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:

Mastery Based Learning	Traditional Education Models
A customizable instructional strategy	Curriculum based approach
Mastery before moving on is first priority	Maximum amount of information by end of year
Time to reach mastery is not fixed by student	Whole class expected to progress at same pace
Students taught how to learn constantly	Focus is on how much information is retained
A student demonstrates mastery until Meets or Exceeds learning standard for that concept	Class moves on regardless of concept mastered creating a gap that compounds over time
Testing is used positively to measure how well a student is progressing toward mastery	High stakes testing often identifies current knowledge, not mastery of a concept
Supports are given immediately for all students and peer to peer mentoring is highly encouraged	Supports are given if available and for the time allotted to reach some mastery, not full mastery
Crediting demonstrates progression and concepts mastered. One example could be: 1 = Does not Meet Standard, 2 = Approaching Standard, 3 = Meets Standard, 4 = Exceeds Standard.	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.

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-work/mastery-based-learning

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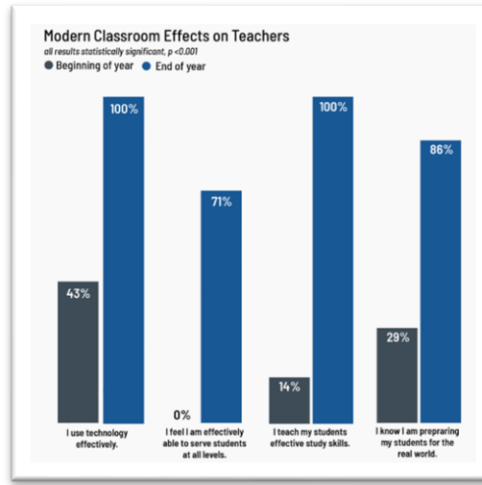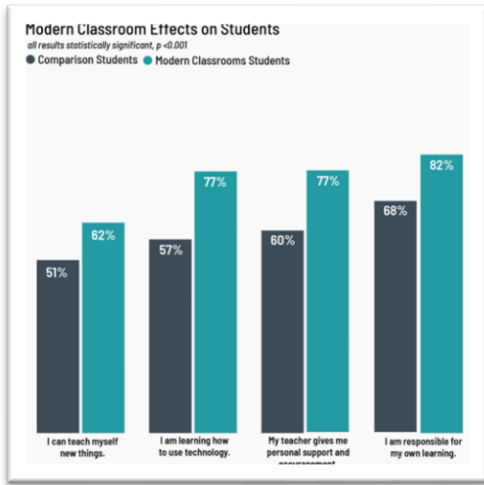
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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

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

(1) Seattle Times Education Lab. Some WA schools opt for 'show what you know' system over letter grades | The Seattle Times. August 2022.

(2) Washington State Board of Education. Mastery-based Learning | SBE (wa.gov). As of September 2022.

(3) John's Hopkins Hospital. The Modern Classrooms Project: Survey Results for the 2019–20 School Year. https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/bitstream/handle/1774.2/62810/Modern%20Classrooms%20Survey%20Report%202019-20%20SY.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y 2019-2020.