



MASTERY RECOGNIZED

How do we create policies and systems that allow learners to progress upon mastery?

IDAHO MASTERY-BASED EDUCATION: STAGING GUIDE



MASTERY RECOGNIZED | POLICIES & SYSTEMS

HOW DO WE CREATE POLICIES AND SYSTEMS THAT RECOGNIZE MASTERY?

Like any quality system that is responsible for student learning, a mastery-based education system is focused on creating the best environment for students to learn and become really good at things. Some of the key differentiators of mastery learning involve the systems-level approach to time, grades, advancement, and human capital that are focused on creating opportunities to demonstrate increasing competence and redesigning systems to recognize mastery. This involves removing barriers that have become a norm in the education system but actually do not serve to help young people gain competence.

Schedule - Because no research-based, ideal schedule exists, organize time to enable the practices that do have a research basis and to create opportunities for experiences that align with its stated values. Time should be flexible enough to support paces of learning determined by learner needs and to enable learners on-demand access to the materials, experts, and opportunities they'll need to accelerate their learning.

Staff Configurations - Personalized, competency-based learning changes the role of the classroom teacher. Teachers have always played many roles, but new systems place new demands on them. Effective mastery-based schools create differentiated roles for educators that model personalized, mastery-based mindsets and provide sufficient time and support to allow teachers the opportunity to build expertise, take on new responsibilities, and continue to learn and develop.

Grading & Advancement - In mastery-based education systems:

- The purpose of reporting or "grading" is to support and enhance learning. The goal is developing competency, and how long and how many tries don't matter.
- Mastery-based "grades" are adopted because they value growth over time and opportunities for revision; they are fluid, rather than permanent, instilling a growth mindset to help build student self-efficacy.
- "Grades" are transparent messages of progress that can precisely communicate to all stakeholders what has been learned and what comes next because they are connected to specific learning expectations.
- Transparent "grades" enable transparent advancement and crediting—everyone involved in the decision understands the criteria for moving forward.



What needs to **shift** within these areas?



And what are the **indicators** of mastery-based systems and policies?

Whether or not you have been using the frame of mastery based education, let's start by identifying current policies and systems and how they support mastery learning.

KEY SHIFTS TO MASTERY

from

Where is your team on the journey?

to

DRIVERS OF POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

Lack of a common set of values

Community values drive the design of policies and systems to support a culture of mastery. Policies and systems are the bridge between the statutes and the daily practices in the school. They have to be grounded in the same values that the community wants to manifest in the classroom.

A common mission and vision for student competence

ORGANIZATION OF TIME

Focused on adult needs

Time is organized to responsively meet the needs of educators and learners. Flexible use of time supports personalized pathways and pacing, and ensures equitable opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Flexible use of time

ADULT ROLES

Organized to meet adult needs

Differentiated adult roles responsively meet the needs of learners and leverage professionals' strengths to support personalized pathways and pacing, and ensure equitable opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Differentiated adult roles

GRADING, ADVANCEMENT, AND CREDITING

Gateways & uncertainty

Equitable, transparent, performance-based grading, advancement, and crediting policies enable students to progress to higher-level work and meet important milestones based on demonstrated readiness.

Equitable, transparent, performance-based

TRACKING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Prioritizes reporting

Systems to track growth and manage data support student agency and make student progress and achievement clear to all stakeholders.

Prioritizes tracking growth

INDICATORS OF MASTERY



SYSTEM INDICATORS



STUDENT LEARNING INDICATORS

DRIVERS OF POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

Policies and systems are grounded in the values essential to mastery learning: equity, growth, responsiveness, flexibility, and transparency.

Students learn in an environment that is equitable, growth-oriented, responsive, flexible, and transparent.

ORGANIZATION OF TIME

Flexible, responsive scheduling enables personalized student pacing for developing and demonstrating competence.

Learners build and demonstrate their growing competence at the time and the pace appropriate to their needs.

ADULT ROLES

Flexible, differentiated roles enable adults to leverage their strengths to provide responsive supports to ensure all learners develop competence.

Students access learning partners, resources, tools, and supports they need when they need them.

GRADING, ADVANCEMENT, AND CREDITING

A clear purpose, with strong ties to the culture of mastery, drives equitable and transparent grading, advancement, and crediting policies and practices, which are agency-promoting, grounded in research, and built on a common understanding of the competencies.

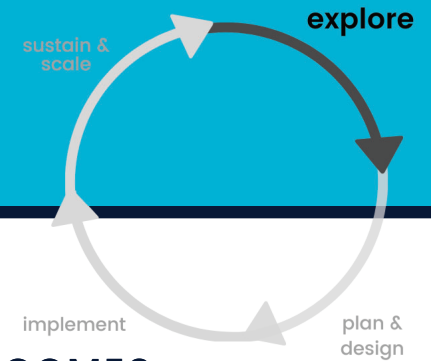
Students and adults collaborate to build a shared understanding of the competencies, which they use to equitably identify goals, communicate growing competence, determine advancement, and certify achievement.

TRACKING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Competency-based data management systems enable students, teachers, and families to collaboratively monitor learner progress against individualized goals.

Students and adults collaboratively and continuously gather, document, and analyze, in real time, an array of student data to respond to learner needs, supporting their growth.

MASTERY RECOGNIZED | explore



Explore and envision policies and systems that support progression upon mastery.

What are the systems and policies that define mastery learning, and where is your team in the journey towards ensuring it all aligns to the vision of helping students become competent?

Begin to self-assess your assets and needs in the policy and systems domain.



OUTCOMES

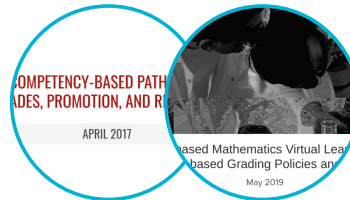
- Identify a specific policy or system to address.
- Establish a goal for policy or systems work.



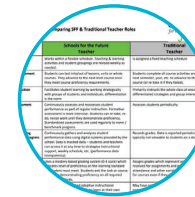
KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES



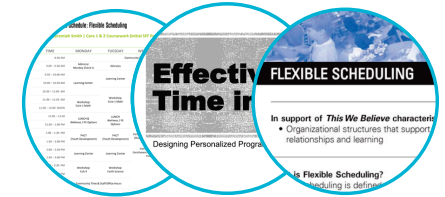
Explore policies and systems of mastery-based education. Start with a broad introduction for your team from the *Explore Series*.



Analyze current systems and policies. Do they support or undermine stated values and a culture of mastery? Begin by identifying practices, policies, and systems that are already in place in your system. A good introduction to the topic can be found in *Decision Points for Grades, Promotion, Reporting and Mastery-based Grading Policies and Practices*.



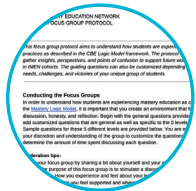
Explore Differentiated Roles. Consider how the shift to mastery-based learning could impact teacher roles. This resource, *What's different? Comparing SFF & Traditional Teacher Roles*, describes how one system reimaged what it means to be a teacher.



Explore flexible organization of time. Look at how other mastery-based systems organize time to maximize personalization. *How Schools for the Future Works: Student Schedules, Creative Uses of Time in School*, and *Flexible Scheduling Research Summary* can get you started.



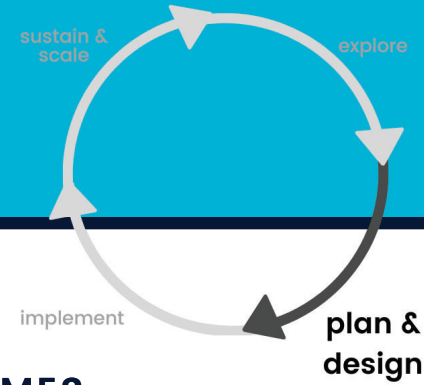
Complete the Self-Assessment. Use the *Policy & Systems Self-Assessment* to to identify an entry point for your work.



Assess perceptions of current policy and practice. Gather student insights into their perception and experience of grading practices and policies using surveys or the *IMEN Student Focus Group Protocol*. Extend to other stakeholders.

For Recommended Reading check out Appendix C.

MASTERY RECOGNIZED | plan & design



Plan, design, and build capacity to support progress upon mastery.

Plan the work needed to shift your system to one that advances mastery learning, rather than creates obstacles for recognizing mastery. Develop the capacity of teachers, parents, and students to understand learning goals, student progress, and grading process and philosophy to create a collaborative relationship between all stakeholders. This is deep work, so pace yourself!

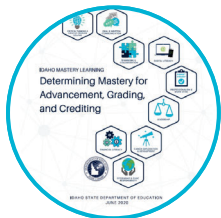
OUTCOMES



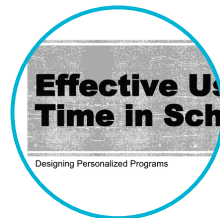
- An actionable plan to meet the goal for policy and systems change identified in the EXPLORE stage.
- A common understanding of the policies and systems that support mastery learning.



KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES



Design Equitable, Transparent Performance-based Grading, Advancement, and Crediting Policies. Identify the values you want to promote and the practices that align with those values and develop policies that support them. Communicate how those policies should be implemented. The *Guide to Determining Mastery*, can guide you through the process.



Design Flexible Organization Of Time. *Creative Uses of Time in Schools* outlines a process for organizing time to meet specific goals of your mastery-based learning system.

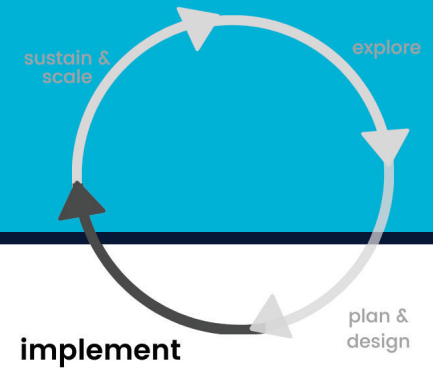


Systematize transparency and equity. *Collaborative scoring* of student work is one way to build a shared understanding of the fine details of the competencies, which can also help teachers communicate the competencies to students. Creating opportunities to help *parents* understand competencies is also vital.

Design Differentiated Adult Roles. Ask how your system can, in the words of Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, "get the right people on the bus in the right seats." Conduct a Functional Audit: identify needs that are unmet, poorly met, or create unnecessary strain and drain. Identify individuals in your system who have talent or expertise in specific areas, and develop a plan to deploy them where those assets can be leveraged and further developed.

Identify System for Tracking Student Growth and Managing Student Data. Begin by collecting requirements. What functionality do you need a tracking platform to be able to do? This might be limited to tracking progress on competencies, while relying on current systems to handle other functions such as student information, scheduling, and reporting. On the other end, it might mean creating a wishlist for features in an all-in-one solution that unifies the functions of a traditional student information system with courseware. Once you've identified the must-haves, and perhaps some nice-to-haves as well, begin to explore platforms.

MASTERY RECOGNIZED | implement



Implement plan, provide feedback and support, engage in action research.

Go slow to go fast. Of all the changes involved in shifting to mastery learning systems, those that touch on grading, scheduling, and staffing are most visible, have the widest impact, and are most closely tied to tradition. *Going slow to go fast* means building a wide coalition of stakeholders and communicating frequently. It also allows time to build systems and policies that reflect both the values of the community and to incorporate what has been learned through implementation in other areas.



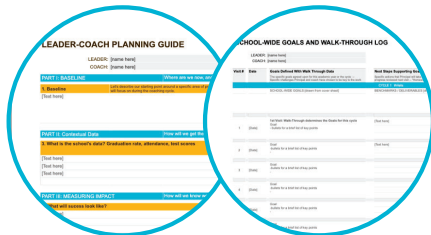
OUTCOMES

Data to inform

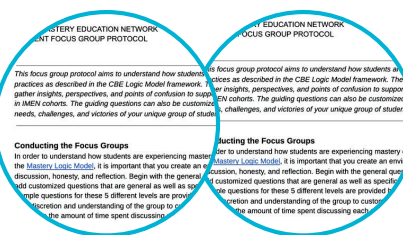
- evaluation of goals identified in your plan for policy and systems to support mastery-based education; and
- development of new goals and plans.



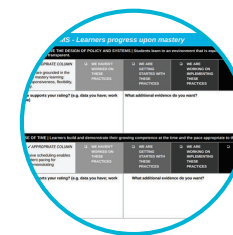
KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES



Implement new policy and systems
Implementing changes to grading, scheduling, and staffing with integrity requires capacity building. Deliver an array of differentiated professional learning opportunities, followed up with opportunities for learners to practice and receive feedback. The **Admin Log** and **Teacher Plan** in the [School-based Coaching Plan](#) are designed to support this work.



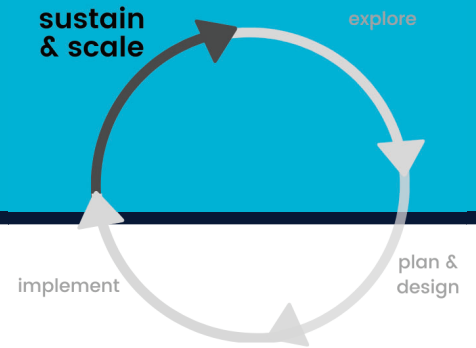
Measure impact
Use tools such as the [Student Focus Group Protocol](#) and [Teacher Focus Group Protocol](#) to collect data about the impact of system and policy changes on practice and on adult and student culture. Use data to respond to unanticipated needs and identify potential tweaks or opportunities for additional learning or communication.



Reflect
Use insights gathered during implementation to inform the ongoing shifts to mastery-based curriculum and assessment.

Periodically revisit the [Self-Assessment](#), using it as a touchstone for progress.

MASTERY RECOGNIZED | sustain & scale



Establish SYSTEMS for sustained implementation and collaborative practice.

Systematize processes for promoting ongoing improvement. Ensure formal structures are in place to provide teachers with opportunities to leverage new policies and systems, and to implement with integrity.



OUTCOME

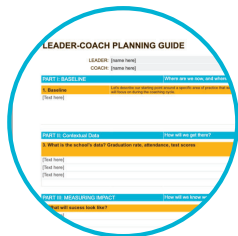
Formalized, sustainable, and scalable systems for continuous review of policies and systems to support mastery-based learning.



KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Continue to refine sustainable support structures.

Adapting the *School-based Coaching Plan* to incorporate teacher-to-teacher observation and coaching can help teachers prepare for new roles or make effective use of unfamiliar schedules.



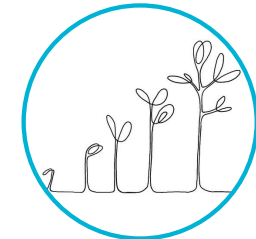
Induct new teachers into existing practices and policies

Create a system to ensure new teachers have the opportunity to learn and implement mastery learning practices. Coaching is an integral component to demonstrate partnership with teachers as they engage in deep paradigm shifts.



Keep equity in the forefront through routine systems analysis

Each year, engage stakeholders in broader collaborative analysis to address any unresolved barriers to the equitable opportunities for learners to be recognized for mastery.



Share results

Document practice and collect data to identify effective policy and systems, and share results within and outside the system.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

Click on the section of the Staging Guide you want to explore.

INTRODUCTION

STUDENTS
EMPOWERED



LEARNING
PERSONALIZED



COMPETENCIES
DEMONSTRATED



MASTERY
RECOGNIZED



APPENDICES