Khan
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Network

Mastery-Based Learning Implementation Rubric

About This Rubric

This rubric is designed to support reflection on and assessment of **mastery-based learning (MBL) implementation** in the classroom. It is not a comprehensive tool for evaluating instruction as a whole. While it touches on elements of teaching practice, its primary focus is on how well a learning environment supports and enacts the core principles of mastery-based learning. It can be used individually or collaboratively to **support goal-setting, instructional planning, coaching, or school-wide implementation** efforts.

The rubric is organized into **three domains**:

- **Clarity** focuses on how students understand what they're learning, why it matters, and how they'll know they've mastered it.
- **Continuous Growth** centers on how the learning environment enables students to keep progressing toward mastery through pacing, feedback, and support.
- **Connection** considers how class time is used to foster collaboration, meaning-making, and student engagement, including the teacher's role in the process.

> **Note on Domain Interdependence**:
> Clarity and Continuous Growth provide the foundation that makes meaningful learning possible. When students clearly understand their goals and have the tools, time, and support to make progress, they're prepared to engage deeply with others. The Connection domain reflects the outcome of strong mastery-based design: shared learning experiences that are collaborative, purposeful, and intellectually rich. In this way, the first two domains create the conditions for the third to thrive.

Each domain is broken into specific, observable areas of practice and described across **five levels of implementation**. The rubric is developmental by design, illustrating how these practices evolve as learning becomes **increasingly student-driven** and aligned with the principles of mastery-based learning. The five levels of implementation are defined as follows:

- **Foundational**: Traditional or rigid practices with little evidence of mastery-based design.
- **Emerging**: Early signs of MBL elements, but they are inconsistent, teacher-led, or underdeveloped.
- **Established**: Practices are established and reflect a solid understanding of mastery-based learning. This is the target level for implementation.

- **Empowered**: Students take increasing ownership of their learning, decision-making, and progress toward mastery.
- **Transformational**: Learning extends beyond the classroom through interdisciplinary, purpose-driven, real-world work. This level is often more appropriate for older students or those with deep experience in MBL environments, and may not be the goal in all contexts.

Domain 1: Clarity

Description: The Clarity domain ensures that students understand what they are learning, why it matters, and how to demonstrate mastery. Learning goals, pathways, and assessments are transparent, consistent, and accessible. Students can see where they are in their learning journey, what success looks like, and what steps they need to take next. Teachers design structures that promote visibility, ownership, and confidence in the learning process.

Focus Areas: Learning Goals & Expectations · Learning Pathways · Assessment Practices

	Foundational Implementation	Emerging Implementation	Established Implementation	Empowered Implementation	Transformational Implementation
	Progression Toward Student-Driven Learning →				
Learning Goals & Expectations	Learning goals are teacher-centered and not visible to students. Most students are unaware of what they're expected to learn or why.	Goals and success criteria are present but inconsistently referenced. Students may not fully understand what mastery looks like.	Student-friendly goals and criteria are consistently used and referenced. Students can explain what they're learning and why.	Goals are co-developed with students and tailored to their learning needs. Students regularly reflect on progress toward mastery.	Students design personalized goals connected to real-world purpose, passions, and community. Learning is driven by internal motivation.
Learning Pathways	All students follow a rigid, one-size-fits-all sequence. Pacing and progress are tied to the curriculum calendar, not individual readiness.	A mastery pathway exists, but it is unclear or unevenly applied. Students follow the same general sequence with minor variation.	Structured mastery pathways provide clear progression with some flexibility in pacing or method. Students understand their next steps.	Pathways are personalized with multiple options to demonstrate mastery. Students choose how to navigate content based on readiness and interest.	Students design and direct their own learning journeys, integrating cross-disciplinary work, internships, and community experiences. Progress is nonlinear and purpose-driven.

Assessment Practices	Assessments are summative, infrequent, and used only for grading. No revision is offered.	Assessments include occasional formative checks but focus remains on final outcomes. Feedback is limited or delayed.	Assessment is ongoing and embedded in the learning cycle. Students receive timely, actionable feedback to guide improvement.	Students engage in regular self- and peer-assessment. Revisions are encouraged and part of a culture of growth.	Assessment is authentic and iterative. Students showcase mastery through exhibitions, portfolios, and public presentations. Reflection and refinement are continuous.

Domain 2: Continuous Growth

Description: The Continuous Growth domain supports students in making steady progress toward mastery over time. Pacing is flexible and personalized, allowing students to move forward when ready or revisit concepts when needed. Feedback is timely and actionable, and revision is a routine part of the learning cycle. Students build self-regulation and executive function skills that empower them to plan, reflect, and advocate for their own learning.

Focus Areas: Pacing & Autonomy · Feedback & Revision · Self-Regulation & Executive Skills

	Foundational Implementation	Emerging Implementation	Established Implementation	Empowered Implementation	Transformational Implementation
	Progression Toward Student-Driven Learning →				
Pacing & Autonomy	All students move at the same pace, regardless of readiness. Learning is time-bound and teacher-driven, leaving struggling students behind and fast learners unchallenged.	Some flexibility exists, but the teacher still controls pacing. Supports for students who need more time or challenge are inconsistent or unclear.	Students progress at individualized paces within a structured system. Checkpoints and teacher support help them stay on track and respond to their readiness.	Students actively manage their pacing using planning tools and progress data. They access reteaching, feedback, and extension opportunities as needed to maintain momentum.	Students design their own learning timelines, integrating school, community, and real-world experiences. They proactively balance workload, mastery goals, and external commitments.
Feedback & Revision	Feedback is infrequent, vague, or only summative. Revision is not expected or supported. Students often receive grades	Feedback is mostly teacher-directed and limited in depth. Revision is optional and inconsistently supported. Struggling students may	Students receive regular, specific, and actionable feedback. Structures are in place for students to reflect and revise work with teacher support.	Students actively seek feedback from multiple sources and use it to guide revision. Revision is an expected and routine part of the learning cycle.	Feedback is authentic and iterative, often coming from real audiences. Students co-design meaningful work and improve it through multiple rounds of revision,

					reflection, and collaboration.
	without understanding next steps.	not know how to act on feedback.			
Self-Regulation & Executive Skills	Students rely entirely on teacher direction to manage their time, tasks, and materials. Planning and organization skills are not taught.	Students are introduced to tools like checklists and calendars but need frequent prompting. They struggle to work independently or manage setbacks.	Students use goal-setting, planning, and reflection routines to manage their learning. Teachers provide tools and coaching to build independent habits.	Students self-direct their learning using personalized systems. They monitor their own progress, adjust plans as needed, and know when to seek help or regroup.	Students confidently manage long-term goals across academic, personal, and community contexts, adapting and leading their learning with increasing independence.

Domain 3: Connection

Description: The Connection domain focuses on the power of shared learning experiences. When students come together—whether with peers or teachers—class time is used for collaboration, relevance, and deep engagement. Students build social learning skills, apply knowledge in meaningful ways, and participate in intellectually rich tasks. The teacher's role and classroom culture are intentionally designed to support connection, curiosity, and purpose.

Focus Areas: Collaboration & Peer Interaction · Relevance & Real-Life Application · Instructional Role & Environment · Intellectual Rigor & Cognitive Engagement

	Foundational Implementation	Emerging Implementation	Established Implementation	Empowered Implementation	Transformational Implementation
	Progression Toward Student-Driven Learning →				
Relevance & Real-Life Application	Tasks feel disconnected from students' lives and lack purpose beyond content coverage.	Learning connects to real-world themes or interests, but application is surface-level or teacher-driven.	Students engage in meaningful tasks connected to real-life situations, careers, or personal interests. Learning has a visible purpose.	Students apply their learning in authentic contexts. They contribute to projects with real-world relevance and personal meaning.	Students co-design learning experiences around real-world issues, community needs, or personal aspirations. Learning leads to real impact.
Instructional Role & Environment	The teacher directs all learning. Students are	The teacher occasionally facilitates	The teacher acts as a guide and coach,	The teacher co-constructs learning	The teacher acts as a connector and advisor. Students drive

	passive recipients of information. The classroom culture is compliance-based.	inquiry or student discussion but remains the primary decision-maker. Student voice is limited.	creating space for student-led learning and inquiry. The classroom is respectful and responsive.	with students, promoting ownership, risk-taking, and independence. The classroom is student-centered.	classroom culture, and learning extends beyond the room through community and interdisciplinary collaboration.
Intellectual Rigor & Cognitive Engagement	Shared learning tasks are low-level, procedural, or over-scaffolded. Class time focuses on completion over thinking.	Students engage in tasks that are somewhat challenging, but thinking is shallow or inconsistent. Activities may lack depth.	Students use class time to engage with complex ideas, analyze problems, and apply their learning. Tasks promote sustained thinking and reasoning.	Students tackle open-ended, interdisciplinary tasks that require deep thinking and creativity. Collaborative time is used to stretch ideas, challenge assumptions, and deepen understanding.	Students co-create ambitious, inquiry-driven work that pushes boundaries, integrates disciplines, and has real-world impact. Intellectual engagement is student-driven and sustained across contexts. Collaboration is a driver of deep thought and meaningful outcomes.