Teacher Perspectives on Student Mastery:
Implications for Diagnostic Assessment Use and Design
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METHODS
We surveyed 95 teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities on their perceptions of their students’ skill mastery and asked them to provide a definition and describe what mastery looks like to them.

"The ability to apply knowledge to a task and follow through with an explanation*

"The student is able to transfer skills learned across the board in different subject areas”

"Able to work independently and confidently on a task with little to no teacher support”

"Being able to live independently on their own. They need to know lifeskills.”

"This student's cognitive & developmental level would not allow for mastery of the topics assessed at his chronological age”

"80% accuracy with multiple adults in 4/5 trials across different weeks”

"Mastery is consistent correct responses that rule out the possibility of guessing”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
1. How do teachers of students with significant cognitive disabilities describe mastery?
2. How realistic are expectations of mastery for students who take alternate assessments of alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS) according to teachers?
3. How do the qualities of teachers’ descriptions of mastery coincide with their beliefs about student potential to master skills on the AA-AAS?

IMPLICATIONS
- Because teachers usually administer teslets to students and drive students’ progress through the curriculum, how they think about mastery is relevant to opportunities to learn (OTL) challenging grade-level content.
- The level of independence teachers expect and what that looks like may have implications for the selection and use of accessibility supports and the teacher’s behavior during test administration.
- How teachers understand and use score reports obtained through formative and summative testing may be influenced by their buy-in and the incongruities between their definitions of mastery and the diagnostic classification models’ less complex concept of mastery.