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## Using Mastery Learning to Help All Students Achieve

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# Using Mastery Learning to Help All Students Achieve

## The practice and the need it addresses

### What is Mastery Learning?

- In 1968, Benjamin Bloom outlined a specific strategy that he dubbed *learning for mastery*, which later became *mastery learning* (Guskey, 2007).
- Mastery learning includes the following elements:
  - Instruction organized into units.
  - Clear instructional goals.
  - Minimum passing criteria.
  - Use of regular formative assessment to evaluate student learning on instructional goals.
  - “Corrective” (p. 12) activities paired with formative assessments to address individual struggles.
  - Use of parallel assessments to corroborate the first formative assessment and provide students with multiple attempts.
  - Enrichment activities to push high achieving students (Guskey, 2007; MacGaghie, 2015).

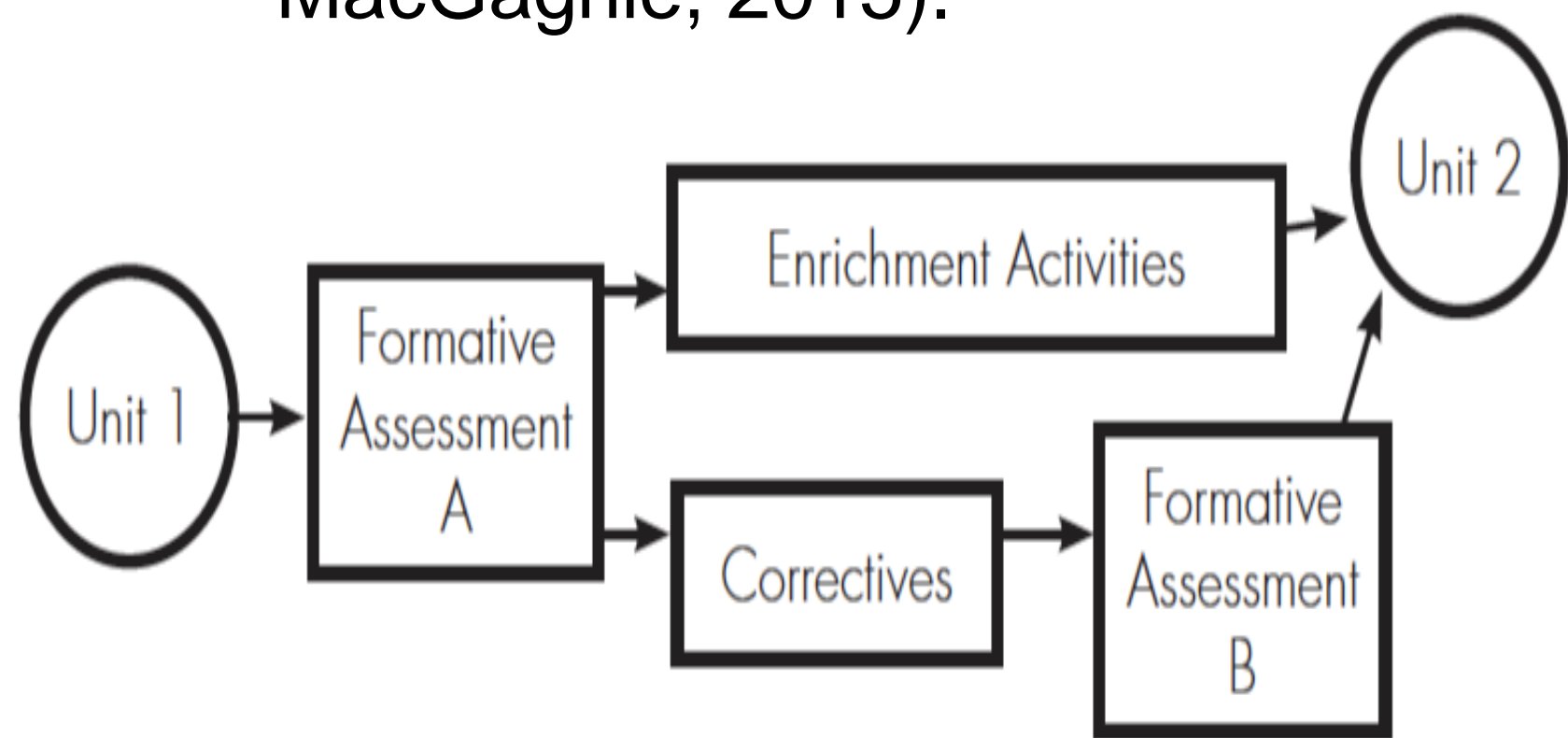


Figure 1. Components of Bloom's (1968) mastery learning. Reprinted from "Closing Achievement Gaps: Revisiting Benjamin S. Bloom's 'Learning for Mastery'" by T. R. Guskey, 2007, *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 19(1), p. 14.

## Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students

### What the Research Says

- In classes that implement mastery learning, 90% of students achieve at the level that was previously attained by only the top 10% of the class (Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 1990).
- “[L]ow aptitude students may gain more” (Kulik et al., 1990, p. 286) from a course that uses mastery learning.
- It may be particularly effective in achieving higher-level thinking goals (Guskey, 2007).
- Mastery learning reduces variation in student learning and closes achievement gaps (Guskey, 2007).
- Mastery learning may also boost students’ confidence in learning situations, attendance rates, involvement in class activities, and attitudes toward learning (Guskey, 2007).

### What UNLV Students Say

- “Dr. Beck allowed the students to redo assignments based on her corrections and feedback...I greatly benefitted from this. It also took the pressure off[f] scholastic performance and allowed the students to fully concentrate on the assignment. I learned more by redoing an assignment I did not fully understand. Afterwards this gave me a feeling of mastery and self-confidence.”

## Resources and where to find them

### Additional Resources

- See handout for resources on differentiation, backward planning, and mastery learning including example syllabus language.

### An Example

Learning to use APA format in a master’s level education program is crucial to student success in the M.Ed. program. Using mastery learning allows our students to incorporate APA skills in a scaffolded (gradual) manner to fully grasp the concept:

- Students participate in an APA tutorial online.
- Students take a baseline quiz and have unlimited attempts until they reach 100%.
- Students complete an APA correction activity to apply their knowledge.

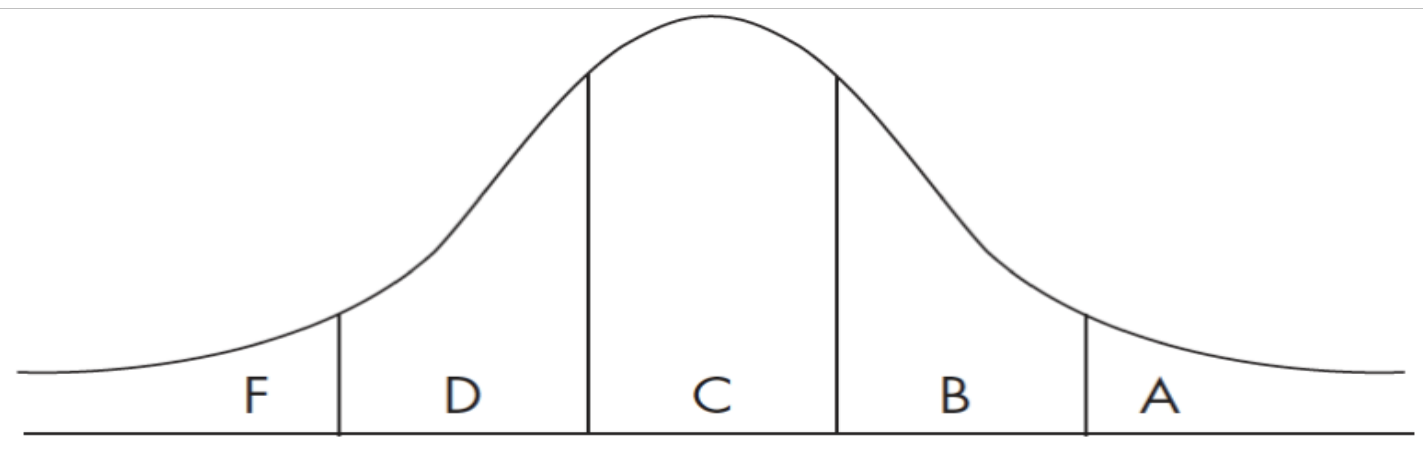


Figure 2. Distribution of scores in a class with regular instruction. Reprinted from “Closing Achievement Gaps: Revisiting Benjamin S. Bloom’s ‘Learning for Mastery’” by T. R. Guskey, 2007, *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 19(1), p. 11.

## How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

### Why Mastery Learning?

- It can be easily implemented across content areas. We recommend homing in on a key skill in your content area and allowing students multiple opportunities for success.
- It is possible to work into any course and syllabus and may require minimal adjustments (Guskey, 2007). See the example language in our handout.
- The instructor can determine how much time to allocate to mastery learning—just a little or more extensive implementation.
- It allows students to attempt knowledge or skill multiple times (Guskey, 2007).
- It meets the needs of diverse learners (Guskey, 2007).
- It reduces variation in learning and closes achievement gaps (Guskey, 2007).

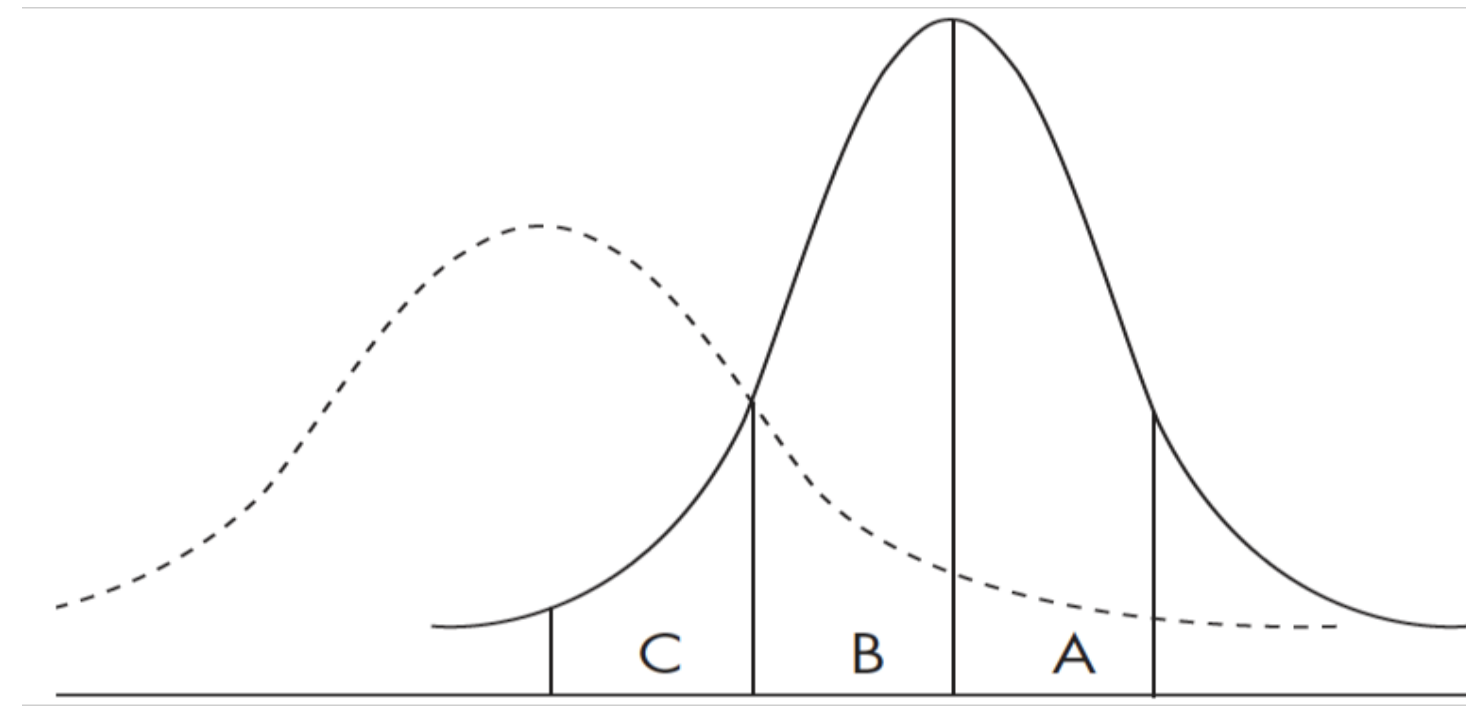


Figure 3. Distribution of scores in a class with mastery learning. Reprinted from “Closing Achievement Gaps: Revisiting Benjamin S. Bloom’s ‘Learning for Mastery’” by T. R. Guskey, 2007, *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 19(1), p. 14.