Applying the Model of Mastery Learning to Teaching Writing

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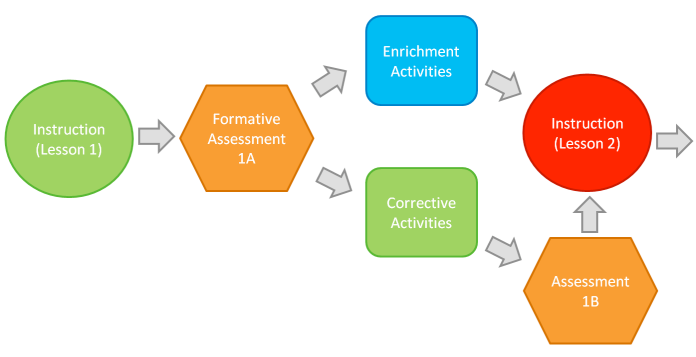
Session Plan

1. Overview of mastery learning
2. Describe application of model – case study of news writing class (online)
3. Examples of exercises

1. What Is Mastery Learning?

- Outcome-based learning
  - Curriculum organized into units
  - Progress measured at the end of the unit



1. What Is Mastery Learning?

1. Identification of specific outcomes or objectives that students must achieve.
2. Designing topics and exercises towards those goals.
3. Students work through each objective at their own pace, instead of working as a class through specific topics all at once.
   - Some students may move quicker, while others may take a little longer.
   - The Mastery Learning model is best applied in classrooms where understanding of certain objectives is required before moving on to subsequent topics (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).
4. Students have more than one chance to demonstrate mastery of content and skills.

1. What Is Mastery Learning?

- "When compared with students in traditionally taught classes, students in well-implemented mastery learning classes consistently reach higher levels of achievement and develop greater confidence in their ability to learn and in themselves as learners."
- Anderson, 1994; Guskey & Pigott, 1988; Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 1990
- Source: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct10/vol68/num02/Lessons-of-Mastery-Learning.aspx

2. Case Study: Teaching News Writing

- Concerns:
  - First part of the course = information
  - Skills vs. rhythm of the class
    - Textbook chapters
  - Teaching online
    - No revision after grading / feedback in forum exercises
    - Little discussion in forums
    - Poor writing skills
- Research:
  - Students vary widely in learning styles and rates

2. Case Study: Teaching News Writing

1. Journalism History and Principles
2. News Values and Audiences for News
3. Reporting for News
4. Writing Basic News Stories for Print
5. Writing Basic News Stories for Web and Broadcast

- Bonus Objectives:
  - Writing for Public Relations
  - Other Types of Basic News Stories

2. Case Study: Teaching News Writing: Objective Example

- Part 1: What is journalism? Journalism history.
  - Required readings: *Elements* – Introduction and Chapter 1; *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 1
- Part 2: Reporting truth.
  - Required readings: *Elements* – Chapters 2 and 4
- Part 3: Journalism as public forum.
  - Required readings: *Elements* – Chapter 7
- Part 4: Journalism law and ethics.
  - Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 7
- **Assignments:**
  - Quiz 1 – covers Parts 1 and 2
  - Lab 1 – covers Part 4
  - Twitter exercise 1 – covers Parts 1-4
  - Extra credit Sunlight Foundation – covers Part 3

3. Examples

OBJECTIVE I. Journalism History and Principles - TO BE COMPLETED BY SEPT. 30

Part 1: What is journalism? Journalism history.

- Required readings: *Elements* – Introduction and Chapter 1; *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 1; First Amendment link below

Part 2: Reporting truth.

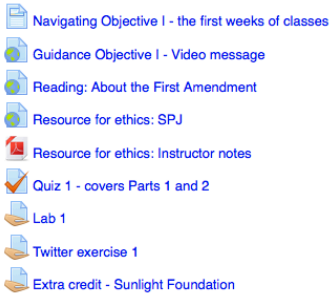
- Required readings: *Elements* – Chapters 2 and 4

Part 3: Journalism as public forum.

- Required readings: *Elements* – Chapter 7

Part 4: Journalism law and ethics.

- Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 7



2. Case Study: Teaching News Writing: Objective Example

- Part 1: News values.
  - Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 2, pages 18-21
- Part 2: Audience needs and interests.
  - Required readings: Lecture notes on Moodle
- Part 3: Diverse audiences.
  - Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 4, pages 88-89; Lecture notes on Moodle
- **Assignments:**
  - Quiz 2 – covers Parts 1-3
  - Lab 2 – identify news values and discuss audience
  - Twitter exercise 2 – good stories for diverse markets
  - Extra credit NewsU "Handling Race and Ethnicity"

OBJECTIVE IV. Writing Basic News Stories for Print - TO BE COMPLETED BY NOV. 18

Part 1: Organizing the facts.

- Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 3, pages 36-41

Part 2: Writing the summary lead.

- Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 3, pages 42-47

Part 3: Writing the basic news story, with a summary lead and following an inverted pyramid format.

- Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 3, pages 48-65

Part 4: Introduction to AP style.

- Required readings: *Inside Reporting* – Chapter 3, pages 56-57; Bandaid Guide to AP Style on Moodle

Navigating Objective IV

Lecture - Objective IV

Lecture - Link for analyzing structure of story

Assignments to Complete for Objective IV

Quiz 4 - ONE HOUR

Lab 4 - Writing leads

Lab 5 - Writing news in the inverted pyramid structure

Twitter Exercise 3

News Story 1 - OPTIONAL REWRITE - Submit it here

News Story 2 Proposal

Extra Credit - Lead Lab

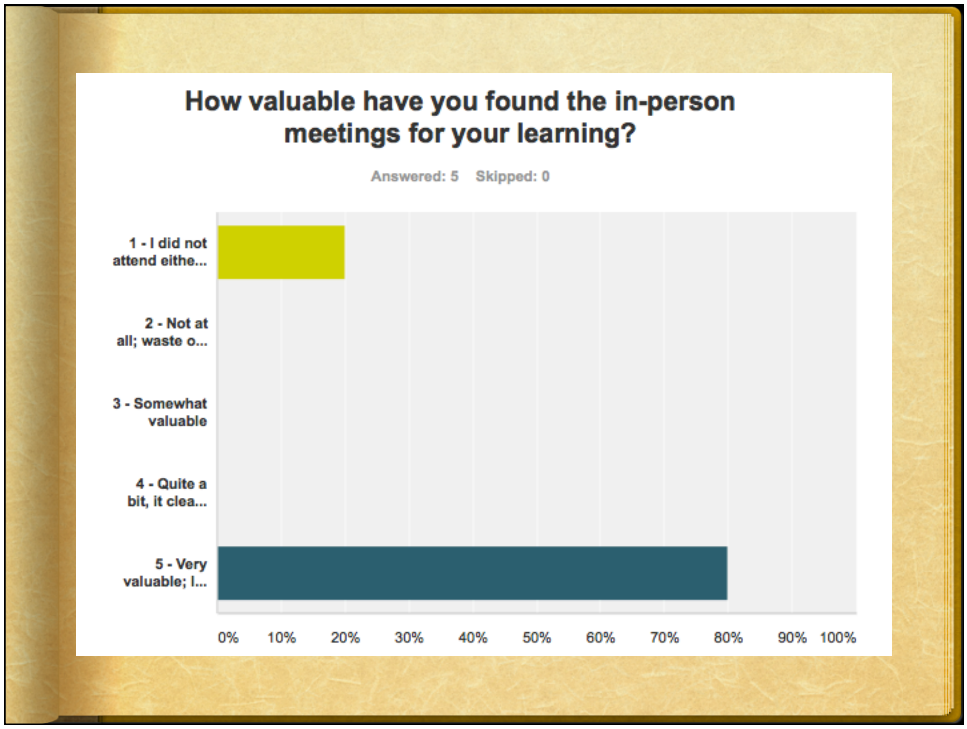
2. Case Study: Evaluation: Final Grades

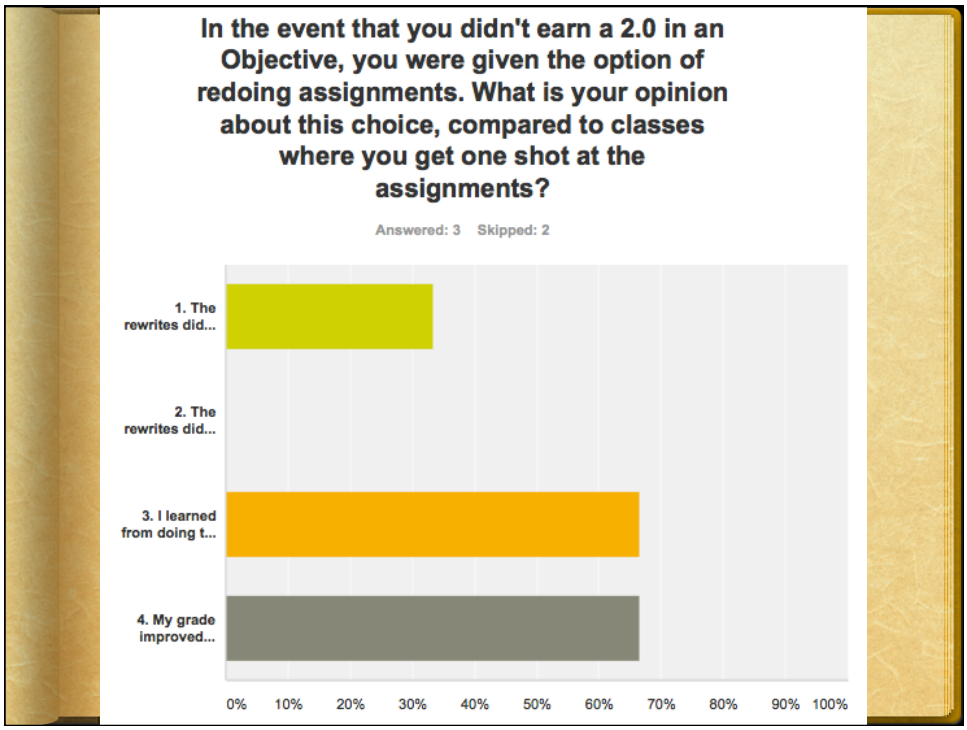
Fall 2012 Online

- 2.74 final grade average
- 11% in the 1.0-2.0 range
- 11% earned 0.0
  - 1 gave up work during the semester

Fall 2013 Online - Mastery

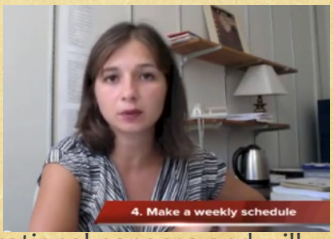
- 3.2 final grade average
- 6% in the 1.0-2.0 range
- 18% earned 0.0
  - 2 gave up work during the semester
  - 1 had extenuating circumstances


How valuable have you found the in-person meetings for your learning?
Answered: 5 Skipped: 0
1 - I did not attend eithe...
2 - Not at all; waste o...
3 - Somewhat valuable
4 - Quite a bit, it clea...
5 - Very valuable; I...
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%


In the event that you didn't earn a 2.0 in an Objective, you were given the option of redoing assignments. What is your opinion about this choice, compared to classes where you get one shot at the assignments?
Answered: 3 Skipped: 2
1. The rewrites did...
2. The rewrites did...
3. I learned from doing t...
4. My grade improved...
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

2. Case Study: Teaching News Writing: Challenges

- No deadlines
- Missing deadlines
- Invisible students



- "Mastery learning is not an educational panacea and will not solve all the complex problems facing educators… Careful attention to the essential elements of mastery learning will, however, allow educators at all levels to make great strides toward the goal of all [students] learning excellently."

(Guskey, 1996)

Take-Away Thoughts

- More engaged students
- Students experience more instructor attention
- Students experience more personalized instruction
- Less post-class grading for instructor