



June 10, 2026

Dear Emery County School District Families,

As we prepare for school year 26/27, our goal remains steadfast: to ensure every student in Emery County is deeply engaged in learning, supported in their growth, and fully equipped for success. With this commitment, I am pleased to announce an exciting shift in our educational approach. Beginning this upcoming school year, our K-8 schools will officially transition to a Mastery Learning and Grading model.

This initiative is a direct reflection of our community's shared vision and initiates the academic mastery portion of the Emery Portrait of a Graduate, including the promise to implement the vision for critical thinking, effective communication, resilience, personal responsibility, a strong work ethic and a civics and citizenship mindset in every student. Mastery learning and the six pillars of the portrait of a graduate serve as cornerstones of our Focus 2026 strategic plan.

What is Mastery Learning?

In a traditional classroom, time is fixed, but learning is variable; the class moves on to the next topic after a test, even if a student has not quite gripped the material yet. Mastery learning flips this formula. In a mastery-based classroom, learning is the constant, and time is the variable. Students progress as they demonstrate that they truly understand the concepts.

Furthermore, there are clear milestones tied to essential learning standards that guide the way. Instead of receiving a single, ambiguous letter grade for a whole unit, students receive clear feedback on specific skills, showing exactly what they know and what they still need to work on. Report cards will look different from the context of meeting a mastery standard and progressing towards mastery. In mastery systems, pairing a letter grade with a mastery-based evaluation helps satisfy conventional grading requirements while still providing a detailed look at what skills a student has actually learned.

During instruction, mistakes are viewed as steps in the journey. If a student does not master a concept the first time, they receive targeted support and opportunities to try again without penalty. This model works to ensure that no child is left with gaps in their foundational knowledge, and no child is held back from advancing when they are ready to soar.

We know that a shift like this brings questions, and we want to ensure you feel informed and confident every step of the way. We have built a comprehensive hub of resources specifically for our families and encourage you to please visit our community page at emeryschools.org/community to find detailed explanations, frequently asked questions, video guides, and deeper insights into how this aligns with our Focus 2026 goals. On this page you will find the portrait of a graduate framework, Focus 2026, and mastery learning information including a voice over PowerPoint presentation, a video, and voice file explaining the important aspects of Mastery Learning.

Thank you for your continued partnership, your trust, and your dedication to educating the children of Emery County. Together, we are creating a learning environment where every single student can truly master their potential.

Warm regards,

Dr. Jim Shank
Superintendent of Schools
Emery County School District