

What districts get when they switch to Mastery.

Seven districts, five states of research, and the results they saw after moving to Mastery for assessment.



Most states return their test results over the summer, weeks or months after the school year has ended. The third grader who struggled in math is a fourth grader now, with a new teacher and new standards to learn. In too many classrooms, scores are arriving too late for teachers to act on.

Some districts have started looking for ways to spot who was off track while there was still time to do something about it. In a 2025 study across five states, the predictive assessments in Mastery by Instructure correctly identified which elementary and middle school students were on track for proficiency 84% of the time, above the industry standard of 75%. What follows pulls together the strongest results and stories from districts that made the switch, organized by what they actually got out of it. The names, numbers, and quotes are theirs.

Predictions accurate enough to plan around

A benchmark is only useful if it tells you the truth about where a student will land. When Lexington City Schools in North Carolina brought in new academic leadership in 2023, the team inherited free, state-provided benchmarks that were loosely aligned to standards and could not predict much of anything. They moved to Mastery Connect and Mastery View Predictive Assessments. The next year, those predictions matched actual reading and math results with 82% and 88% accuracy.

82% | 88%

prediction accuracy for reading and math at Lexington City Schools, NC

3–5 points

how closely Fairfield County, SC, predictions track the state English exam

Fairfield County, a rural South Carolina district where 86% of students are economically disadvantaged, has used the same predictive assessments since 2013 and now sees student scores fall within three to five percentage points of the actual state English end-of-course exam. That kind of reliability is what lets a team plan interventions before the end-of-course exam (rather than explain the results after it.)

“We needed benchmark data that teachers could actually understand and use. Without that, you're not going to move instruction.”

— Leigh Jones, Chief Academic Officer, Lexington City Schools

“Our benchmarks are pretty much in line as a predictor for the state English end-of-course exam. Students may fall anywhere between a three to five percentage point difference.”

— Leevette Malloy, Director of Secondary Education, Fairfield County School District

Scores that move where it counts

Prediction is the setup. The results on state accountability measures are the payoff, and this is where the districts have the most to show. Hamilton County Schools in Tennessee, a 45,232-student district, adopted Canvas and Mastery Connect in 2018 and built a habit of using common assessment data to decide what to teach next. Over the following stretch the district climbed from a Level 1 to a Level 5 rating, the top of Tennessee's five-point scale, and has stayed there three years in a row.

Lexington's turnaround showed up quickly: seventh-grade math scores rose 25.7% in a single year, and English 2 end-of-course proficiency climbed 7.6%. In South Carolina, an 11,000-student Kershaw County district put Mastery to work inside Canvas with weekly data meetings, and one of its middle schools moved from an "Average" to an "Excellent" rating on the state report card in a year. De Soto School District 73 in Missouri, which had set out simply to put standards back at the center, has posted double-digit growth on state assessments year after year and now scores at the top of its region.

"Our scores have more than doubled in the past four years, and we really credit a lot of that to our use of Mastery Connect. We have been a level five for three years in a row now, and that's a level five out of five."

— Rachel Turner, Secondary Social Studies Content Lead, Hamilton County Schools

"Without Mastery Connect, we would not have made the progress we had last year. It was the most significant tool we used."

— Beth Felts, Director of Accountability and School Improvement, Lexington City Schools

Level 1 → 5

Hamilton County, TN accountability rating, then held for three years

25.7%

single-year jump in seventh-grade math scores at Lexington City Schools, NC

Average → Excellent

Kershaw County, SC middle school report-card rating in one year



Teachers back at the center of assessment

Before Mastery Connect, a De Soto teacher named Maddy Overmann was building tests in paper packets and Google Forms and losing up to three days to a single one. That is time no district can spare, and the tests were not even well aligned to standards. Switching gave teachers a shared place to unpack standards, tie every question to one, and shorten assessments without losing rigor. The tool did more than save hours. It changed who owned the work.

“Mastery Connect forces you to know your standards as a teacher. It shows me which questions need adjusting and exactly where students are in their learning.”

— Erin Beck, High School Teacher, De Soto School District 73

“Before Mastery Connect, every teacher was on their own to develop their assessments as they saw fit.”

— Anthony Goad, High School Science Content Lead, Hamilton County Schools

When teachers build and read the assessments themselves, the data stops being something handed down from a central office and starts being something they trust. Ron Farrow, De Soto's assistant superintendent, said the district's whole strategy was simple: go back to basics, put standards at the center, and give teachers data they can act on.



Data a whole team can act on together

The districts that get the most from Mastery treat it as an instructional habit, not just a testing event. Hortonville Area School District in Wisconsin has used Mastery Connect since 2013 to run its professional learning communities, using shared trackers and student-facing views to anchor conversations about learning rather than points. Passaic County Technical Vocational Schools in New Jersey, with 4,500 students across more than a dozen academies, folded Mastery Connect into Canvas so teachers pull assessment data in the same place they run coursework.

“Teachers like having data they can use. Mastery Connect provides that just-in-time data we need to make instructional decisions.”

— Ted Szczawinski, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Passaic County Technical Vocational Schools

“Student View has allowed us to move from a culture of students trying to get points to a culture of students trying to understand their learning.”

— Chris Hansen, Director of Learning, Hortonville Area School District

Kershaw County makes the same point from the classroom side. Principal Rebecca Shackleford describes watching students' posture change as their trackers shift from red to yellow to green. When the data is visible and shared, students start owning it too.



Growth that reaches every student group

Averages can hide the students a district most needs to reach. Several of these districts point specifically to subgroup results. At Lexington City Schools, four of five schools met or exceeded growth in every subgroup, including students with disabilities, and its middle school exceeded growth for the first time. Kershaw County met or exceeded growth targets in every category, subgroups included.

4 of 5 schools

met or exceeded growth in every subgroup at Lexington City Schools, NC

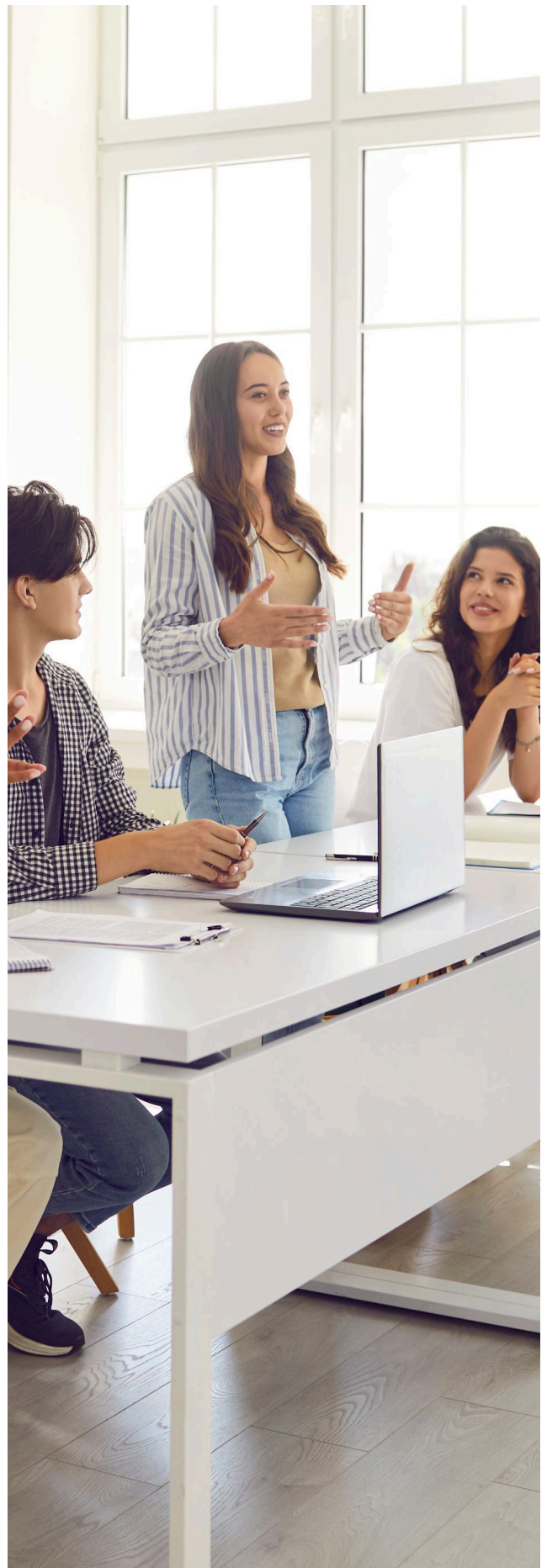
Fairfield County is the clearest test of the idea. In a rural district where most students live in poverty, the same predictive assessments and formative tools have supported a run of recognition, including a National Blue Ribbon honor for one of its Title I elementary schools. Mastery can't close gaps on its own, but it gives a district the information to see gaps early and do something about them.

“86% of our students are children of poverty, and we have made extraordinary efforts to close the achievement gap. That was one of the reasons why we started utilizing Mastery Connect close to 12 years ago.”

— Dr. Claudia Avery, Deputy Superintendent of Academics, Fairfield County School District

“What Mastery Connect has let us do is provide a common assessment for all the teachers in the content being tested, so that we could get a picture of what all students are doing across schools, across grade levels, and across demographics.”

— Anthony Goad, High School Science Content Lead, Hamilton County Schools



The research behind the results

Instructure has studied how districts use Mastery and how it holds up. A few figures worth knowing:

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Predictions that clear the bar. The 2025 multi-state validity report behind that 84% figure covered more than 32,000 students across Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Predictions correlated to actual state results at an average of .80 in grades three through eight, the level researchers treat as strong.
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More assessment, higher scores. Across ESSA Level III efficacy studies in Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina, students in grades three through eight gained anywhere from two to 38 percentile points for every two additional assessments they completed in Mastery Connect.
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Tested widely, not narrowly. The efficacy work spanned six districts across four states and drew on samples as large as 74,906 students, in communities ranging from 500 to 78,000 students, with no notable differences by demographic group.

The districts behind these results

Every figure and quote in this piece comes from a published Instructure customer story. Here is who they are.

District	State	Students	What stood out
Hamilton County Schools	TN	45,000	Rose from a Level 1 to a Level 5 district in three years and held it three years running
Kershaw County School District	SC	11,000	A middle school jumped from “Average” to “Excellent” on the state report card in one year
Lexington City Schools	NC	3,000	Seventh-grade math scores rose 25.7% in a single year
De Soto School District 73	MO	3,700	Double-digit annual growth on state assessments, now top of its region in core subjects
Passaic County Technical Vocational Schools	NJ	4,500	Built one connected home for coursework and assessment data alongside Canvas
Fairfield County School District	SC	2,300	Predictions land within three to five points of the state English exam in an 86%-poverty community
Hortonville Area School District	WI	4,200	Shifted students from chasing points to owning what they understand

Sources

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Multi-State Predictive Validity Report 2025 — instructure.com/resources/research-reports/mastery-view-predictive-assessments-multi-state-predictive-validity
ESSA Level III efficacy studies — community.instructure.com (Mastery Connect usage leads to ELA and math gains)