam question is correct. The message therapist writing the question uses a reference text of their choice and then during the review process questions are checked against additional

reference books and there are infinite possibilities against which items can be verified. For anatomy alone there are thousands of possible reference books one could access. Instead, instructors should rely on their professional judgment regarding which textbooks best support their curriculum to prepare students to practice safely and competently at the entry level. In turn, that should be what best supports preparation for the MBLEx. Due to the increasing confusion about the list of books and after consulting with many educators, in 2017, the FSMTB will no longer be providing a reference list. Although we have never suggested that successful MBLEx students need to study from particular textbooks for some reason the book list has taken on that erroneously perceived function. Most of our audience today is pretty familiar with ELAP. For those of you who aren't it was a two-year effort by top educators and instructional designers in our profession to discern what should be taught in core entry-level massage instructional programs to prepare a student to be ready to begin practicing massage safely and effectively. Debra, our recent survey included a statement quote "The FSMTB should use the results of the Entry-Level Analysis Project ELAP as well as the Job Task Analysis to determine appropriate content for the MBLEx in quote a total of 85% believe the MBLEx should reference ELAP would you please explain why the MBLEx doesn't reference ELAP?"

**Debra:** A license indicates that an individual can practice safely and competently on the public. The key word is practice. So, the exam has to be based on practice. The source of the exam content comes from the profession. Several thousand licensed massage and bodywork therapists participate in a job analysis. That's where we find out what therapists actually do in practice, how often they do it, and how important each task is. That provides us with the testing blueprint. The ELAP is an educational blueprint, not a testing blueprint. Although many topics will overlap with the two blueprints. They're developed from different sources and designed for different purposes.

**Bob:** I want to let ABMP's Director of Education, Anne Williams, share some information here. She served on the ELAP work group. While her primary role today remains a couple of minutes away, she has a useful perspective on this particular issue that may alleviate the fears of schools who are evolving their curriculum to better match ELAP recommendations.

**Anne:** Hi everyone, as Bob just mentioned I served as part of the work group that researched and wrote the ELAP blueprint and project report. Our goal with ELAP was to precisely define what a person should know and be able to do to work safely and competently at the entry level. As Debra just mentioned the MBLEx is based on a Job Task Analysis which determines the type of knowledge and skill people are using every day when they work as massage therapists. While the MBLEx might not use ELAP, ELAP used the FSMTB Job Task Analysis as a reference when writing learning outcomes and objectives we cross-referenced every job task to make sure it was covered in ELAP. In fact, ELAP addressed areas that are not yet showing up on the MBLEx because they are not currently practiced by the majority of professionals. A primary example is research literacy. ELAP includes learning objectives for research literacy, but research literacy doesn't show up in job tasks reported by professionals. So, you won't see this area covered on the MBLEx, but research literacy is part of a good educational foundation. So, it's part of the ELAP blueprint. If you compare ELAP and the JTA, you'll see that ELAP is actually more inclusive of

knowledge and skills than the JTA. If you're teaching a program based on ELAP your students will be prepared for the MBLEx. If you need help identifying areas where ELAP and the JTA don't match up, I can help you. Just email me.

**Bob:** If I'm hearing you correctly, over time the Job Task Analysis which informs the MBLEx may come to more fully reflect ELAP content if ELAP ends up influencing future textbook editions and instructional content, but that will be a lengthy process.

**Anne:** Yes, that's correct Bob. It will just take some time.

**Bob:** Debra a significant number of schools reported that they don't feel the FSMTB is communicating effectively with schools around changes to the MBLEx. Would you share with us the methods FSMTB uses to communicate with schools?

**Debra:** Yes, we have been communicating with schools in many ways and at many venues. We presented a variety of national industry events to school instructors, owners, and students. We enjoy conversations and interactions every day with administrators, students, and faculty via phone and email. We have a dedicated MBLEx call center that fields as many as 2000 calls each month and in addition to incoming calls, we also reach out to our candidates, especially if they have a pattern of failing to see how we can help them have a successful experience. We have relationships with schools via the MBLEx executive office, where students and school personnel can contact our Director of Examinations, our school liaison, and candidate support staff. We also send out an electronic newsletter each month specifically for school faculty and administrators. It's called In-Touch With Education. We send out information on social media, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. For the MBLEx, the candidate handbook contains a lot of important information about the MBLEx and related topics. We ship handbooks at no cost to schools. Keep in mind new additions are published each July so don't stock up in May or June or the shelf copies will soon be outdated. And of course, our website is a valuable resource where you can access the handbook immediately and it has other tools for schools, such as informational videos that can be used in the classroom when preparing to take the MBLEx. The videos cover topics about the testing experience, adaptive testing, and exam security.

**Bob:** Debra, as you referenced, FSMTB sends out a monthly newsletter via email to schools. At ABMP, we know from our own efforts, to communicate with schools, that school contacts such as Directors of Education and program managers, often have limited tenure. Turnover can be frequent. What can schools do to make sure the FSMTB has the email address and contact name of the appropriate person on campus?

**Debra:** Good question. It's important that schools take steps to reach out to us too. Contact us by email at [info@fsmtb.org](mailto:info@fsmtb.org) or [mblex@fsmtb.org](mailto:mblex@fsmtb.org).

**Bob:** Are there other ways FSMTB might consider contacting schools in the future about changes? Especially those related to the MBLEx. Is there a role for old-fashioned snail-mail to all school directors when really important changes are made? And finally, how can ABMP support your efforts?

**Debra:** From surveying schools, we found out that electronic communications are preferred as the best method of delivery so that the recipient can more easily disseminate the information to colleagues, and we can also be alerted to any undelivered messages as well as unopened messages. We do publish the candidate handbook in hard copy each year. Some might call that an old-fashioned thing to print on paper. In one instance, we provided a one-year advance notice of a change to the exam, and we still have people claiming they didn't know about it. So, ABMP helps by spreading the message through their own channels and between all of our myriad methods and attempts we do our very best to reach as far and wide as possible.

**Bob:** To briefly recap challenges and solutions, we found that computer adaptive testing has not in fact increased the difficulty of the MBLEx. FSMTB agrees that the textbook reference list is not complete, but they're addressing that by moving toward eliminating the partial list. The results of ELAP, in fact, are not used directly to inform the test. We talked about how long term, there may come to be some influence if textbooks move in that direction. Finally, we learned that indeed FSMTB is reaching out in a broad variety of ways to communicate changes to the MBLEx to schools and if you feel you're not getting that response, they welcome your contacting them and making sure your contact information is up to date on their records. Debra thank you very much. We appreciate that, and we'll be back working with you as we get toward the conclusion of this presentation. As a reminder, if you have additional questions, you can send them via email to Mary or Anne. In Mary's case [info@fsmtb.org](mailto:info@fsmtb.org). In Anne's case, [education@abmp.com](mailto:education@abmp.com). While we understand the sky is not actually falling regarding student performance on the MBLEx, ABMP has higher ambitions and aspirations we are confident message school leaders share. We'd like to see 80 percent, even 90 percent of first-time MBLEx test takers earning a passing score. We expect FSMTB would like to see this too. Yeah, 100 percent would be fantastic, but we understand the reality that not every single student is able to keep their act together through 500 to 1000 hours of classroom instruction or to put in the seat time to use good tools and prep for the MBLEx. Still, we should aspire to initial test taker pass rates north of 70 percent. I want to reintroduce Anne Williams. She is going to share with you curriculum strategies, simple classroom methods you can use. In essence, best practices to better prepare your students for the MBLEx from day one.

**Anne:** Hi everyone! All right let's talk about strategies for helping our students pass the MBLEx starting from day one. We're going to take a hard look at terminology we're going to figure out how to give useful homework that supports our students in their testing process. We're going to deconstruct graded quizzes and we're going to use some problem-solving reviews. So, when we talk about terminology, I mean words that have exact meanings and if you look at this report from the entry level analysis project, the work group identified 2,674 terms that are key to entry-level practice. This is a picture of the beautiful Trevi fountain in Rome and I include this picture because I've been trying to learn Italian for about 14 years and I want you to ask yourself, can you speak a foreign language because that's what learning message is. Look at this. If you were going to learn English, Spanish, French, Dutch, Portuguese, or Italian you would need 250 words just to construct a simple sentence. You would need to be able to understand around 750 words if you are around people who speak the language. 2,500 words are needed to completely understand native speakers and 2,500 words would be needed by you to carry on any

conversation. Learning massage is truly the same as learning any other foreign language and look at what we've got. Our terms have terms. You have to be able to understand eight terms to have a working concept of the word ground substance. It becomes fairly complicated in our profession just to learn the language. I counted up all of the terms on one MBLEx practice exam from their new exam study guide. I counted 543 words that I considered terms. So, to pass the MBLEx, you're going to need to know at least 550 words. Think about the last anatomy lecture you participated in. Whether you were a teacher or a student, often they look like this all of these underlined words are terms and therefore it is no wonder that our learners look like this. Term definitions are learner entry points to information. The great philosopher Kierkegaard said, "if you don't know the language, you can't enter the country". If our learners don't know the language, they don't have an entry point for the content we're trying to teach them on during a particular lecture or lesson. This is an absolutely impossible entry point. This is a door that slammed in your face. Research shows that if a learner is missing the meaning for more than one in 10 words during a lecture, he or she will lose interest and disengage. Alternately, or at the same time, he or she will also experience feelings of discouragement, humiliation, and hopelessness. If these feelings persist, the learner will drop out of classes. If you're dropping more than five percent of your students from classes, take a look at the entry points you're creating in classes. Likely, they're too steep. When you think about terminology, think about these four levels. At level one, a person can match a term to its written definition. So, you could have a list of terms and a list of definitions, and your learner could go through and figure out which belongs with which. That's the lowest level of being able to work with the term in its definition. At level two, I could tell you something about the term. I could say something like, "well, ground substance uh it looks like egg whites, and I think it has something to do with connective tissue." At level three you could give a reasonable definition of a term in your own words and at level 4 you can easily and fluidly use the term to explain other terms. As teachers, we're at level 4 when it comes to terminology. Our students are probably around level one and really, they need to be at level 3 to do well on the MBLEx. So, I want you to ask yourself how many of the 2600 words identified by ELAP could your students explain in their own words? If it's not very many, we need to spend more time on this area in our schools. So, I want you to teach terminology explicitly and systematically and that looks like this. First, of all you're going to define all important terms, even the terms they know, or you think that they should know and what happens when you do this is you get all of your learners on the same piece of territory with all of their feet pointed in the correct direction of the trail. You're telling them, "You're not going to be left behind. We're all starting from the same place". I often do this whenever I do a presentation. Whether it's for teachers, whether it's for students, whether it's for industry professionals, I'll define something really easy and what I'll see out in the audience is everybody nodding their head with me whenever you know something or whenever you can relate to something that a speaker is about to launch into, your anxiety as a learner decreases. You say I've got this. I know this. I understand where we're at. As a teacher when you define easy words, you're creating context for your learner. You're setting them up to take that step forward into new territory.

Next, I want you to match a term with an image and then I want you to use that image only for that term and use it completely consistently. So, if you've got multiple teachers who might need

to cover the word physicians release, they should all be using this particular definition the one that you've agreed as a faculty and they should be matching it to this term and that should happen in every single class. I don't have time here today to go into effective ways to build learner constructs, but this is incredibly important for creating a solid construct for your learner.

Next, provide the official definition and include word parts when it's appropriate and then again always use the official definition and use that same definition. Class to class, term to term, it should always be used consistently by all of your faculty. Now, if the word parts don't actually add anything to the meaning just eliminate them. Don't use them. At that point but if they help you understand something about the meaning then break it down into the word parts and do that fairly consistently. Have your learners verbalize terms when a term comes up, have them say it out loud so they pronounce the term and then have them take a minute and explain the term in their own words to a partner. Have the partner explain it back. You explain it and have them try it again. What happens is verbalization uses a different part of the brain than just thinking and reading something. So, when you get them to verbalize it, they deepen their understanding of it. They deepen their processing; their cognitive processing and they remember it better. Always provide a vocabulary form with complete definitions before lectures. That's right. Give them the complete definitions. You never ever want your learners scribbling out something that you've written on the whiteboard or have as a definition on your slide. Just give it to them. Cover these definitions, cover that lecture that vocabulary form first and then if a learner is listening to your lecture and you say the word elastin fiber and they suddenly find themselves confused, they can refer to their form. They can see the definition, they're back on track with your lecture, and they won't disengage. It serves you on multiple layers in multiple ways turn complicated terms into activities. So, um if I had a word like this spasm and I looked at it and I said wow I've got one, two, three, four, five, six words they need to know to understand this word spasm. I'm going to recognize that as a fairly complicated term. I'm going to have my students break into pairs. They're going to research all of the underlying terms and be ready to explain those underlying terms in their own words. Now when I'm ready to launch into my lecture about spasm. They have the background they need to stay with me. They're not going to get left behind. The other thing that's great about this is I'm teaching an approach to the work, meaning I'm teaching learners how you break down a complicated term and understand it. So, even though I don't need them necessarily to know all these underlined words. For something else, what I'm doing is, I'm showing them how to understand the word as if I weren't there to help them through it. Finally use your terminology slides for regular terminology reviews. So, when you get a set of terminology slides every teacher should share these slides and be using these slides regularly to reinforce terminology. I think you understand that my note to self is that I'm hoping you'll make terminology a top priority. ABMP has a great resource, it's called reinventing the lecture. It's a three-part webinar series I just completed it. It's all based on the latest thinking in instructional design around lectures and it talks about addressing terminology explicitly and systematically in the body of your lecture. If you're a teacher, you can access these in our online education center and then you'll be able to get three CE credits for it. So, we've talked about focusing on terminology. Now, let's talk about useful homework. So, this is homework that doesn't help the situation. I also call this homework that sucks it's simply too much homework, reading assignments that are so lengthy that nobody ever tackles them. When teachers use homework



assignments to teach new content which they should never do and when they're not producing anything that they can use later, if you look at all the research on homework in adult education for vocational learners which is what we're teaching in massage therapy. Over and over again, the research will say no more than seven total hours per week of homework. That is one hour per night. Anything more than that sets them up for failure and your homework should not be teaching anything new. It should be focused on review that they can use for their quiz and exam preparation. So, have your students write quizzes not notes from textbook reading assignments. This is a great recommendation, but it requires a shift in your thinking. So as schools, this is what you have to do to make this work for you your primary cognitive testing method. For your students it has got to be multiple choice questions. These are the types of question forms that are used on the MBLEx. So, if you're using lots of true and false if you're using matching um if you're using fill in the blank because that's actually quite a difficult form of testing but mainly your main testing method should be multiple choice questions. Next, you want to write your quizzes using the same best practices for quiz writing as the MBLEx. I don't have time to cover what those best practices are or to talk about the methods that the MBLEx uses but these are standardized in terms of the way that you should be writing multiple choice questions. I've created a resource. It's called how to write quiz questions. Drop me an email and I'll send you a copy and you can use it in your school whether or not you're an ABMP member. The other thing you should do is purchase the FSMTB's Massage & Bodywork Licensing Examination study guide. You want to use this to make sure that your teachers have a sense of how questions are formatted. They're formatted according to those best practices that we just described. Get a copy of this, make sure all your teachers are familiar with it, and make sure that you are consistently formatting your test questions to prepare students for that day when they will eventually sit and take the MBLEx. Next, you want to teach students how to write quiz questions correctly. Use this ABMP resource that I talked about, hand it out, use it to teach them how to write quiz questions and give them an assignment where they write proper quiz questions. So next, you're going to assign students no more than 10 pages of reading per night and they're going to write quiz questions from that 10 pages of reading. So, an assignment might look like this. Okay learners, you're going to write a five-question multiple choice quiz from your textbook, pages 42 to 52. Make a separate quiz key, then you're going to photocopy everyone's completed quizzes and have students use those copies in a study activity where maybe they take their peers quizzes or to keep for notes or to use to quiz themselves later. Here's the whole point of this. You're teaching her to think like a test writer. You're teaching her to predict how item writers, how test writers figure out what distractors to use, you're teaching her how to set up a key that's the correct answer and then create some really confusing distractors to go around that key. When you do this, you are building her brain capacity to sit down for the MBLEx and to be able to figure out when she doesn't know the answer right off the top of her head. She can now use that strategic thinking that critical thinking to make an educated and informed guess. Next, you're going to have students make flash cards and turn them in for homework points. So, an assignment might look like this. "Okay students, I want you to highlight all of the keywords or the words you don't recognize in your textbook pages 87 to 95. You're going to make flash cards for these terms. You must turn in at least 15 flash cards to get full points. So, these two items are useful. Homework, multiple choice, quizzes instead of notes from textbook, reading assignments

and making flashcards for points that's good homework. All right, so we've talked about terminology and useful homework, let's talk about what it means to deconstruct a graded quiz. Deconstruct means to reduce something to its constituent parts in order to understand those parts better. You know more about chicken noodle soup if you understand something about chicken carrots, celery, and pasta than if you just try to understand the whole of chicken noodle soup right from the beginning. So, your directions again for this are to use multiple choice questions as your primary testing method and then to have students deconstruct their wrong answers on their marked quizzes. So, an assignment might look like this. "Okay learners, I have just passed out your graded quizzes. I want you to take a look at your quizzes identify correct answers and incorrect answers. For each incorrect answer, write the question and the choices, underline the choice you made, highlight the choice you should have made, and then you're going to answer these questions. Why did you choose the option you did? What thinking caused you to rule out the correct option? What do you need to know to get this answer correct if you see it again on another test? Properly deconstructed quiz questions will result in half a point returned to your quiz score. So, if you miss five and you turn them in, you're going to get a half a point for each of those five that you missed. This is an easy way to improve your grade. I have a true story about deconstruction. A student using ABMP's exam coach product called me because she was stressing out about taking the MBLEx. She said that she kept missing exam questions on information that she felt like she knew. So, together I pulled one up and I did a screen share with her and together we went through an exam coach quiz, and I had her deconstruct her wrong answers. What we found was that unknown distractors were a big problem for her. She'd instantly see the correct answer and she'd say well my gut says that it's a but the moment she encountered a distractor, so a wrong answer, that she didn't recognize that term or she didn't recognize something about it she'd lose confidence in herself and pick it because she couldn't rule it out as wrong. She tended to choose it even above the answer she believed was correct. So, based on deconstructing just two quizzes with me she learned this about herself, and she was able to compensate for it when she took the MBLEx, and she passed actually with a really high score she called me to tell me about it and tell me how excited she was. She recognized her own tendency just from deconstructing two quizzes and was able to compensate. Next, use problem solving reviews. So, you want to go back, and you want to add problem solving reviews to every single lecture and you want to be doing these types of reviews anytime you're working with major concepts. So, what that means when I say a problem-solving review, I mean that you're going to place review questions in a scenario-based format with a focus on real-world application. So, there are tons of questions like this in the MBLEx and these really blow students minds if they're not prepared for them. Here's a great example. This is actually from the MBLEx test guide, to feel the ligamentum nuchae change tension underneath the fingers what passive movements can be performed at the head. Now, what happens for a learner is um if it were framed a little bit differently, this look, the learner wouldn't have problems with it, but the learner says to him or herself, "I've never felt the ligamentum nuchae change tension underneath my fingers while performing passive movements at the head. I don't have an actual sensation of having done that, so I don't know the answer to this". They actually do they just have to work it out they have to critically think about it they have to visualize that circumstance and imagine the head moving and feeling the ligamentum nuchae while that occurs. So, here's another one at her

last session sally brought the practitioner an aromatherapy candle, this time she offers a soy latte these behaviors are consistent with, we all know, it's transference, right? But what happens is if we were to say to the student, "when a client attempts to personalize the therapeutic relationship it's called Transference". The minute we're putting it into this real-world scenario the student doesn't recognize it and their mind gets blown. So, the minute they lose confidence in themselves they're going to start doing that thing we just talked about. Where they're going to choose distractors that they don't recognize the term. That they don't know even about something that they believe they do know, because they've lost confidence so these real-world scenario questions that they will encounter over and over again on the MBLEx really freak them out we've got to get them more prepared.

Here's another example. During a visual assessment a practitioner observes that the client's cervical curve is abnormally decreased. Which muscle is most likely to be hypertonic? Now if we were to say something like, "in the condition commonly referred to as military neck, which muscle would be hypertonic?" The students going to get it because they know that information, they've learned it in our class. Suddenly though, in this real-world scenario they're going to struggle to break down the fact the cervical curve abnormally decreased which condition does that occur and that occurs in military neck. Okay now I'm on to something. So again, you can see how important it is for your students to start working with these critical thinking questions that they're going to encounter on the MBLEx. One thing you can do to support your students in this process is, you can turn these reviews into fun peer activities. What you're going to do is give each student two cards. The first has an A and B on opposite sides, the second has a C and D on opposite sides. You present one of these scenario-based questions and the learners hold up the card that they believe it is, and you're going to have different answers so one person's going to say A another B another C another D it's going to be all over the place. That's a good thing. You want them to pair up with someone who has answered differently from them and then what they're going to do is they're going to try to talk each other into their own answer. What they do when they do this is they reveal their critical thinking process for each other. Those students who are strong critical thinkers will demonstrate, will model for a student who has less developed skills, their thinking process. They're going to say, "well I pretended that I was sitting at my client's neck and that my fingers were on the ligamentum nuchae and then I just imagined what I would feel when they turn their head in different ways." They're going to show a student who's not naturally good at this how to think it through and over time your learners are going to get better and better and better at approaching issues that require their critical thinking. So, that's what we've got to do. We have reached the end of this main piece. We've got to focus on terminology, give useful homework, deconstruct graded quizzes, use problem solving reviews. Those are the four things we can do every single day in our classes to improve exam scores. So, I also want to talk about some common challenges facing students as the MBLEx draws near. First of all, they get overwhelmed with the enormity of the task before them. When they considering studying, that means you need to do this, provide your students with a study plan. This is an organized schedule that outlines study topics and learning tasks. So, it might be as simple as doing something like this, where you give them maybe two or three tasks that they're going to do, and the task should take them about an hour and you're going to break it down by bite-sized chunks. You don't want your students studying broadly you want them to study in chunks and

this is often a mistake they make. They try to they try to study all of the different topics at once. One topic at a time. Just work on one at a time, but continually move on, don't stay with one for too long but continually move on. Each study session should be its own topic don't integrate until the very end. You're going to need at least an eight-week study plan to help your students start to prepare. They should plan to do an eight-week study plan and then do a practice exam of a hundred questions that they use diagnostically to figure out where they're weak. Here's the second obstacle. They choose the wrong study method. Research shows that what students do as they start to prepare for a really big exam is they return to their textbooks. They read chapters and take notes this is the least effective study way. You don't want them doing this. This should be happening early in their programs and at the point they start to study for the MBLEEx they need to use different methods. These are the top three methods they should be using. Flash cards: they should be explaining key terms out loud in their own words not looking at the definition, but then using it to prompt. They should practice being able to explain keywords in their own language. Then you want them taking 10 question topic-specific practice quizzes over and over and over again in those key areas. So, remember this, when we talked way back then about giving useful homework well the reason, we have to do that is if we don't give them useful homework, they won't have the tools they need to start to practice for the MBLEEx. At the end of their massage journey, they need to have flash cards for all topics and all subjects. They need to have complete vocabulary lists with definitions and they need to have a whole bunch of practice quizzes that they can use for studying. So, obstacle number three, they don't have ready-to-use study materials and as a result they end up as an MBLEEx statistic, the wrong kind. So now I'm going to quickly and shamelessly plug the product that I worked three years to help develop with our team here at ABMP. It's called ABMP Exam Coach. It's based on the research that I just reviewed. How should people study for a big exam like the MBLEEx? Exam Coach is based around the idea that students should study in these three ways, terminology, flash cards, practice quizzes. So, when you go and again in bite-sized chunks. So, in the subject of kinesiology, right now I'm studying the spine and the thorax, right? And I can look. I go to this big vocabulary list when I click on a term it gives me the terminal it gives me the definition and I can hear the term pronounced. We've pronounced over 2,400 terms for you. So, what happens is this becomes an incredibly useful study tool I can work through every single one of these words and try to explain it in my own language and then check it by clicking on the term. Next, Exam Coach has over 5,000 interactive flash cards. They're all done and ready to use. Once you've mastered a card you click the green box, and it removes it from your rotation. You can always add it back later, but it removes it, so you stay focused on the information that you need to know, not the stuff you've already learned. Finally, and the other thing about the quizzes is that we have unlimited quizzes you can take as many as you want in all 74 topics. So again, it's keeping that learning really really chunked and it never reinforces the wrong answers. It always tells you oops wrong answer. Try again. Finally, after that eight week of study that we talked about, you have four 100-question practice exams that simulate the weighting of questions as the MBLEEx simulates them. So, 13% will be A and P 17% will be assessment for example and then you have 1 hour and 50 minutes to answer those 100 questions. So, it really gets you ready for the pressure of being tested and one of the things that research shows is that you need to be taking longer tests because people get exam fatigue. If they haven't really practiced taking long tests, then as the test

gets towards the end, they'll start to miss more and more questions. Or at least research shows this because they simply get tired. So, they need to take at least they need to take these four practice exams to really be prepared and have the stamina they need when they get to the big test. The other thing that Exam Coach does is it gives you really clear direction on where you're weak. So, it takes those 74 chunk topics and it says, "you know what you're doing great everywhere, you could use a little bit more study on ethics and you definitely need more study on equipment and safety. Go back and study those particular areas before you take another test. So, that's our product ABMP Exam Coach. If you want to find out more about it you can always call us and we can set you up with a demo. The other thing we have and this one is completely free so check it out. We have a "passed the test" section of student life. Student life is a big free student network we created to support students in integrating all the things they need to integrate as students. So, it's a treasure trove of resources that teachers can also tap. Check this out it's totally free to everyone whether or not you're a member. Okay. I blew through that. Hopefully, I didn't take too long. Those are some ideas for ways that you can better prepare your students for the MBLEx starting from day one. If you need any help or if you have questions, you can always contact me and at abmp.com or my extension is 644 and I'm happy to help you in any way that I can. Thanks so much.

**Bob:** Thanks Anne. Now in this final part of the presentation, let's discuss some of the other questions that came up on the recent survey. Here's a wicked one to start off. What is FSMTB's recommendation to schools about what to tell students about the complicated math, psychometrics, and scoring systems used in computer adaptive testing design?

**Debra:** Understanding advanced applied mathematical algorithms is really best left to psychometricians who spend years in school to understand and work with the material and we work with teams of psychometricians. So, students should really focus on message. This is their time to demonstrate their knowledge, not be concerned with mathematical formulas.

**Bob:** Debra in a careful review of the comments made by survey participants, a number of people expressed concern that candidates could not flag questions and come back to them later. I understand that this is part of the way a CAT test works, but perhaps you could discuss this in more depth to increase the understanding here.

**Debra:** With Computer Adaptive Testing the computer selects the next question based on the prior response. It's a very linear process. So, a candidate would not suddenly jump from an extremely easy question to an impossibly difficult one. It really does stay in the range of the student ability. In addition, we find that those who go back and change an answer typically choose the wrong answer anyway.

**Bob:** Debra another comment that we saw during the survey review was that the practice exam and FSMTB's new MBLEx guide seems much easier to candidates than the actual test. Can you speak to this concern and also talk about how you develop the guidebook and how you want people to use it?

**Debra:** This is interesting because those questions actually came from the MBLEx. They were live questions definitely active items but are obviously retired now. The guide was developed by

licensed massage therapists. It's been reviewed by students and educators before it was published. It's important to note that it's an interactive study guide. It's not a review course designed to flesh out exam topics. It's not looking to teach course material and importantly it also shares the limits of the depth of material, including what will not be tested.

**Bob:** A number of survey participants noted they don't feel there's enough guidance provided on what to study. Schools want to know which pathologies they should teach. Which special populations does the Job Task Analysis indicate are important and which modalities do students need to know to pass the exam? There are hundreds of pathologies out there. Surely, we don't expect an entry-level therapist to know them all. Without guidance, how will schools know what they should teach? Can you address this concern for schools?

**Debra:** We do offer a free item writing training which would give insight into how the exam items are developed. Every item is reviewed multiple times and so, obscure pathologies would not make it onto the exam for example. Remember that the MBLEx is a licensing exam. It's testing for safe and competent practice We're not looking for anybody to be diagnosing all medical conditions. It's also not our job to teach the content for the test. Merely reflect what is seen in practice.

**Bob:** One final comment seemed to crop up repeatedly. Can you share with listeners why the FSMTB has instituted a 30-day wait before people can retest?

**Debra:** Yes, as we saw earlier that those people retaking the MBLEx have a 67% failure rate. This is because the MBLEx is very highly statistically reliable. Which means that if a candidate were to take the test today and fail it and take it again tomorrow, they would fail again assuming there was no other intervention and what we found was that people were returning home and reapplying in 24 hours with no intervention to change the outcome. So, the 30-day wait period is a measure to allow candidates time to study, to seek help and potentially change the outcome to a passing result. Which is what we all want.

**Bob:** To close our session, let's briefly review our discussion. Last year 30.5 percent of candidates failed the MBLEx on the first try and 67 percent failed on the second try. We lost somewhere around 4,800 potential massage therapists. We know what we have to do. We have to teach terminology explicitly and systematically and make it a top priority. We have to give useful homework assignments that help students build the right kind of study tools. We have to deconstruct graded quizzes to help students better understand their thinking processes. We want to place review questions in a scenario-based format with a focus on real-world application to better prepare students for these types of questions on the MBLEx. We want to help students overcome their common test-taking obstacles. Next year, let's tell a different story. Let's make sure we don't lose people who want a career in the massage profession. Instead, let's make sure our graduates get to tell us I passed the MBLEx. Thank you.

[Music]