Harnessing the Benefits of Mastery-based Learning
2023 Legislative Priority

**WSPTA recognizes that more can be done to close the opportunity and achievement gaps in our educational methods and that implementing mastery-based learning instructional strategies has the potential to directly reduce those gaps when implemented so that all students succeed.**

**Background**

According to the Seattle Times Education Lab, in the 2020-2021 school year, 83% of Washington State students graduated on time; however, fewer than half of students met standards in English, math and science, as measured by standardized tests.\(^1\)

Mastery-based Learning (MBL) is an instructional strategy and educational philosophy that has risen in popularity recently because students must achieve a level of mastery (90%-100%) prior to moving forward to learn a new concept. Below are a few key differences between Mastery Based Learning and traditional education approaches:

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<tr>
<th>Mastery Based Learning</th>
<th>Traditional Education Models</th>
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<td>A customizable instructional strategy</td>
<td>Curriculum based approach</td>
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<td>Mastery before moving on is first priority</td>
<td>Maximum amount of information by end of year</td>
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<td>Time to reach mastery is not fixed by student</td>
<td>Whole class expected to progress at same pace</td>
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<td>Students taught how to learn constantly</td>
<td>Focus is on how much information is retained</td>
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<td>A student demonstrates mastery until Meets or Exceeds learning standard for that concept</td>
<td>Class moves on regardless of concept mastered creating a gap that compounds over time</td>
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<td>Testing is used positively to measure how well a student is progressing toward mastery</td>
<td>High stakes testing often identifies current knowledge, not mastery of a concept</td>
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<td>Supports are given immediately for all students and peer to peer mentoring is highly encouraged</td>
<td>Supports are given if available and for the time allotted to reach some mastery, not full mastery</td>
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<td>Crediting demonstrates progression and concepts mastered. One example could be: 1 = Does not Meet Standard, 2 = Approaching Standard, 3 = Meets Standard, 4 = Exceeds Standard.</td>
<td>Creates a grade point average using A, B, C, D. It is important to never equate A, B, C, D grading with the progression rubric used.</td>
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The State Board of Education has established the Mastery Based Learning Collaborative to help schools fund, plan and implement MBL in their schools.\(^2\)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:**

[www.sbe.gov/our-](http://www.sbe.gov/our-)

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

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What do Teachers and Students Say about MBL:

A study performed by John’s Hopkins from 2019 to 2020, surveyed teachers and students before and then one year later after implementing MBL strategies in their school. Teachers reported a 53% increase in being able to use technology, a 71% increase in effectively serving students at all levels, 86% increase in teaching students effective study skills, and 57% increase in preparing students for the real world. Students reported an 11% increase in being able to teach themselves new things, a 20% increase in the use of technology, a 17% increase in feeling supported by their teachers, and a 24% increase in feeling responsible for their own education.[3]

Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that harness the benefits of mastery-based learning to ensure all students experience learning through a positive progression of demonstrated mastery that increases learning outcomes through inclusivity, communicated performance indicators, and timely feedback and supports to reach learning goals.

Citations

