



WHEN “MASTERY” FEELS LIKE REPETITION: RETHINKING REDUNDANT ASSIGNMENTS IN DIGITAL LEARNING
AT SOME POINT, IT STOPS FEELING LIKE LEARNING AND STARTS FEELING LIKE COMPLIANCE.
IN MANY COURSES—ESPECIALLY THOSE CENTERED ON DIGITAL LITERACY AND MEDIA CREATION—STUDENTS ARE
ASKED TO PRODUCE MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF ESSENTIALLY THE SAME ASSIGNMENT: A BLOG POST, A VIDEO, A
PODCAST. ON THE SURFACE, THIS SEEMS LIKE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE VERSATILITY. IN PRACTICE, IT
OFTEN BECOMES REDUNDANT.

IF A STUDENT HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED CLEAR UNDERSTANDING, CREATIVITY, AND THE ABILITY TO
COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY, WHY REQUIRE THEM TO PROVE IT AGAIN... AND AGAIN... IN SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT
FORMATS?

MASTERY SHOULD BE RECOGNIZABLE
TRUE MASTERY ISN'T FORMAT-DEPENDENT.

IF A STUDENT CAN:

CLEARLY EXPLAIN A CONCEPT

ENGAGE AN AUDIENCE

USE APPROPRIATE TONE AND STRUCTURE

DEMONSTRATE CRITICAL THINKING

THEN THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE HAS ALREADY BEEN MET.

REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS THAT MIRROR THE SAME SKILLS DOESN'T DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING—IT
SIMPLY EXTENDS THE WORKLOAD. AT THAT POINT, THE FOCUS SHIFTS FROM LEARNING TO TASK COMPLETION.

REDUNDANCY VS. RIGOR

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGOR AND REPETITION.

RIGOR CHALLENGES STUDENTS TO THINK DEEPER, APPLY KNOWLEDGE IN NEW WAYS, AND STRETCH THEIR
ABILITIES. REPETITION, ON THE OTHER HAND, OFTEN ASKS STUDENTS TO REPACKAGE THE SAME IDEAS WITHOUT
ADDING MEANINGFUL COMPLEXITY.

CREATING A BLOG POST, THEN A VIDEO, THEN A PODCAST ON NEARLY IDENTICAL TOPICS DOESN'T NECESSARILY
BUILD NEW SKILLS—IT REINFORCES THE SAME ONES IN A LOOP. FOR STUDENTS WHO ALREADY GRASP THE
MATERIAL, THIS CAN FEEL LESS LIKE GROWTH AND MORE LIKE BUSY WORK.

TIME IS A RESOURCE

STUDENTS ARE NOT JUST LEARNERS—THEY ARE OFTEN PROFESSIONALS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
MANAGING MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES.

WHEN ASSIGNMENTS BECOME REDUNDANT, THEY DON'T JUST TAKE TIME—THEY TAKE VALUABLE TIME. TIME THAT
COULD BE SPENT:

EXPLORING NEW CONCEPTS

ENGAGING IN DEEPER RESEARCH

APPLYING KNOWLEDGE IN REAL-WORLD CONTEXTS

INSTEAD, THAT TIME IS SPENT RECREATING CONTENT TO SATISFY FORMAT REQUIREMENTS RATHER THAN
INTELLECTUAL ONES.

A BETTER APPROACH

IF THE GOAL IS TO ASSESS MASTERY, THEN FLEXIBILITY SHOULD BE PART OF THE DESIGN.

EDUCATORS COULD:

ALLOW STUDENTS TO CHOOSE ONE FORMAT TO DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING

OFFER ADVANCED OR ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENTS FOR THOSE WHO SHOW EARLY MASTERY

FOCUS GRADING ON DEPTH, ORIGINALITY, AND APPLICATION—NOT REPETITION

THIS APPROACH RESPECTS BOTH THE STUDENT'S TIME AND THEIR DEMONSTRATED CAPABILITY.

FINAL THOUGHT

EDUCATION SHOULD BE ABOUT GROWTH, NOT REDUNDANCY.

WHEN STUDENTS CONSISTENTLY SHOW THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THE MATERIAL, THE SYSTEM SHOULD RECOGNIZE
THAT—AND RESPOND ACCORDINGLY. MASTERY SHOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED THE FIRST TIME IT APPEARS, NOT
AFTER IT'S BEEN REPEATED IN THREE DIFFERENT FORMATS.

BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY, LEARNING ISN'T ABOUT HOW MANY TIMES YOU CAN PROVE SOMETHING YOU
ALREADY KNOW. IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE ABLE TO DO NEXT.