

# Tallmadge Curriculum

March, 2023

TALLMADGE CITY SCHOOLS

## DIRECTIONAL SYSTEM



### OUR MANTRA

Empower - Everyone, Everyday



### OUR VISION

Tallmadge is a collaborative community that empowers every student.



### OUR MISSION

Every Tallmadge graduate is successfully employed, enrolled or enlisted.

Is Mastery-Based Grading Better for Students than Traditional Grades?

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### SETTING THE CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR MASTERY-BASED GRADING

It can be hard to imagine how to implement mastery-based grading when you have never done it before. The core limitation is the attachment most educators have to fixed-pace learning. To implement mastery-based grading you have to challenge the status quo of traditional systems where all students have the same amount of time to achieve competence. Instead, in mastery-based learning each student continues to spend time on a skill until they achieve proficiency (Dick & Reiser, 1989).

For that to become a reality, educators need to infuse elements of self-pacing in their classroom so they can let some students work on one lesson while others move on to the next because they have achieved mastery. Instead of looking at a unit and saying students NEED to learn lesson #1 on Monday and lesson #2 on Tuesday, we need to honor the fact that learning just isn't that rigid.

### THE VALUE OF MASTERY-BASED GRADING

Before you make the leap into transforming your classroom around mastery-based grading, it's critical to understand why it is so valuable. At its core, mastery-based learning refers to the notion that students must meet a certain level of competence for a task or skill before moving on to the next. Aside from it sounding quite sensible, there are some core reasons why mastery-based grading is truly valuable for students:

**Prevents lingering skill gaps:** Every teacher knows what it is like to start a lesson, only to realize a few minutes in that a number of students aren't ready for it. This is the consequence of sustained skill gaps. Kids have been pushed through class after class and lesson after lesson without achieving actual mastery. We collectively sweep foundational skill gaps under the rug, knowing that eventually it is going to create challenges for students when presented with more complex skills. It also leads to enormous variability in learning levels within the same classroom, school, or district. It is no surprise that when mastery-based grading is implemented effectively it is associated with a decrease in the amount of variability in aptitude between students.

**Builds student confidence:** Mastery-based grading is integral to building students' sense of self-worth in the classroom. Kids are not oblivious to the fact that they are being moved on from one lesson to the next without actually fully grasping the skill. In fact, every time they do get pushed forward without achieving mastery, they question whether or not they are holistically "good" at a particular subject. When this happens over and over, they question whether they are even capable of academic success. In a mastery-based setting, where students are given a true opportunity to succeed, they develop more positive attitudes toward the content being taught. (Anderson, 1994; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 1990). More importantly, they start to believe in themselves and ultimately improve their academic self-concept.

**Prepares students for the real world:** In my first few years as a classroom teacher, I thought the best way to support my students was to just give them everything they needed. I shielded them from productive struggle, I didn't require mastery, and I conditioned them to believe completion and effort were sufficient. At the time, I thought I was doing what was best for kids, only to realize later I had let them down. I misrepresented how they would be treated when they left my classroom and traveled on to college or the workplace. In these settings, they felt blindsided when suddenly they were held to mastery. They needed to show competence and were expected to be self-aware enough to identify when they needed to engage in further learning or seek out additional support. When we don't hold our students accountable to mastery, we fail to prepare them for what's next in life. We sell them a false reality that will only hurt them in the long run and sometimes when it is too late. Source: Kareem Farah - <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/mastery-based-grading/>

## State and District Assessment Windows

### OST

#### Spring

ELA: April 11 – May 1

Math, Science and Social Studies: April 17 – May 5

ELA, part 1: April 13 (THS)

ELA, part 2: April 14 (THS)

ELA: April 18-19 (TES)

American History, parts 1 and 2: April 17

Government, parts 1 and 2: April 18

Biology, parts 1 and 2: April 20

Algebra 1, part 1: April 21

Algebra 1, part 2: April 24

Math: May 25 and 26 (TES)

Geometry, parts 1 and 2: April 26

Science: Grade 5, May 1 and 2 (TES)

### MAP

April 24-May 5

### ACT (Juniors only)

February 28

### AASCD

February 27 – April 21

### OELPA

January 30 – March 24

**Empower  
Everyone,  
Everyday**

## MTSS

Making learning more appropriate and effective means embracing the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning preferences of diverse students. Teachers are culturally responsive when they hold all students to high standards, make learning challenging, engage all learners, have an understanding and incorporate students' various cultural backgrounds into the design of learning experiences, and make connections between classroom and the world beyond. Adopting culturally responsive teaching methods can lead to a more positive classroom learning environment, more efficient use of class time and human resources, higher-quality instruction, and greater student engagement.



**“Kids are not oblivious to the fact that they are being moved on from one lesson to the next without actually fully grasping the skill. In fact, every time they do get pushed forward without achieving mastery, they question whether or not they are holistically “good” at a particular subject. When this happens over and over, they question whether they are even capable of academic success.”**

- Kareem Farah

## Social Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is essential to academic achievement and well-being in school, as well as success in college and careers. Helping students build SEL abilities means they can engage cognitively in learning, benefit from interactions with others, and develop the key skills they will need to thrive in the 21st century. Fostering social and emotional well-being is a key component to improve conditions for learning that consider the whole child. Ensuring a safe and healthy school environment is key to the social and emotional development. Personalized learning initiatives should recognize the integral role of SEL in enabling the whole child to succeed.





## Personalized Learning and Differentiated Instruction: a Breakdown

### Personalized Learning

Once you have established the conditions necessary to grade students on mastery, then it's time to design the systems necessary to make it happen. Reaching mastery is a journey and typically involves two stages:

#### STAGE 1: DEVELOPING MASTERY THROUGH PRACTICE

As soon as a student is exposed to a new skill, they need to practice that skill. The practice stage should be where they spend the majority of their class time. It is when students are truly developing their understanding of the material. Designing effective opportunities for practice should include:

**Application of the Material:** For practice to be productive, it must include applied learning. This can be done through discussions, labs, readings, worksheets, and other activities. Some of the best forms of practice are driven by inquiry and constant questioning. The experience should be scaffolded so students are systematically engaging in more challenging work as the lesson builds, bringing the student closer and closer to mastery.

**Opportunities for Collaboration:** Ideally, practice time is collaborative. Students should be able work together to understand new content and ask questions to peers who may have already mastered the skill. In an effective mastery-based environment, educators are also working to build students' ability to be self-regulated learners. Instead of running a teacher-centered classroom, students should be at the center and teachers should serve as a guide as students lean on each other through the journey to mastery.

**Constant Revision:** One of the most important elements of building an effective mastery-based grading classroom is cultivating a culture of revision. Students need to internalize that to achieve mastery you should EXPECT to revise your work. This is a novel concept to many students and will result in some pushback, which is a good thing. During this practice time, students should be submitting assignments and receiving feedback from their teacher on areas that need improvement. Unlike a traditional setting, where students turn in assignments and never see them again until they are "graded," in a mastery-based classroom, students are constantly revisiting their assignment until they understand the material enough to demonstrate their mastery. To revise effectively, students should receive clear feedback on what they do and do not yet understand. They should also receive actionable suggestions for what they should do to progress to the next phase of the learning process where they will demonstrate mastery.

#### STAGE 2: DEMONSTRATING MASTERY THROUGH MASTERY CHECKS

Once a student has practiced sufficiently, it's time for them to demonstrate that they truly are a master of the skill! To provide students with this opportunity, educators need to design effective assessments that allow students to prove their understanding of a given skill or concept. We call these assessments "mastery checks," and students take them at the end of each lesson prior to moving on to the next one. They emulate the function of an exit ticket but aren't administered at the end of a class period. Instead, mastery checks are administered when a student has practiced the content adequately and feels ready to show their understanding of the content in a controlled setting. Designing effective mastery checks is integral to running a mastery-based classroom. Here are some important characteristics to consider:

**Administered Individually:** Unlike the collaborative practice stage, students take mastery checks independently. It is students' opportunity to show that they can execute the skill without the support of their peers. Mastery checks are taken whenever students are ready for them, so you will often have a number of students demonstrating their mastery on different lessons at the same time. To manage the workflow and reduce the chances of cheating, many educators create a "Mastery Check Zone" in their classroom. That area of the classroom is completely silent and reserved for students who are demonstrating mastery.

**Easily Assessed:** At this point, you can probably tell that a mastery-based learning environment requires a fair amount of grading. The key is the grading is purposeful and leads to real data-driven instruction. To help manage the flow of work, it is important to build mastery checks that are easy to assess. These are ideally bite-sized and do a nice job of balancing depth of understanding with efficient assessment. We encourage educators to use a mastery check template to keep a consistent structure. Keep in mind that mastery checks do not all need to be the same format or be delivered in the same medium. They can look like a mini-quiz, a sorting activity, or verbal assessments. As a teacher, you will know best what a student needs to do to demonstrate their understanding of a skill.

**Opportunity for Reassessment:** The heartbeat of an effective mastery-based grading environment is reassessments. Students and teachers should all come to the collective understanding that part of the journey to mastery is frequently falling short on assessments, reflecting on why, and then re-demonstrating mastery. To do this effectively, teachers develop a clear understanding of what constitutes mastery and then hold students to it. To support this process, a number of educators build rubrics for their mastery checks to ensure the grading process is as efficient as possible and the evidence is clear when a student needs to be reassessed.

Bear in mind that there is no one universally accepted method to executing a mastery-based grading system. You are the expert in the room and understand best what will work for you and your students. Once you have a plan, make sure to articulate it clearly to your students. Nothing should feel like a surprise.

## English Learner Services

[Interpreter Request Form](#)

[Strategies for Diverse Learners Using the UDL Model Focus on English Learners](#)

[How to Set Preferred Language in Remind for Parents](#)

[Tier 2 intervention Practices for English Learners](#)



## Gifted Programming

High Quality Professional Development (HQPD) for Gifted Service in General Education Settings;

[Professional Development in Gifted Education](#)

## Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

Upcoming Trainings from Summit County ESC;

[Summit County ESC Professional Development](#)

“When you shift your focus from getting grades to gaining understanding, you set yourself on the road to mastery. You begin learning how to learn.”

- Marty Neumeier

## Committee Meeting Schedule

- **EL Department Meeting** on Friday, March 3 at 1:15 p.m. in the Conference Room at the MEC.
- **Authentic Learning Steering Committee Meeting** on Thursday, March 9 from 12:00-3:00 p.m. in the Community Room at THS.
- **District Lead Teacher Meeting** on Thursday, March 9 at 3:45 p.m. in the Community Room at THS.
- **District Professional Development Day** on Friday, March 10 from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the K-8 Campus.
- **New Teacher Cohort Classroom Observations** (all day) on Tuesday, March 14.
- **ELA Content Committee Meeting** on Wednesday, March 15 from 12:00-3:00 p.m. in the Community Room at THS.
- **Art Department Meeting** on Thursday, March 16 from 12:00-3:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at TES.
- **Social Studies Content Committee Resource Review** on Tuesday, March 21 (grades 6-12) and Thursday, March 23 (grades K-5) from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at the Summit County ESC.