

# Idaho Mastery Education

## A Toolkit for Families



### IDAHO MASTERY EDUCATION - A TOOLKIT FOR IDAHO FAMILIES

- Learn the story behind Idaho Mastery Education
- Understand what Idaho Mastery Education looks like in action
- Get ready to discuss specifics with your child's teacher(s)
- Address some common myths and misconceptions
- Find out where to learn more

### DEAR PARENT

You might have heard about Idaho Mastery Education in the news or from a friend. You may be wondering, what is Idaho Mastery Education, and what impact will it have on my child? This kit is designed to help answer questions you may have and provide a foundation for further discussion with your child's teacher(s).

Idaho mastery education gives every student the opportunity to grow and succeed, to develop persistence and determination. It gives teachers the opportunity to meet individual children where they are and lets students learn at their optimal pace.

### MUST-KNOW FACTS ABOUT IDAHO MASTERY EDUCATION

We hope that you'll read everything in this kit, but until you have time, here are the most important things to know:

- This isn't an education fad or experiment.
  - This is an educational update happening across Idaho and other states. It's based on the reality that no child is "average." Every child has different strengths and needs, and that will never change.
- Idaho Mastery Education can look different from classroom to classroom.
  - Each school and classroom can apply Idaho Mastery Education in a way that takes into account their unique situation, resources, and student needs.
- Idaho Mastery Education insists that every child can learn.
  - Idaho Mastery Education is rooted in the idea that each child is more than average. Every child deserves the opportunity to be challenged and to succeed.

# IDAHO MASTERY EDUCATION - AN INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS

- Offers flexibility
- Promotes transparency
- Instills a desire to learn
- Develops real-world skills
- Ensures success
- Personalizes learning

## MASTERY EDUCATION IN IDAHO

In December of 2012, then-Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter created the Task Force for Improving Education. The 30-member committee met more than 15 times over the next 8 months and ultimately made 20 recommendations.

Their first recommendation was to transition the state to a mastery education system. House Bill 110, passed by the Idaho Legislature during the 2015 session, directed the Idaho State Department of Education, under the leadership of Superintendent Sherri Ybarra, to move Idaho toward a mastery education model.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

Idaho Mastery Education lets students advance as they master concepts and skills, regardless of their age or the time it takes to get there. The approach and pace in a classroom are designed to match each student’s unique personality, needs, and learning style.

In an Idaho Mastery Education classroom, one group of students could be exploring math tutorials on tablets, with each student’s instructional video specifically tailored to his or her skill level. Another group may be working on a group project, learning not only the material itself but also collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills. A final group may be working on individual projects, with the teacher there to support them as needed.

Students receive frequent feedback to show progress on learning targets, reflect on how they best learn, and celebrate growth in real time. Each school district will determine how best to use mastery education for their unique student population.

Lawmakers defined mastery education as a system where “student progress is based upon a student’s demonstration of mastery of competencies and content, not seat time or the age or grade level of the student.”

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MY STUDENT?

Idaho Mastery Education meets children where they are and lets them learn in ways that are best for them. It allows for more personalized, differentiated learning, and provides support to struggling students before they advance, preventing future failure.

If your student is in a school that has adopted Idaho Mastery Education, you can rest assured that they will benefit from a personalized learning experience, receive assistance when needed, and advance—and graduate—with the skills necessary for future college and career success.

### ***Alex - 2nd grade excels in reading***

When Alex excels, Idaho Mastery Education:

- Offers different types of learning opportunities
- Lets him move at an optimal pace
- Offers teacher guidance

### ***Sarah - 9th grade struggles with science***

When Sarah struggles, Idaho Mastery Education:

- Offers different types of learning opportunities
- Lets her move at an optimal pace
- Offers teacher guidance

## **GET THE FACTS ABOUT IDAHO MASTERY EDUCATION**

### **Idaho Mastery Education Isn't**

- Idaho Mastery Education isn't a move to technology, and it doesn't mean giving every student an iPad or computer.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't just a new way of assessing student progress.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't the latest education fad or experiment.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't going to happen overnight.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't just for struggling students, or just for students who need to be more challenged.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't a way of making children teach themselves.
- Idaho Mastery Education isn't a top-down mandate, or a one-size-fits-all system.

### **Idaho Mastery Education Is**

- Idaho Mastery Education is a way of teaching that recognizes each student's unique strengths and needs. Some schools will use technology and devices in the classroom. These can be useful tools for teachers and students, but they are just that—tools. These technologies aren't a required part of Idaho Mastery Education. Also, using these technologies doesn't mean a school is using Idaho Mastery Education.
- Idaho Mastery Education is focused on measuring a student's mastery of skills and concepts. Because of this, many Idaho Mastery Education classrooms will measure students' mastery based on some form of performance assessment. Assessments aren't just tests—teachers can assess students through assignments, projects, performances, and in other ways. Teachers give assessments to students when they are confident that the students will be fully successful. A low score on an assessment is a sign that the student wasn't ready to move forward. It's a chance to go back, practice more, and try again.

- Idaho Mastery Education is an educational update that changes the way we prepare students for careers, college, and life. Idaho's educational update to mastery education started in 2012. This is a fundamental change that asks all Idahoans to rethink how students learn and what they are capable of. Changes this big take time and effort, but we owe our children nothing less.
- Idaho Mastery Education is meant to serve each and every individual student. Sometimes the education system is designed to serve the average student. But in reality, no student is "average." Instead, each student has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses. Idaho Mastery Education lets students spend more time and effort on concepts that they are struggling to master. Students can move quickly through material that they do grasp so that they continue to be challenged.
- Idaho Mastery Education is a flexible system that allows teachers to step in quickly when a student starts to struggle. Idaho Mastery Education asks students to take ownership of their education. It invites individual students to help decide how they will learn. A teacher in an Idaho Mastery Education classroom should use many different teaching methods, including self-led, group, and one-on-one. Parents in an Idaho Mastery Education school know what their students are currently learning and can watch their growth over time.
- Idaho Mastery Education is being planned and led by teachers with decades of experience in the classroom. Educators from your school are able to work with other Idaho teachers to deepen their knowledge about Idaho Mastery Education and figure out how it will work at your child's school.

### **What does a student-centered experience look like?**

Learners participate in a range of different learning techniques (teacher-facilitated, small group, individual, conferencing) and flexible groupings with other students based on their specific goals or needs.

Learners are regularly engaged in crafting, leading, and sharing the results of their inquiry, and can talk about their experiences: how they make connections and build background knowledge, how they go deep on a topic, the process of synthesizing information and reflecting; and finally, the creation of work products or performances to demonstrate Mastery.

Learners have ongoing opportunities to build strong relationships with adults, including parents and educators, who will continue to be formally engaged in their learning.

Learners access their learning data in real time and can take a leading role in discussing, reflecting, and evaluating their work relative to their goals.

Learners have a range of meaningful choices within units of study. Those choices are designed to make the curriculum relevant to the individual student, foster the student's self-regulatory abilities, and support interest-based learning and career exploration. Students have regular and varied opportunities to learn key cognitive (thinking) and metacognitive (awareness of thinking) skills and strategies. Students have sufficient time to practice and apply new skills and strategies in both group and independent settings.

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER**

Hopefully, this packet answered many of your questions about Idaho Mastery Education. However, because Idaho Mastery Education is designed to be flexible, local, and student-centered, it may look a bit different in each classroom, and for each student. Here are some ideas to help guide a conversation with your child's teacher.

- How have this school's teachers been trained to accommodate this new approach?
- How can I support my child best in this new environment?
- How does my child need to be prepared to start school?
- How will I be kept up-to-date on my student's progress, including any challenges my student may be facing?
- If we move, how will my child's skills transfer to a school that hasn't adopted Idaho Mastery Education?
- My student has an IEP. What does this mean for them?
- My student has been identified as gifted or high achieving. What does this mean for them?
- What happens if my child is struggling to master a concept? How will they get caught up?

**STILL HAVE QUESTIONS? INTERESTED IN LEARNING EVEN MORE?  
VISIT [WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV](http://WWW.SDE.IDAHO.GOV)**