



MICRO-CREDENTIALS

A GAME-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY FOR STATES TO SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF TEACHERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Micro-credentials are a potentially game-changing strategy for states to help experienced, hard-working and highly skilled teachers continuously improve their practice to meet the ever-increasing needs of their students in a global, 21st century economy. Micro-credentials are a competency-based, personalized validation that a teacher has mastered a specific classroom practice and can use it effectively in his or her classroom. This contrasts sharply with most professional development, which at best requires only theoretical understanding of a classroom practice.

States are using micro-credentials to target the skills teachers most need, achieve a higher return on state investment in professional learning, make teacher relicensure more meaningful, address teacher shortages, and create skills-based pathways for career advancement, where strong teachers can remain in the classroom. States are continuing to explore micro-credentials and learn from pilot efforts.

As states begin to scale micro-credentials, they can take the time needed to incorporate micro-credentials into a larger state strategy to improve classroom instruction and make sure that teachers support micro-credentials. They can focus on those micro-credentials with the strongest connection to student learning and that best meet the specific needs of teachers, schools and districts. They can also ensure that teachers receive the time and support they need to hit the higher bar of teacher practice that micro-credentials can set.

A micro-credential is a competency-based validation that a teacher has mastered a critical classroom practice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Most, if not all, of the most promising efforts to increase student learning rely on improving the practices of teachers who are currently in the classroom. For example, ensuring that students are able to read by the end of third grade requires teachers to provide highly effective instruction based on the science of reading.¹ In personalized learning, teachers must shift to facilitating student learning of specific competencies, using a variety of delivery mechanisms and through various partners, a formidable challenge for many teachers.² Similarly, high-quality instructional materials have the strongest impact when teachers know how to use them effectively.³

In addition, the vast majority of teachers who will teach over the next 20 years are *already* in the classroom. This means that improving the pipeline of new teachers, while critically important, is not enough to improve classroom practices in most schools for the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, previous large-scale efforts to support the professional growth of teachers have mostly failed.⁴ Little or no change in classroom practice occurs after teachers participate in typical professional learning programs, including workshops, conferences and traditional courses.⁵ Teachers generally find these experiences ineffective, yet they are often forced to participate to qualify for salary increases and to retain their licenses.⁶

¹ See ExcelinEd, [K-3 Reading Policy Summary](#).

² See ExcelinEd, [Competency-Based Education and School Finance](#) (2017); Jobs for the Future and the Council of Chief State School Officers, [Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching](#) (2015).

³ See Ross Wiener and Susan Pimentel, The Aspen Institute, [Practice What You Teach](#) (2017).

⁴ See Melissa Tooley and Kaylan Connolly, New America, [No Panacea: Diagnosing What Ails Teacher Professional Development Before Reaching for Remedies](#) (2016).

⁵ See, e.g., TNTP, [The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth About Our Quest for Teacher Development](#) (2015).

⁶ See Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, [Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development](#) (2015).



A PROMISING SOLUTION: MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR TEACHERS

What Is a Micro-Credential?

A micro-credential is a competency-based validation that a teacher has mastered a critical classroom practice. It reflects an independent review of evidence (e.g., a video) of the teacher using the practice effectively with real students in a real classroom. Ideally, the micro-credentials a teacher pursues reflect the specific pedagogical needs of that teacher, based on feedback about his or her current practice.

There are several critical features of micro-credentials. First, for each micro-credential, a specific classroom practice is identified. The following are some illustrative examples selected from existing offerings:

Teaching phonics: Phonics refers to understanding how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns. This micro-credential requires demonstrating an understanding of how phonics works and how to design and implement a phonics lesson that includes strong modeling and opportunity for student practice with feedback.⁷

Creating learner profiles: The learner profile is one of the core components of personalized learning where information about the learner is used--in conjunction with the learner--to determine their unique path to achieving proficiency in all the standards. Effective practitioners guide students to reflect on themselves as learners, display this understanding in the learner profile and use this information to create valuable learning experiences that support their academic readiness, learning preferences and hobbies/interests.⁸

Redirecting student behavior to meet classroom expectations: The way an educator redirects student behavior in the classroom creates a tone and impacts the relationship between the educator and the community of students. Positive redirection includes a variety of methods, such as, nonverbal cues, physical proximity, private conversations and signals, highlighting existing positive behaviors, prompting with questions and making specific requests with fewer words and less emotion to ensure accountability to the shared norms.⁹

Modifying instruction through formative assessments during a lesson: Formative assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations of student comprehension and learning needs during a lesson. One goal of formative assessment is to collect and analyze data that can be used to improve student learning and instruction within the lesson. In order to effectively conduct formative assessments, educators must be able to select formative assessment techniques to gather the information they want, implement the technique with efficacy to gather quality data and then modify instruction based on the analysis of data.

Helping students clarify and support their ideas: Students often do not come to school with a lot of experience or practice in engaging in academic conversations. Therefore, teachers must scaffold the growth of two key conversation skills—clarifying, as well as supporting with evidence, examples and reasoning. This is important for all students, including English learners. Components of this micro-credential include preparation, engaging in conversation and note-taking, formative assessment and final discussion.¹⁰

⁷ See [BloomBoard](#).

⁸ See [BloomBoard](#).

⁹ See [BloomBoard](#).

¹⁰ See [Digital Promise](#).



Second, each micro-credential details what this practice looks like in the classroom and how teachers can demonstrate they can effectively use the practice. For example, the Arkansas Department of Education has developed a micro-credential on modifying instruction through formative assessments during a lesson. To earn this micro-credential, teachers must submit a 5- to 10-minute video that demonstrates the following three features:

- Data collection is strategically gathered at critical points in the lesson, and the quality of data lends itself to informed instructional decisions to ensure students achieve proficiency in the learning objective(s);
- Evidence clearly demonstrates how data is quickly and efficiently analyzed in-process; and
- Based on the data, in-process decisions are made to tailor instruction and ensure students achieve proficiency in the learning objective(s).¹¹

Third, teachers are generally free to develop the skill required to earn a micro-credential in whatever way they choose. There is no formal instructional program or instructor. Sometimes teachers are provided with resources they can consult, including videos of other teachers implementing the practice effectively. They can reflect on how their own instruction compares to effective use of the practice.¹² When teachers think they have mastered the practice, they submit their evidence, which is independently reviewed by someone specially trained in the practice. Rubrics are typically used to assess the evidence, and there are systems to ensure consistency among reviewers. If the practice is demonstrated sufficiently, teachers earn the micro-credential. Otherwise, the teachers are provided feedback, and they can revise their submissions until they are acceptable.

Types of Micro-Credentials

There are more than 500 different micro-credentials currently available to teachers, and the number is growing.¹³ Many of the micro-credentials are grouped into “stacks,” which are oriented around a common theme, and sequenced into pathways.¹⁴ Digital Promise and BloomBoard are the two largest micro-credentialing platforms.

Spotlight: Digital Promise

Digital Promise has created a public platform for teachers to earn micro-credentials. It engages with expert-issuing organizations, including universities, nonprofits, school districts and teachers’ unions. Digital Promise evaluates newly proposed micro-credentials using a “stress test” that considers the research that supports the practice, the evidence that will indicate successful demonstration of competency and the rubric by which the evidence will be assessed.¹⁵ It also ensures that issuers use a reliable and rigorous review process. This includes using the first 50 submissions to calibrate review.

Spotlight: BloomBoard

BloomBoard has also created a platform for micro-credentials. Rather than openly accepting micro-credentials from third-party issuers, BloomBoard works closely with states and other partners to develop research-based micro-credentials, and it rigorously reviews teacher submissions itself. For example, BloomBoard worked with the Arkansas Department of Education to develop nine micro-credentials for new teachers.¹⁶

¹¹ This micro-credential is part of the BloomBoard platform that is accessible to authorized users.

¹² BloomBoard uses a more formal reflection structure, called ADDIE: analyze; design; develop; implement; and evaluate. [ADDIE](#) is used in designing instruction.

¹³ See, e.g., the Digital Promise [platform](#). See also the BloomBoard [website](#) (free account required).

¹⁴ More examples of micro-credentials are included in the Appendix.

¹⁵ See Dan Brown for Digital Promise, [Research and Educator Micro-Credentials](#) (2019).

¹⁶ By creating an account on the BloomBoard [website](#), it is possible to see many of these micro-credentials.



Why Micro-Credentials?

Micro-credentials are a potential game changer for states to support the professional growth of teachers for the following reasons:

- **Competency-based:** To earn a micro-credential, teachers must demonstrate their ability to use the practice in a real classroom with students. This is fundamentally different than typical professional learning, which at best requires theoretical understanding of a classroom practice, not demonstrated ability to use it.
- **Focus on research-based classroom practices:** The best micro-credentials aim squarely at specific classroom practices that are closely connected with student learning. This ensures that professional learning is aimed at the right targets.¹⁷
- **Breaking up teaching into discrete skills:** Through micro-credentials, teachers can focus on very specific, concrete practices. They can read articles about the practice and see videos of teachers implementing the practice effectively. They can reflect on how they are using the practice. As such, micro-credentials can maximize the ability of teachers to learn how to use a new practice.
- **Setting their own path:** Teachers can choose among micro-credentials, giving them more agency over their own professional learning. This is important to motivate teachers to improve their skills, although it is still best practice to establish some guardrails so that teachers pick the micro-credentials that are most appropriate for them.¹⁸
- **Personalized pace:** Teachers can take as much time as needed to develop the practice. This competency-based personalization is more effective than typical whole-class instruction.¹⁹
- **Learning by doing:** Through micro-credentials, teachers are working on job-embedded practice problems relevant to their daily work. The very process of creating the evidence of the skill means that teachers are learning through actual practice, which is generally considered the way adults learn best.
- **Third-party verification and feedback:** Teachers have an opportunity to receive feedback on their video submissions and make adjustments. The feedback is provided by an independent expert, ideally someone certified to review that micro-credential, who can hold up a high bar before saying that a teacher has mastered the practice.

How States Can Use Micro-Credentialing

Micro-credentials are in an early stage of exploration in more than a dozen states, most often at a small scale through pilots.²⁰ Through these efforts, some promising strategies to better support teachers and, ultimately, student learning have become clear, including:

Targeting state instructional priorities: Because micro-credentials focus on specific competencies and skills, states can use them to address critical instructional needs. Tennessee, for example, developed micro-credentials to address three skills in its teacher evaluation rubric—questioning, thinking and problem solving—that were most commonly identified as areas where teachers needed growth.²¹

¹⁷ See National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, [Does Content-Focused Teacher Professional Development Work?](#) (2017).

¹⁸ See Jenny Demonte, AIR, *Micro-Credentials for Teachers: What Three Early Adopter States Have Learned So Far* (2017).

¹⁹ For evidence of the effectiveness of personalized learning with students, see John F. Pane et al., RAND Corporation, [Continued Progress](#) (2015).

²⁰ See Digital Promise, [Micro-Credentials and Education Policy in the United States](#) (2019).

²¹ Tennessee Department of Education, [Micro-Credential Pilot: Year Two](#) (2017).



More effective funding for professional learning. Many states provide significant funding for professional learning. States also provide considerable indirect support, e.g., funding formulas that incorporate funding for teachers who participate in professional learning. States can require that any professional learning they support, directly or indirectly, incorporates micro-credentials, moving from “hours to outcomes.”²² They can use existing funding to make micro-credentials free for teachers and to provide financial incentives for teachers to earn micro-credentials. As more professional learning is oriented around micro-credentials, rather than credit hours, states can see a higher return on their investment in teacher expertise.

More meaningful relicensure. In many states, teachers are required to take a certain number of hours of professional development in order to keep their teaching licenses. And to qualify for salary increases, teachers often must take enough courses for a master’s degree or its equivalent. There is typically no requirement that these hours or courses result in teachers having an ability to implement new classroom practices or that they are tied to any particular development needs.²³ Micro-credentials are a far better option than seat time in workshops or courses that produce at best only theoretical understanding of a practice. States can decide to allow teachers to meet their relicensure requirements, and qualify for salary increases, by earning micro-credentials. Currently, in Arkansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Utah, districts can count micro-credentials for relicensure.²⁴

States can require that any professional learning they support incorporates micro-credentials, moving from “hours to outcomes.”

Addressing teacher shortages. States can use micro-credentials to address critical teacher shortage areas. This can be in specific subjects matters, such as computer science or career and technical education, or in geographic locations, such as rural districts. States can identify the specific, critical skills that teachers in these areas need. Then teachers can focus on earning micro-credentials for these skills. Some teachers may already have the skills, based on various experiences, and they can readily demonstrate these competencies without having to take an entire course or series of courses.²⁵ Minnesota, for example, is creating micro-credentials so that existing teachers can expand their skills in order to teach hard-to-staff career technical education courses in rural schools.²⁶

Skills-based career advancement. States can identify teacher leaders based on their advanced skills, e.g., ability to coach other teachers, rather than seniority in the job. In Louisiana, prospective teacher leaders proceed through a suite of micro-credentials, including one on delivering professional development.²⁷ Similarly, teacher leaders in Arkansas must achieve proficiency in several skills, such as running an effective professional learning community.²⁸ Because their skills are validated externally through a rigorous micro-credentialing process, these teachers are more likely to command the respect of their peers. This approach also creates a path for the most highly skilled teachers to remain in the classroom, while they support other teachers, rather than leave the classroom for higher-paid administrative jobs.²⁹

²² Interview with Jason Lange, BloomBoard (Mar. 27, 2019).

²³ See Melissa Tooley & Taylor White, New America, [Rethinking Relicensure](#) (2018).

²⁴ Stephen Sawchuk, “[Can ‘Micro-Credentialing’ Salvage Teacher PD?](#)” *Education Week* (Mar. 26, 2016); Interview with Machel Mills, Tennessee Department of Education (Apr. 12, 2019); Interview with Jason Lange, BloomBoard (Apr. 22, 2019); Interview with Dr. Karen Johannesen Brock, Provo City School District (Apr. 18, 2019).

²⁵ Some teachers may have learned some of the skills already through various experiences, and they can earn the micro-credentials without having to attend unnecessary courses.

²⁶ Interview with Josh Nelson, Lakes Country Service Cooperative (Mar. 26, 2019).

²⁷ Interview with Hannah Dietsch, Louisiana Department of Education (Mar. 25, 2019). Louisiana is identifying [content leaders](#) and [mentor teachers](#).

²⁸ Interview Sandra Hurst, Arkansas Department of Education (Mar. 22, 2019).

²⁹ See BloomBoard and American Institutes for Research, [Redefining Educator Career Pathways With Micro-Credentials](#) (2019).



LESSONS FOR STATES

Early adopters of micro-credentials have identified some important lessons that can benefit others, as described below.

Make Micro-Credentials Part of an Overall Teacher Professional Growth Strategy

Micro-credentials are not effective as a stand-alone initiative. They need to be part of a state's overall strategy on teacher professional growth, which includes the professional learning system, professional growth plans, teacher evaluation, relicensure, career advancement, compensation, improvement of schools and districts and use of strong curricular and instructional materials. Without connecting these various elements, there is a risk that teachers will pursue fewer and less needed micro-credentials.

Involve Teachers

States can make sure that teachers support micro-credentials and feel that they are helpful. The assumption behind micro-credentials is not that teachers are deficient. Teachers already believe that current professional learning efforts are ineffective, and they need to feel that micro-credentials are part of the solution. States can regularly consult teachers when designing their micro-credentials systems and seek ongoing feedback from teachers.

Don't Rush; Build Capacity

Implementing micro-credentials effectively in a state requires many different components. It is particularly important to ensure that micro-credentials are high value and that evidence is rigorously reviewed for skill mastery. As such, leading states have advised others to take their time, and many states are finding they need to build their capacity and the capacity of school districts, with the help of organizations like BloomBoard and Digital Promise. Tennessee, for example, has worked for several years with districts so that they can support their teachers pursuing micro-credentials, and this local ownership is critical to sustaining the effort over the long run.³⁰

Pay Attention to the Specific Practice Without Being Too Prescriptive

States need to be sure that improving or changing a specific teaching skill identified through a micro-credential will really improve student learning. There are a huge number of pedagogical practices and a near infinite number of ways to fragment effective teaching into discrete skills. A practice may seem important, but the evidence may not show that changing this practice translates into improved student learning, perhaps because it must be combined with other practices to have any impact.³¹

This means that states need to establish a reasonably strong research requirement, without going so far as to dictate every micro-credential, which would stifle innovation. It is important to remember that states are currently accepting many professional development workshops and courses with little or no evidence of effectiveness, so even a modest research requirement for micro-credentials represents a significant step forward.

Micro-credentials are an important way to help experienced, hard-working and highly skilled teachers continuously improve their practice to meet the ever-increasing and diverse needs of their students in a global, 21st century economy.

³⁰ Interview with Machel Mills, Tennessee Department of Education (Apr. 12, 2019).

³¹ For example of a change in practice that did not significantly impact student learning, see National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, [Does Content-Focused Teacher Professional Development Work?](#) (2017).



Set a Rigorous Competency Bar

States can also set criteria for the competency level required to earn a micro-credential. “If we allow weak evidence that a teacher has a skill, we will lose the great opportunity of micro-credentials,” said Dr. Karen Johannesen Brock, from Provo City School District in Utah. To earn a micro-credential in this district, teachers must show more than that they can do a practice one time. Instead, teachers are expected to use the practice over and over again in their classrooms throughout the school year, and the video submitted must show the fruition of these efforts.³²

“If we allow weak evidence that a teacher has a skill, we will lose the great opportunity of micro-credentials,”

Dr. Karen Johannesen Brock, Provo City School District in Utah.

Student learning is affected when a teacher can consistently use a practice under real and varied circumstances. If micro-credentials allow just conceptual understanding of a practice, they are not fundamentally different than what is expected from traditional workshops. A lesson plan does not necessarily show that a teacher can use a skill in the classroom. With portfolios of student work, it is possible to cherry pick successes. Even a video of a classroom may reflect the one time a teacher used a practice in an ideal situation.

To earn a micro-credential, states can require that teachers achieve a rigorous proficiency level or increase their proficiency from one level to a higher level. This means setting standards not only for the rubrics used to review evidence, but also for the reviewers and the review process. Without such standards, there is a risk that issuers will lower their bar in order to attract more teachers. Indeed, among the existing micro-credentials currently offered, there are numerous examples where teachers only need to demonstrate content knowledge or can submit lesson plans.³³

Link Practice to Teacher and School Needs

While teacher choice is important, micro-credentials are not meant to be an unlimited library of selections based on whim. States can ensure that micro-credentials develop the most relevant and critical skills for their teachers. An advantage of micro-credentials is that they can address the very specific needs of teachers, as identified by their supervisors or through their performance reviews. Micro-credentials can also target the priority skills identified by states, districts and schools, as Tennessee did when it focused on three skills that were the most common growth areas for teachers.³⁴ States can consider creating expectations for how teachers will progress through micro-credentials along certain pathways.³⁵ It is typically far less effective for a teacher to develop disconnected skills. BloomBoard, for example, has developed progressions of micro-credentials that build along a teacher’s career.³⁶

One way to ensure that micro-credentials address urgent teacher needs is through professional growth plans, which are required in some states. For each teacher, the plan can identify micro-credentials that address the specific needs of the teacher, include the priorities of the school, district and state, and reflect pathways of micro-credentials along which the teacher is expected to progress.³⁷

³² Interview with Dr. Karen Johannesen Brock, Provo City School District (Apr. 9, 2019).

³³ See, e.g., the Texas OnCourse Academy, which seeks to build the skills of teachers to provide college and career counseling. Its micro-credentials focus on teachers acquiring basic knowledge, e.g., what FAFSA is, rather than teachers demonstrating that they can help a family understand FAFSA and successfully complete a FAFSA application. By creating a teacher account through the Texas OnCourse Academy [website](#), it is possible to see the various modules and review the assessments for each module. To show proficiency, teachers are required to correctly answer multiple choice and true/false questions, not demonstrate using a practice with students.

³⁴ Tennessee Department of Education, [Micro-Credential Pilot: Year Two](#) (2017).

³⁵ See Getting Smart and BloomBoard, [Moving PD from Seat-Time to Demonstrated Competency Using Micro-Credentials](#) (2016).

³⁶ See [BloomBoard](#).

³⁷ See Melissa Tooley & Taylor White, New America, [Rethinking Relicensure](#) (2018).



Pay Attention to Teacher Support

Pioneers in micro-credentials have identified the need to provide significant time and support for teachers, and this is consistent with the research on professional learning.³⁸ Many of the new teachers in Arkansas participating in a pilot did not complete the micro-credentials, in part because they did not receive sufficient support from mentor teachers.³⁹ “Districts cannot just put micro-credentials out there and expect teachers to learn,” says Barnett Berry, head of the Center for Teaching Quality.⁴⁰ At Harmony Public Schools in Texas, which heavily uses micro-credentials, teachers receive coaching and participate in professional learning communities focused on cycles of inquiry.⁴¹

It can be extremely difficult to change old habits. It is risky, often with setbacks along the way. There must be a culture of trust in the school so that teachers can move beyond what they have always known. Teachers need significant time, carved out of the school day, week and year, to try out new practices individually and with their colleagues. Teachers are extremely busy and are given little time for professional learning. They also need intensive and sustained help, including opportunities to see a practice, do it, get feedback from skilled coaches and do it again. The coaches need to know not only the practice but also how to help another teacher learn it.⁴² This can require new staffing models so that highly skilled, teacher leaders can remain in their classrooms but work with teams of teachers.⁴³

“Districts cannot just put micro-credentials out there and expect teachers to learn,” Barnett Berry, head of the Center for Teaching Quality.

Without sufficient support for teachers, there will be inexorable downward pressure on the proficiency bar for micro-credentials, and teachers may come to resent the entire approach. For states to gain the most benefit from micro-credentials, they can put in place expectations for the amount and type of support teachers will receive. They can help districts and schools incorporate micro-credentialing into existing professional learning and teacher support efforts. This allocation of time and support will require resources. By raising the bar on professional learning, many teachers will need *more* time, not less. Some will need more support, not less. Thus, micro-credentials can result in many more effective changes in teacher practice than the current, broken system--but it may cost the same or more.

Provide Incentives

Leading states and districts have found that teachers are considerably less likely to earn micro-credentials without incentives.⁴⁴ Otherwise, it is easier for teachers to take traditional, less demanding workshops. It can be expected that an experienced teacher would need a compelling reason to make the considerable effort to change his or her current practices. Incentives can include providing a financial bonus for each micro-credential earned, credits for relicensure and eligibility for leadership roles.⁴⁵

Some states are allowing teachers to count micro-credentials as part of a master’s degree equivalency, which helps with relicensure and compensation. This is a valuable incentive. The challenge is that traditional master’s degrees are more universally recognized, so many teachers still favor them. To address this concern, a state can require that districts not discriminate against master’s degrees earned through micro-credentials, e.g., for salary increases.

³⁸ See Teaching Matters, [Competency-Based Micro-Credentials for Educators: Powerful Lessons from Two Years in the Field](#)

³⁹ Interview Sandra Hurst, Arkansas Department of Education (Mar. 22, 2019).

⁴⁰ Interview with Barnett Berry, Center for Teaching Quality (Mar. 25, 2019).

⁴¹ Interview with Dr. Burak Yilmaz, Harmony Public Schools (Mar. 28, 2019).

⁴² See The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, Learning Forward and Public Impact, [Coaching for Impact](#) (2016).

⁴³ As explained above, states can use micro-credentials to identify highly skilled teachers to serve as teacher leaders. Public Impact’s [Opportunity Culture](#) is a well-established model of teacher leaders working with teams of teachers.

⁴⁴ See Teaching Matters, [Competency-Based Micro-Credentials for Educators: Powerful Lessons from Two Years in the Field](#).

⁴⁵ Interview with Odella Younge, Digital Promise (Mar. 12, 2019).



Use Micro-Credentials Across the Career Continuum

The concept of micro-credentials equally applies to experienced, new and aspiring teachers. As discussed above, Arkansas is using micro-credentials for new teachers. States can use micro-credentials to change both teacher preparation and induction, identifying the skills that aspiring teachers need to demonstrate and guiding the development of new teachers.

MOVING FORWARD

Micro-credentials represent a very promising path for states to support the professional growth of teachers, which is critical to broad, ongoing efforts to improve student learning. Micro-credentials can increase the impact of professional learning efforts, and they offer a more impactful way to recognize and reward teachers as they progress in their careers.

Reflecting on the lessons identified by leading states, districts and schools, states can best achieve the many benefits of micro-credentials by considering the following 13 actions:

1. In any state funding and support, prioritize professional learning that uses micro-credentials;
2. Allow teachers to meet their relicensure requirements, and to qualify for salary increases, by earning micro-credentials;
3. Use micro-credentials, rather than seniority, to identify highly skilled teachers for career advancement, including teacher leaders;
4. Allow teachers to fill hard-to-staff positions after earning relevant micro-credentials;
5. Incorporate micro-credentials into a broader teacher professional growth strategy;
6. Involve teachers;
7. Take the time needed to ensure quality and to build the capacity of the state, districts and schools;
8. Set a strong but reasonable research requirement for any micro-credential offered;
9. Establish a reasonably high proficiency bar to earn a micro-credential;
10. Use professional growth plans to focus micro-credentials on the skills teachers most need;
11. Make sure teachers receive the time and support needed to change their practice;
12. Provide financial and other incentives for teachers who earn micro-credentials; and
13. Use micro-credentials for all teachers, including those who are aspiring, new and experienced in the profession.



APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Sample of Micro-Credentials Offered Through BloomBoard (Sponsor)

Early Educator (With Arkansas Department of Education)

- Redirecting Student Behavior to Meet Classroom Expectations
- Maximizing Learning Through Classroom Routines
- Promoting Shared Values and Expectations
- Creating Physical Environments for Learning
- Developing a Climate of Respect and Rapport
- Modifying Instruction through Formative Assessments During a Lesson
- Aligning Instructional Outcomes with Assessments
- Applying Key Lesson Design Elements
- Communicating Instructional Outcomes with Students

Elementary Mentor Teacher (With Louisiana Department of Education)

- Expressing Understanding of Text Through Writing
- Reading Complex Grade-Level Texts
- Demonstrating Math Content Knowledge
- Facilitating Mathematically Productive Discussions
- Mentoring to Improve Classroom Management
- Mentoring to Improve Content Instruction

Early Literacy

- Interactive Read Aloud
- Teaching Phonological Awareness
- Beginning Writing Instruction
- Text-Based Discussions
- Teaching Phonics

Personalized Learning

- Creating Learner Profiles
- Developing Customized Learning Paths
- Developing Learner as Resource
- Developing Learner Independence
- Establishing a Shared Commitment to Success
- Focusing on Proficiency-Based Progress
- Infusing Learner Voice
- Setting Personal Learning Goals for Students
- Understanding a Learner-Centered Experience
- Utilizing Standards-Guided Learning

- Using the Honeycomb as a Change Strategy

Classroom Management

- Promoting Shared Values and Expectations
- Maximizing Learning Through Classroom Routines
- Redirecting Student Behavior to Meet Classroom Expectations

Data-Driven Instruction

- Aligning Learning Objectives with Assessments
- Modifying Instruction through Formative Assessments During a Lesson
- Using Formative Assessment to Modify Future Instruction
- Strategic Grouping Based on Data
- Utilizing Assessment Criteria with Students

Addressing Learning Differences

- Collaborating to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners
- Developing Culturally Responsive Instruction
- Identifying Your Student Learning Needs
- Understanding Cultural Differences
- Using the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol to Adapt Instruction for English Learners
- Implementing Universal Design for Learning

Organize Content for Learning

- Planning Interdisciplinary Learning Experiences
- Engaging Students in Authentic Learning Experiences Connected to Local and Global Issues
- Applying Key Lesson Design Elements

Creating a Collaborative Culture in Support of Learning

- Building Collaborative Relationships with Teacher Learners
- Facilitating Effective Meetings
- Collaborating with School/District Administrators to Achieve Learning Goals
- Guiding Effective Conflict Resolution
- Developing Distributive Leadership Teams in Support of Student Academic Success



Sample of Micro-Credentials Offered Through Digital Promise (Issuer)

Beginning to Teach (Educators Rising)

- Anti-bias Instruction
- Classroom Culture
- Collaboration
- Formative Assessments
- Learner Engagement

Supporting English Learners: Constructive Conversations (Understanding Language at Stanford Graduate School of Education)

- Assessing Conversations
- Creating Effective Conversation Prompts
- Helping Students Clarify and Support their Ideas

Using Technology to Support the 4Cs in the Classroom (Friday Institute at North Carolina State University)

- Collaboration to Support Student Learning in a Digital Learning Environment
- Creativity to Support Student Learning in a Digital Learning Environment
- Critical Thinking to Support Student Learning in a Digital Learning Environment
- Communications to Support Student Learning in a Digital Learning Environment

Basic Performance Assessment Design (Center for Collaborative Education)

- Competency Based Rubric Design
- Performance Assessment Design
- Performance Assessment Validation

Computational Thinking Practices (Digital Promise)

- Analyzing and Communicating with data
- Collecting and Structuring Data
- Creating Algorithms
- Creating Computational Models
- Understanding Systems

Effective Coaching (Various Issuing Organizations)

- Coaching for Improvement
- Collaborating with Administration
- Connecting & Sharing with Networks

- Critical Conversations
- Cultivating Your Growth Mindset
- Data-Driven Interventions
- Designing for Learning
- Fostering a Collaborative Learning Culture
- Leading Active Professional Learning
- Observation & Feedback

Fractions Instruction (Friday Institute at NC State)

- Apply Number Lines - Demonstrating Application of the Number Lines in Fraction Instruction
- Conduct a Student Interview Using Number Lines as the Primary Representational Tool

Personalized Learning (The Institute for Personalized Learning)

- Understanding a Learner-Centered Experience
- Using the Honeycomb as a Change Strategy
- Standards Guided Learning
- Learner as Resource
- Learner Independence
- Shared Commitment to Success

Collective Leadership (Center for Teaching Quality)

- Assessing How Time is Currently Used
- Building Your Team
- Creating a Plan for Redesigned Learning
- Cultivating a Shared Purpose
- Engaging Stakeholders
- Managing Change
- Understanding Your Leadership Strengths