Mastery-Based Education with a Culturally Responsive Imagination: Remarks on Early Research

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At this uncertain and disrupted time . . .

We can and must be responsive and sustaining

with young people in school spaces—both online

and in person.

What are you hearing about online schooling this year?

How are you thinking about meeting students' needs?

Mastery Collaborative

Program of NYC Department of Education

NYC PK-12 schools that choose to focus on **mastery-based** and **culturally responsive-sustaining** systems & practices. This is our 6th year.

70 member schools that "cross-pollinate" effective practices and ideas via professional learning, virtual visits, mentoring, and resource sharing. Partnerships this year with 3 geographic districts around NYC DOE.

Friends of Mastery Collaborative: Interest group for educators and schools exploring mastery/CRSE shifts. Friends of MC can opt in to program events. http://bit.ly/MCFriends

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Theory into action

We focus on school-wide and classroom shifts in the following areas:

- Curriculum

- Classroom Moves

- Grading Practices

- Learner-centered, responsive culture

Students at Flushing International HS, Queens

What looks different in a MC school?

Where's the teacher?
Students are in the driver's seat.
The teacher is rarely at the front of the room.

MASTERY RETAKE CENTER
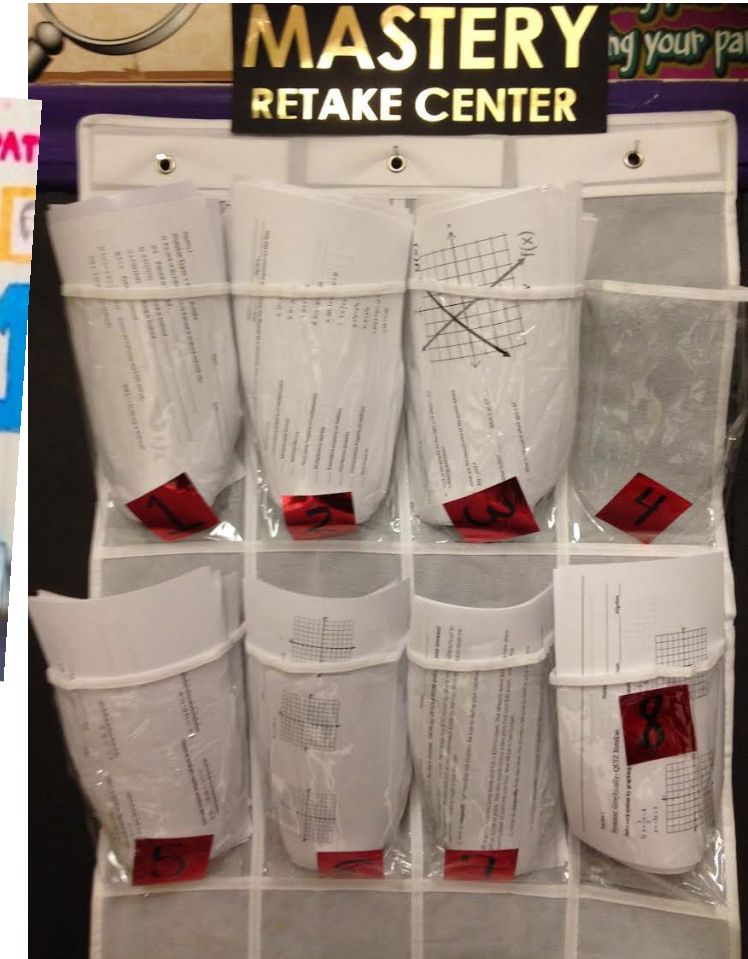
Can you NAME your grade?

N — **Not Yet** — No evidence of progress towards mastery

A — **Approaching** — Evidence of progress towards mastery

M — **Meeting** — Evidence of mastery

E — **Exceeding** — Evidence of above grade level performance

Grades function as feedback.
The focus is away from alphanumeric grades, and more on increasing mastery over time.

Retakes: Students use a "Mastery Retake" system to work more on outcomes they want to improve.

Five mastery-based power shifts

Traditional approach	Mastery approach
1 The teacher knows the learning goals and criteria for success, but might or might not share them with students.	Shared learning outcomes include explicit, measurable, relevant, transferable skills and knowledge that support student agency.
2 Emphasis may be on covering content, more than on application of skills.	Students learn and apply discipline-specific skills and knowledge, as well as cross-cutting skills, habits, and mindsets that underpin success in and out of school, critical thinking, critical consciousness, cultural competency, agency.
3 Students are usually instructed in a cohort, with limited opportunity for responsive supports.	Students receive timely, differentiated supports. Learning frequently involves collaboration and peer feedback, freeing up teachers to provide cognitive coaching as fits the needs of learners.
4 Assessment may be primarily post-mortem and/or "one and done," with no plan in place for addressing learning still to be done.	Assessment is an ongoing dialog, provides useful and timely feedback, and tends to be a positive learning experience.
5 Pacing is determined by the need to cover all prescribed course material in the allotted time.	Pacing is responsive, and may include reteaching, retaking, extra time, or accelerated learning, depending on students' demonstrated progress in relation to the stated learning goals for the unit or course. Depth and transfer of learning is prioritized over speed or breadth. **

Digital version:

bit.ly/MCFrameworkShifts

* Our shifts are heavily informed by www.competencyworks.org's definition of competency education. We believe that each shift represents a move to a youth-centered approach to learning—and also requires significant changes in roles and power dynamics, for both educators and learners.

** Our pacing shift differs from that of the field at large, valuing responsive pacing more than asynchronous pacing, because we see collaboration and interaction as vital aspects of the learning process.

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CRSE's 3 pillars: Dr. Gloria Ladson Billings (1994)

a) Students must experience **academic success.**

b) Students must develop and/or maintain **cultural competence.**

c) Students must develop a **critical (aka sociopolitical) consciousness** through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order." *

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings is known for groundbreaking work in the fields of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Critical Race Theory.

* *"We can't make students aware of painful truths and just move on.*
We need to help them turn awareness into power."
—*Khalilah Brann of* C R E D

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CRE evolves into into CRSE

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy — Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994)

- "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills and attitudes."

Culturally Responsive Teaching — Geneva Gay (2010)

- "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them."

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy — Django Paris & H. Samy Alim (2014)

- "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling."

NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

CRSE helps educators create student-centered learning environments that:

- affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities

- prepare students for rigor and independent learning

- develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference

- elevate historically marginalized voices

- empower students as agents of social change.

http://bit.ly/CRSEFrameworkNYS

Mastery & CRSE: How do students benefit?

- **Transparency:** The path to success is clear from the start. Clear criteria reduce opportunity for implicit bias.

- **Power shifts and role shifts:** Learning is a student-centered process, with teachers as responsive coaches. This shift should be evident in classroom layout and visuals.

- **Positive learning identity:**
  - school culture that affirms intersectional identities (academics, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, and so on)
  - mindsets for learning (growth, belonging, value)
  - cognitive coaching as students engage in learning

- **Mastery of key skills:** Learners demonstrate progress and independent mastery of skills and knowledge that matter in and beyond school. Supports/scaffolds are strategically removed as mastery builds.

http://bit.ly/MasteryandCRSE_MasteryCollab

Mastery-based learning is not inherently equitable and responsive. It's up to us to make it that way.

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Your observations & questions

- What already makes sense?

- Where are the sticking points?

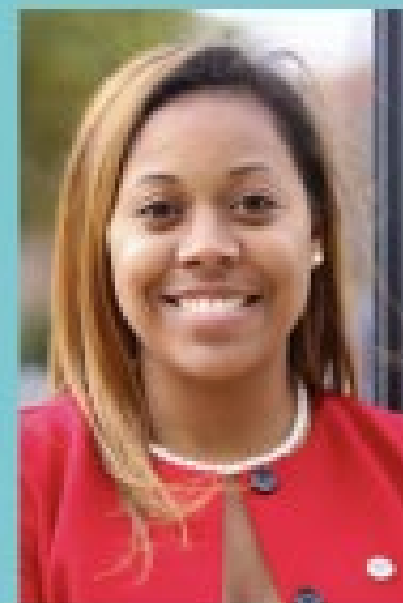*Thanks for being here today!*

NYU Metro Center Research Team

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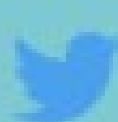leah.peoples@nyu.edu
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PRE Introduction

Center for Policy, Research, and Evaluation (PRE)

- Our mission is to make research and evaluation for education that is action-oriented, liberating, accessible, and results in more equitable systems, policies, and practices.

Type(s) of work we do

Education-based research in collaboration with partners and communities

Education and program evaluation

Rapid response research

Visit: bit.ly/NYUMetro_Research (case sensitive) for more about our work!

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About the Study

Culturally Responsive Mastery-Based Education Study

o   Documented CRE and MBE school-wide policies, practices and resources, teachers' attitudes and practices, and equity-oriented student outcomes

Essentially, we were studying how schools integrated CRE and MBE

We interviewed students, teachers, staff, and admin, surveyed students and teachers, conducted observations, and collect CRE and MBE documents

Key Findings

01 **School-wide Policies & Practices**

All schools have robust institutionalized MBE systems. Most schools do not have CRE policies and CRMBE practices typically include advisory groups, professional development, and team teacher planning.

02 **Teacher Attitudes & Practices**

Few teachers practice MBE & CRE; those who do can be categorized in two ways based on their CRE imagination (where they see possibility for CRE and practice it)

03 **Student Perspectives**

Most students reported having a high sense of belonging, sociopolitical consciousness, intrinsic motivation, academic self efficacy, and cultural engagement across all schools

Credits

Breakout: Culturally Responsive, Mastery-Based Education Study

o What is happening in mastery-based, culturally responsive schools? What's different? Is this a path to equity?

How are youth experiencing these schools?

What are some broader implications of this study?

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