



Read and learn from studies that show that assessment for learning is comparable to individual tutoring in its effectiveness.

Outperform 98 Percent of Regular Students

Benjamin Bloom reported on how a teacher can achieve 98 percent mastery. There are three basic methods of instruction.

1. **Conventional Instruction.** This is the ubiquitous textbook, lecture, worksheet, and test method. The chapters in the textbook constitute the assignment, and the tests are written to determine students' grades only. The intent is to "cover and grade."
2. **Mastery Learning.** The instruction is the same as in the conventional instruction method, but the assignments are based on objectives that the students are responsible for accomplishing and the tests are criterion-referenced. Most of the tests are formative tests or assessments used to determine what kind of corrective help the students needs before the summative test or final test is given. The intent is to teach for mastery or comprehension.
3. **Tutoring.** This is one-to-one instruction. The intent is to give one-on-one tutoring to assess for and then tutor to ensure that mastery or comprehension is reached.

We all know that one-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction, but this would be too costly, so Benjamin Bloom set out to find a comparable form of instruction that could be used in standard classroom group instruction. Here's what he discovered:

- ♦ The average **TUTORED** student outperformed **98 percent** of the students taught under a conventional form (within 2 standard deviations).
- ♦ The average student taught under **MASTERY LEARNING** outperformed **84 percent** of the students taught under a conventional form (1 standard deviation).

With objectives, assessments, and tests, these steps describe how you could teach very effectively in a whole class environment.

- ♦ **Step 1.** Base each assignment on a set of objectives.
- ♦ **Step 2.** Make the first test a formative assessment test to see the effectiveness of your instruction. Use the test results to determine how well the students learned each objective (remember, the questions are correlated to the objectives).
- ♦ **Step 3.** Remediate your instruction as needed.
- ♦ **Step 4.** Base each subsequent test on the lesson objectives; that is, write criterion-referenced tests.

When you use Steps 1–4, you are teaching under a mastery learning format. You are now 84 percent more effective than the conventional teacher who covers the textbook.

- ♦ **Step 5.** Use assessments to monitor individual learning until comprehension is mastered. This is tutoring. You have just changed from group instruction to individualized tutoring. You are now 98 percent more effective than the conventional teacher.

Mastery Learning + Individual Tutoring = High Student Achievement

Benjamin S. Bloom, "The Search for Methods of Group Instruction as Effective as One-to-One Tutoring," *Educational Leadership* 41, no. 8 (May 1984): 4–6.