Mastery-Based Education: A National Perspective

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Goals

- Build understanding of what mastery-based education looks like and why it’s compelling, and
- Address frequently-asked questions on how to design and implement mastery-based education.
What does a mastery-based education system look like?

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What can we learn from other states?

A Snapshot of Competency Education State Policy Across the United States (2013)
What is a “mastery-based education system?”

- Idaho definition: “An education 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.” (House Bill 110)

- Similar to:

  MASTERY-BASED
  COMPETENCY-BASED
  PROFICIENCY-BASED
What is a “mastery-based education system”

...to which we suggest other key ingredients:
Questions for districts considering mastery-based education:

- **What are the learning targets or competencies** that best represent the skills and knowledge students are expected to master? What is the relationship between the program or school’s learning targets and state standards?

- How, and how often, will student progress toward learning targets be assessed? What kinds of *interim benchmarks and formative assessments* will be needed?

- How will students **demonstrate mastery**?

- How will teachers and students **track progress**? What kinds of learning management systems, adapted grade-books, and student-managed tracking tools will be needed?

- How will the program **grade and award credit**?

- How can the system, once developed, be **clearly communicated** to students, families and other stakeholders?

*Source: “Making Mastery Work,” Nellie Mae Education Foundation*
What State Policies, Practices, and Structures Support Mastery-Based Systems?

Outcomes

1. States define and systematize college and career readiness consistent with deeper learning
2. States enable personalized learning and prepare the educator workforce so that all students can succeed
3. States establish balanced systems of assessment to meaningfully measure college and career readiness
4. States anchor accountability in college and career readiness
5. States develop seamless pathways to college and career

Goal

Prepare every student for college and career

Enabling Conditions & Implementation Levers:
- Structures for collaboration, sharing, scaling
- Research and evaluation strategy
- Flexibility or customized assistance to districts
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement

http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Digital_Resources/Innovation_in_Action_State_Pathways_for_Advancing_Student-Centered_Learning.html
Why is this kind of system compelling?

- Students are neither lost nor bored, but **learning is optimally paced** and provides what they need in-the-moment.
- Students aren’t passed along grade to grade despite missing large swaths of information; they are asked to **keep working until they can demonstrate mastery** of each critical concept or competency.
- Students’ learning gaps aren’t ignored. With real-time data and technological supports, **students and teachers know exactly what students have and have not mastered**, and can build from there.
- Learning isn’t something done to students; students take **greater ownership and investment** in their education because learning is relevant and connected to their interests.
- Students don’t just learn academic facts; they **develop skills and dispositions important to their futures** such as problem solving, collaboration, communication, initiative, and self-determination.
Does it work?

AK: Chugach School District
- State test scores rose from bottom quartile to the 72nd percentile.
- Participation in college entrance exams rose from zero to 70%.
- Teacher turnover dropped to 2% from 55%.

MA: Boston Day and Evening Academy
- 90% passed MCAS in ELA even though 55% began with less than eighth-grade reading skills.
- 80% passed MCAS in math even though 63% began with less than eighth-grade math skills.

CA: Lindsay Unified School District
- Proficiency increased 9% in ELA, 4% in math, and 14% in science.
- Scores on the state’s API increased from 644 to 691.
- Suspension rates dropped 41% and gang membership fell from 18% to 3%.
What do parents and teachers think?

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QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
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