COMPETENCIES DEMONSTRATED

How do we ensure all students demonstrate competencies through curriculum and assessments?

HOW DO WE ENSURE ALL STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE COMPETENCIES BY THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS?

By organizing the curriculum around a set of clearly defined competencies that students demonstrate, Mastery-based education systems **make learning the constant and allow time to be variable**. This design supports both personalization and equity. Flexible enough to respond to learners' needs and interests in real time, the curriculum remains rigorous and coherent because it is driven by a set of explicit, measurable, and transferable outcomes.

A mastery-oriented approach to curriculum design is most effective when complemented with a mastery-oriented approach to assessment design. When performance tasks frame the student-centered curriculum, learners engage in relevant, rigorous, and purposeful learning that prepares them to navigate a complex and changing world. Robust formative assessment is embedded throughout to identify learners' needs and plan next steps for learning, ensuring that all students gain the knowledge and skills the curriculum intends.

The inquiry-based Learning Cycle drives unit, lesson, and assessment design, illustrating that learning continuously connects to, and builds upon, previous learning and culminates in meaningful and rigorous demonstrations of competency. By making transparent the cognitive and metacognitive processes used to develop mastery, learners come to understand their own learning processes. Through this powerful scaffolding, the Learning Cycle fosters greater learner agency, supporting learners as they develop the skills to navigate learning experiences and monitor their growth.

Curriculum and assessments in mastery-based education systems enhance equity by providing engaging and accessible entry points into the topic through resources that both affirm the multiple identities of learners and expose them to new and different perspectives. They build agency and autonomy by intentionally and purposefully cultivating student engagement and giving all individuals equal opportunities to learn.

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

And what are the **indicators** of a thriving mastery-based culture?

Whether or not you have been using the frame of mastery learning, let's start by identifying where your current practice aligns to and supports mastery-based curriculum and assessment.

KEY SHIFTS TO MASTERY

from   *Where is your team on the journey?*   **to**

CONTENT AND COMPETENCY ALIGNED

Content-focused

Assessment for learning allows educators to respond to student needs to ensure that all students achieve and demonstrate the content and skill objectives. Assessment also forms the foundation for the clear, actionable feedback that is essential to building students' capacity to take ownership of their learning. This agency-building approach is responsive to both the academic and cultural needs of students, who develop a strong sense of their growth over time and see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Content- and Competency-aligned

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CYCLE

Opaque learning processes

Learning experiences are informed by an inquiry-driven Learning Cycle grounded in the learning sciences and in child and youth development research. The Learning Cycle serves as a framework for the design of experiences that move students through a transparent learning process. In each stage of the cycle, expanded student choice and a metacognitive approach to learning nurture student agency.

Transparent, student-centered learning

PERSONALIZED PATHWAYS

One-size-fits-all progression

Each student follows a path to demonstrating competency that responds and adapts based on their individual learning progress, strengths, needs, interests, and goals. Students co-construct their individualized learning plans, setting goals based on evidence and choosing activities to reach their goals, fostering agency. They make meaningful choices about what, how, and when learning happens, and have the skills and support, when needed, to act up those choices.

Student-directed and -monitored learning

SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENTS

Point-in-time testing and advancement

Assessments are designed to create powerful learning experiences for students and to provide all stakeholders with the data they need to draw accurate inferences about student achievement. Assessments are built on the belief that learners develop skills over time and competence emerges gradually, not spontaneously. The mastery-based design of the tasks hinges on bringing the feedback cycle into the classroom, presenting learners with multiple opportunities for practice, allowing them to revise work as their skills develop, and providing frequent actionable feedback.

Multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

INDICATORS OF MASTERY

SYSTEM INDICATORS

STUDENT LEARNING INDICATORS

CONTENT AND COMPETENCY ALIGNED

Curriculum and assessment affirm and build upon learners' interests, cultural backgrounds, and identities, while actively creating well-scaffolded, autonomy-enhancing opportunities to build and demonstrate competence.

Learners experience a curriculum with clear connections to their lives, interests, and goals, and which positively relate to aspects of their social and community identity.

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CYCLE

The Learning Cycle drives learning experiences, engaging learners in meaning-making, investigation, creation, communication, synthesis, and reflection.

Learners can describe the underlying structure and processes that support their learning, including both cognitive and metacognitive skills and strategies.

PERSONALIZED PATHWAYS

Lessons, units, courses, and classes are flexible, arranged to allow multiple learning pathways and responsiveness to student needs.

Learners have both opportunity and capacity to select from a range of developmentally appropriate, meaningful choices within and among culturally responsive units of study; choices are designed to increase relevance, foster self-regulatory capabilities, and support interest-based learning.

SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENTS

A clearly articulated set of performance assessments allows students to develop and to demonstrate each competency at higher levels of sophistication as they progress toward graduation.

Learners can articulate the connections between the competencies or skills they are developing, the content they are learning, performance-based assessments they are working on, and how each of these relates to their learning goals and personalized pathway.

COMPETENCIES DEMONSTRATED | *explore*
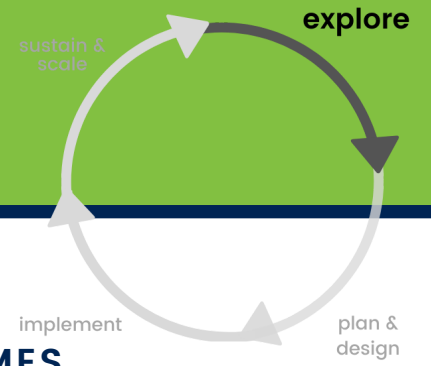
Explore and envision curriculum and assessments built around competencies

This stage of exploration is based on knowing your current curriculum and assessment approach as well as understanding a mastery learning system, so that you can see which area(s) your team should focus on. Shifting to a mastery-based approach in this domain requires a paradigm shift around the purpose of assessments, so ensuring the team believes in the rationale for the shift is critical.

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OUTCOMES

- Identify a specific aspect of curriculum and assessment to advance.
- Establish a goal for aligning content and competencies with curriculum and assessment.
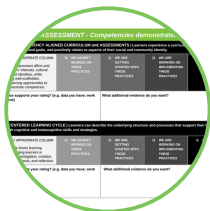
KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Explore the curriculum and assessment domain of mastery-based education. Begin to self-assess your assets and needs in the curriculum and assessment. Start with a broad introduction for your team from the *Explore Series*.

Explore the Idaho Competencies Closely compare the *Idaho College & Career Competency set* to current grade level and course outcomes. Use *Unpack a Competency* to dig into a competency and crosswalk it to course outcomes to identify gaps.

Complete the Self-Assessment Use the *Curriculum and Assessment Self-Assessment* to appraise how well your curriculum and system of assessment ensures that all students demonstrate competencies by the application of knowledge and skills. Use the insights you gleaned to identify an entry point for your work.
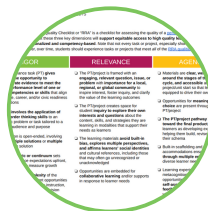
Spot Check Units and Projects Collect sample units and projects from across grade levels and content areas. Use the *Rigor, Relevance, Agency for Equity Task and Project Quality Checklist* to assess their quality. This can help you to identify potential areas of focus for your curriculum and assessment work.

Explore the Learning Cycle If you haven't already, meet the *Learning Cycle*! Consider how it can serve as the basis of curriculum and assessment design for deep, meaningful learning experiences.
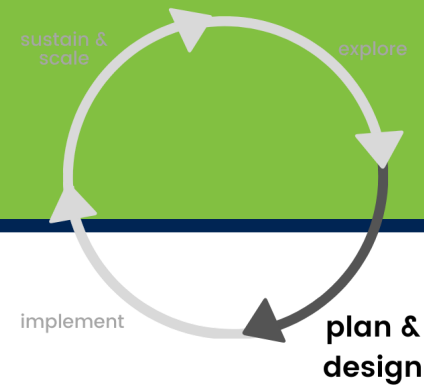
For **Recommended Reading** check out Appendix C.

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Plan, design, and build capacity for mastery-based curriculum and assessments

OK... This is a BIG stage with several important aspects to mastery-based curriculum and assessment. This means there are many starting points to dive into over the course of your work in this domain, and you may find that you cycle frequently between PLAN & DESIGN and IMPLEMENT. Pace yourself and focus on the goals you have established as priorities in the plan for your team, and make sure you are developing clear and common language for what's what in your curriculum and assessment systems for mastery.

OUTCOMES

- An actionable plan to meet the goal for aligning content and competencies with curriculum and assessment identified in the EXPLORE stage.

- A common understanding of the criteria for high-quality curriculum and assessment aligned to content and competencies.

KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Align Content and Competencies with Curriculum and Assessments - This is a big task that involves multiple areas and will likely be a continual process. Depending on your entry point, these tools can help you get started:

Performance assessment overview: For a simple, holistic approach that can be implemented at the team level see this presentation *So I've designed a PBA. Now What?: Designing Learning for Mastery on Any Performance Task*.
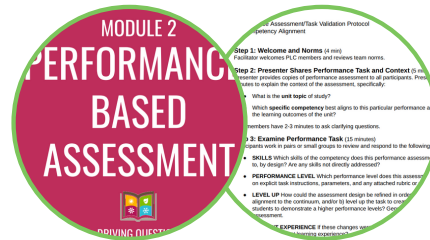
Performance assessment validation: *What Makes a Quality Performance Assessment?* as well as the *Performance Assessment Validation Protocol For Competency Alignment*
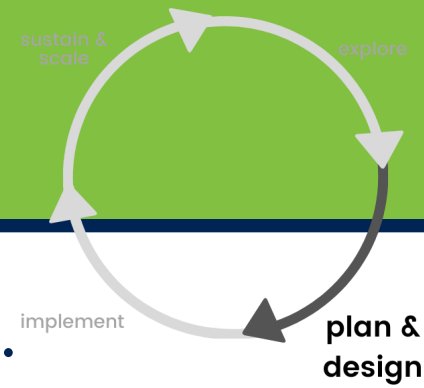
Mastery curriculum ADAPTATION & DESIGN
- Existing units and lesson adaptation: *Mastery Adaptation Guide*
- *New unit and lesson plan design: Mastery Curriculum Design Guide*

Both are broken into modules that support professional learning across a range of settings and groups.

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## KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Adopt or Develop a Learning Cycle
Organizing units and lessons around a student-centered learning cycle makes our learning processes transparent. Using the _Learning Cycle_ to design explicit learning experiences teaches students the skills, strategies, and processes that support agency, self-directed learning, and cycles of feedback and revision.This workshop from the IMEN Symposium describes _Using the Learning Cycle to Plan_ as a way to make learning visible.
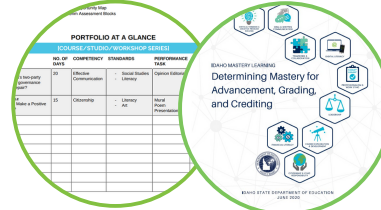
**Plan for Personalized Pathways**
Opportunity maps ensure that students have multiple, purposefully planned opportunities to develop and demonstrate competencies through robust performance assessments. This work can be undertaken at both the course and system levels.
- COURSE LEVEL: _Curriculum Planning Tool | Portfolio at a Glance_
- SYSTEM LEVEL: _Determining Mastery for Advancement, Promotion, and Crediting_
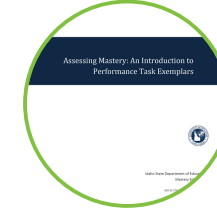
**Explore and Develop Performance Assessments**
Performance assessments allow students to develop and demonstrate mastery of competencies and standards in any discipline. Unlike traditional assessments of learning, which are assigned after the learning takes place, performance assessments are assessments _for_ and _of_ learning. They encourage choice and agency, address student needs and engage student interest.
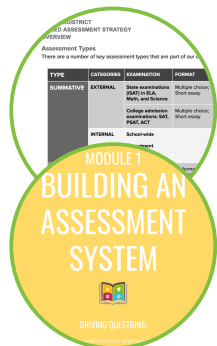
Articulate the System of Assessments
Use the _Tiered Assessment Strategy Template_ to clarify your overall assessment strategy. As described in _Building a Competency-based Assessment System_, systems of assessment are often organized around tiers that help us to a) build a shared understanding about where different assessments and assessment-related activities "live" throughout the system, and b) create a structure that separates time-based assessments. Tier 1 represents external assessments that are time-bound (e.g., state exams); Tier 2 represents school-wide assessments and assessment-related events that are time-bound (e.g., grad ceremony); Tier 3 represents a possible "in-between" layer of assessments/events organized around teams or departments (flexible); Tier 4 represents all assessments/events at the classroom level (flexible).
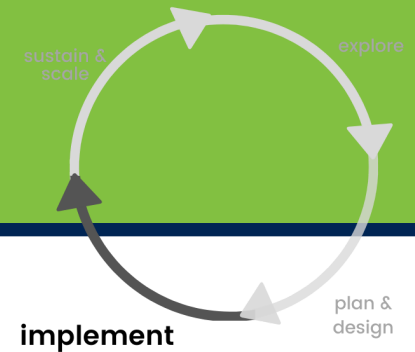
Implement plan, provide feedback and support, engage in action research

Implementing new or revised curriculum and assessments involves action research to capture the impact of changes in real time. Treating each implementation as an action research cycle will allow your team to identify what's working and what adjustments still need to be made. Remember to calibrate and tune your practices in the evaluation of competencies and assessments for equitable and rigorous learning.
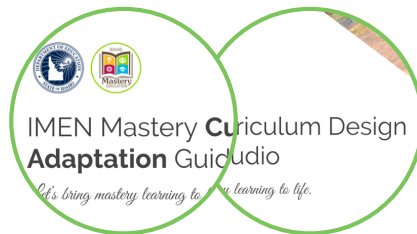
OUTCOMES

Data to inform
- evaluation of goals for aligning content and competencies with curriculum and assessment; and
- develop new goal and plan

KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Implement your plan for cultivating mastery
Deliver an array of professional learning opportunities, followed up with opportunities for learners to practice and receive feedback. Use the *Mastery Curriculum Design* or *Adaptation* modules to guide your team through the process of shifting to mastery-based practices.
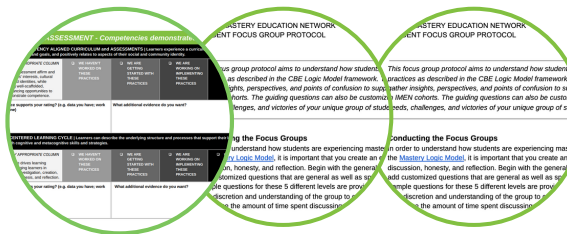
Measure impact
Periodically revisit the *Curriculum and Assessment Self-Assessment*, using it as a touchstone for progress.

Tools such as the *Student Focus Group Protocol* and *Teacher Focus Group Protocol* can help you collect data about changes in curriculum and assessment practices and how students experience those changes.

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

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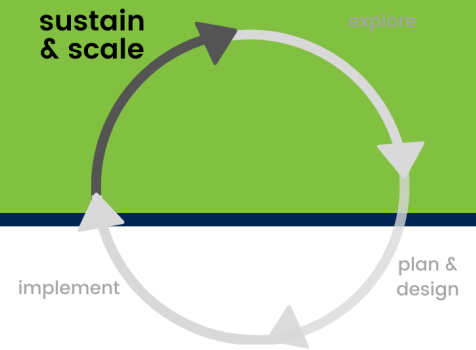
Establish SYSTEMS for sustained implementation and collaborative practice

As new curriculum units and performance assessments are successfully implemented in your classroom and school community, a body of work will emerge that should be codified for collaborative use. Training materials for staff new to mastery-based practices are also being created organically. Throughout this work you are also identifying the leaders in designing mastery-based learning experiences whose work can be elevated to support colleagues. As always, calibrate for equitable practices in assessment for learning.

OUTCOME

Formalized, sustainable, and scalable systems for continuous improvement of curriculum and assessment.

KEY ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS

IMEN Mastery Curriculum Design
Adaptation Gu Studio

Systematize processes for continual review and renewal of curriculum and assessment
Ensure formal structures are in place to continually develop, review and update curriculum and assessment to support mastery learning. For example, schedule regular collaboration times to tune and validate performance assessments and units, identify instructional leaders to coach and lead the work, and review student data to disrupt any equity or access issues.

Ensure appropriate onboarding of new faculty
Systematize definitions, protocols, and design principles of designing mastery-based curriculum and assessments through the *Mastery Curriculum Design* or *Adaptation* modules. Ensure new staff understand the *Tiered Assessment Strategy* for collaborative planning to provide ample, equitable opportunities to demonstrate mastery. Providing the time and space for learning mastery-based practices means fewer interventions downstream.

Share results
Document practice and collect data to identify high-leverage practices and tools, and share results within and outside the system.

Create a library of model performance assessments, projects, and units that can be shared across the district and network as exemplars and training tools.

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

IDAHO MASTERY-BASED EDUCATION: STAGING GUIDE