

A Movement Towards Personalized Professional Learning

An Exploration of Six Educator Micro-credential Programs

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Education



Quality
Performance
Assessment

About the Center for Collaborative Education

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), established in 1994, works to transform schools to ensure that all students succeed in the classroom and beyond. CCE partners with educators and other professionals in schools, districts, and states to increase educational access and opportunity for every student, with particular attention to groups that have historically been underserved. Through its Quality Performance Assessment (QPA) program, CCE assists schools, districts, and states to adopt high quality performance assessment systems that drive deeper student learning.

About Performance Assessment for Learning Micro-credentials

The goal of the Performance Assessment for Learning Micro-credential project in Rhode Island was to take the ideals that drive the **Center for Collaborative Education's** work—equity, personalization, competency, performance assessment—and apply these values not only to students' learning but to professional learning, as well. In partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ) and Digital Promise, we created nine micro-credentials, badges that educators earn by demonstrated growth in skills and knowledge, focused on performance assessment literacy. These nine micro-credentials were organized into three stacks: Basic Performance Assessment Design, Advanced Performance Assessment Design, and Leading a Performance Assessment Community. In addition, for Phase 2 of the project, three additional micro-credentials have been developed focusing on performance assessments as tools for equity.

In the first phase of the Performance Assessment for Learning Micro-credential project, CCE's work focused on designing micro-credentials for practitioners that prepare them to lead their respective school and district initiatives in creating personalized, proficiency-based learning and assessments for their students. We are currently in the second phase of this project, where we are shifting our focus system-wide, working with leadership to embed micro-credentials within current school and district professional learning systems as a valuable currency for supporting teacher professional growth and advancement.

About the Assessment for Learning Project

The Assessment for Learning Project (ALP) launched in 2016, led by the Center for Innovation in Assessment in partnership with Next Generation Learning Challenges at EDUCAUSE. ALP's goal is to support field initiatives in which educators “fundamentally rethink the roles that assessment should play to advance student learning and to improve our K-12 education system.” In its first phase, ALP funded twelve different learning projects around the country including CCE's Performance Assessment for Learning micro-credentials project focused on designing and piloting micro-credentials covering topics related to performance assessment. All ALP projects focused on different ways in which assessment could be envisioned and structured to drive student learning.



Introduction

As a relatively new trend in professional development, the advantages and challenges of implementing micro-credentials are not fully understood. We undertook this research as a way to address a need for a synthesis of learnings from early micro-credential endeavors. As part of our Performance Assessment for Learning Micro-credential project, we met many others interested in developing or sharing effective strategies for using micro-credentials, and used that as a launching point for investigating them more deeply. As the field increases the development of micro-credentials, it is useful to understand what others have learned. We hope our insights will contribute to developing sustainable, effective professional development via micro-credentials. In this paper we highlight the unique features of six micro-credential initiatives, including points of divergence and commonality across the various approaches and their impact on implementing educator micro-credentials.

This paper is based upon interviews with **Juab School District** (Utah), **Kettle Moraine School District** (Wisconsin), **Arkansas State Department of Education**, **Lake County School District** (Florida), **Seminole County School District** (Florida), and **Baltimore County Public Schools** (Maryland). We used a semi-structured interview process so that we could allow conversation to unfold naturally and hear authentic stories while still tracking answers to questions we formulated ahead of time. The paper begins with a comparative overview of motivations, processes, and outcomes of the work, followed by individual summative case memos found in the appendix.

Micro-credentials: A Shift in Professional Development Experience

Imagine it is a professional development day in two districts. In District A, teachers gather in an auditorium where an administrator introduces the professional development topic for the day by reviewing the district and school professional development goals. The administrator then introduces outside consultants who have been brought in as specialists in the topic of importance. The day consists of PowerPoints and lots of handouts, and at the end of the day teachers put the new documents in their “PD binder” where they may or may not be referenced in the future.

In District B, the administrator shares that they are offering teachers the opportunity to complete micro-credentials as a way to fulfill professional development requirements. Teachers are using today’s professional development session to work in their professional learning community on components of their micro-credentials, which they individually selected with their department head at the beginning of the school year to create a personal professional learning plan.

Micro-credentials offer a shift from “sit-and-get” professional development to personalized, competency-based professional learning. Too often, traditional professional development consists of stand-alone days that do not connect to classroom practice. There is little expectation that teachers show they have learned anything or will change their practice and there is no imperative to make sure the professional development aligns with teachers’ individual interests and learning goals.



Micro-credentials offer teachers choice while requiring that they demonstrate their learning through artifacts that show their mastery of a single skill within a given topic. A typical micro-credential consists of resources for learning about a specific skill which must be applied in the classroom. The organization issuing the micro-credential relies on artifacts that show activities in the classroom through

documentation and reflection on what they are trying and seeing to gain insight into the teacher's ideas and practices. Micro-credentials are grouped in "stacks" that typically consist of three micro-credentials. The micro-credentials may each target a very specific learning goal while the stack in its entirety can demonstrate an understanding of a broader or more holistic idea. The stack makes up a deeper portfolio of learning about the topic. By completing stacks, teachers are able to demonstrate broad expertise at their own pace and with grounded classroom practice which incrementally prepares them for leadership positions.

What are Micro-credentials?

Micro-credentials are electronic "badges" that an educator earns by demonstrating growth in skills and knowledge. They are:



Bite-sized: Organized into digestible bites



Research-based: Grounded in educational research



Personalized: Support professional growth in areas of interest



Flexible: Allow for choice in when and how you learn



Performance-based: Apply your learning to your practice

"The big shift is that people have never really seen professional development in that way. I think that we do professional development unofficially all the time. We just don't call it a micro-credential. And that's really what a micro-credential is: try it, see if it works, gather resources try to see if it works, and if it doesn't learn from the mistakes and move on."

Sandra Hurst

Arkansas Department of Education

Micro-credentials offer an opportunity to increase teacher choice and learning and for districts to verify validation of teacher competencies. We examine strategies in six states and districts that have introduced and implemented micro-credentials in order to learn more about the benefits and challenges that come with personalizing professional development through micro-credentials.

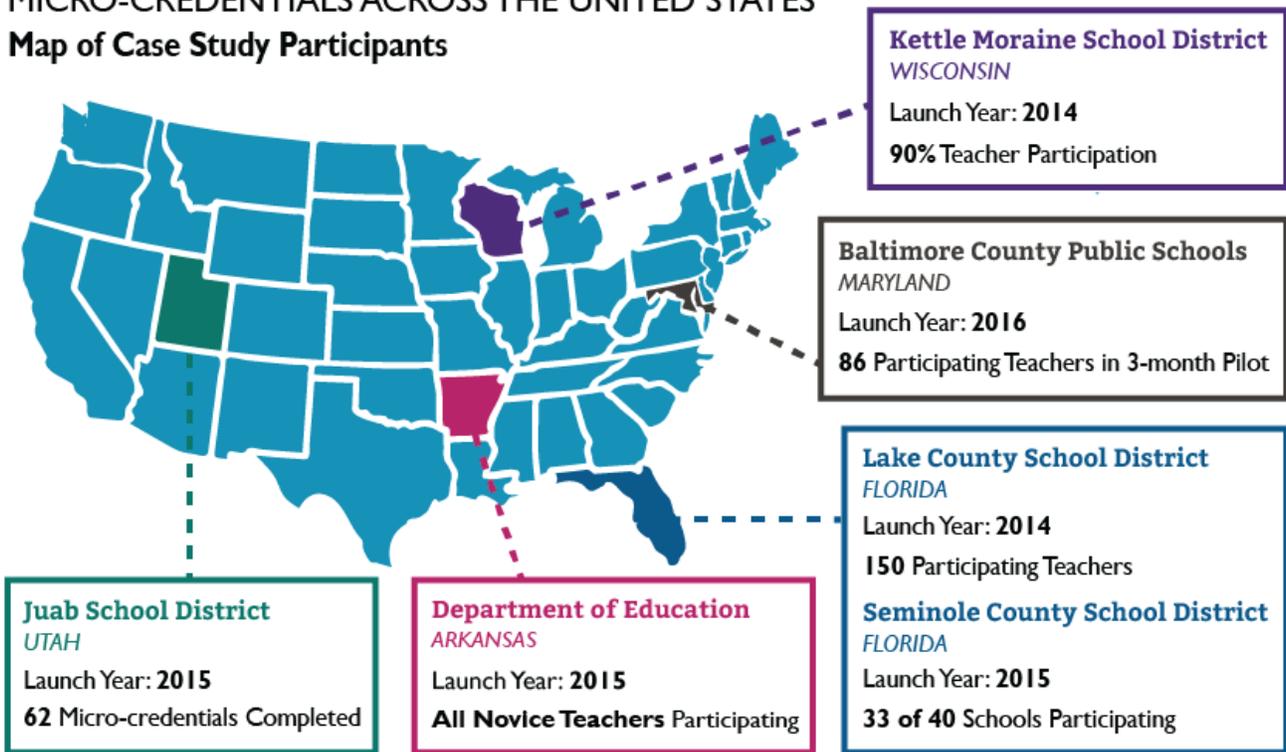
Common Starting Points

All of the administrators we talked to identified changes in policy towards personalized learning for students as a catalyst for reimagining professional development for educators. In order for teachers to effectively change their classrooms, there was a need to model personalized learning experiences by offering voice and choice in their professional development. Seminole and Lake County school districts in Florida both participated in a state-wide rollout of personalized learning before they launched district personalized learning initiatives, whereas Kettle Moraine School District, Baltimore County School District, and Juab School District developed district-level personalized learning goals that were not supported by statewide initiatives.



MICRO-CREDENTIALS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Map of Case Study Participants



Arkansas is unique in that their micro-credential initiatives were backed by Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS) legislation, which was written in compliance with the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements for teachers. While most districts were motivated by student-level initiatives related to personalized learning, Arkansas pursued new policies specifically to promote cycles of continuous improvement at the level of teacher-learning. Arkansas offers 13 paths to Teacher Certification (in addition to a pre-professional bachelor's degree). This flexible approach to teacher certification sometimes results in teachers entering the classroom with vastly different sets of skills, so the pilot policy required new teachers to complete one pre-selected micro-credential with the support of a mentor teacher. This compliance model put a lot of pressure on novice teachers, and many lost confidence, in part because they struggled to successfully earn a micro-credential. Since the first year, novice teachers have been encouraged to adopt micro-credentials and work with mentors, but not required to do so. This voluntary model has minimized the number of new teachers second-guessing their decision to enter teaching based on a micro-credential experience. Many new teachers still opt into the program because the micro-credentials are part of regional cooperative professional learning communities and the mentorship supports are positive.

Another commonality among all sites studied was that micro-credentials are action-based, which allows more direct implementation than sit-down-meeting style professional development. The state and district level administrators and coaches we talked to all mentioned that teachers had to document and show mastery of the skills attached to the micro-credentials in order to receive whatever incentive was offered. Multiple districts developed internal review processes to support the local review of micro-credential artifacts as well as the alignment and application of micro-credential content with everyday classroom activities.



The scope of the projects and pilot participants varied by district, yet all of them emphasized that offering choice was an important factor in developing their micro-credential programs. In spite of the common reasons for exploring micro-credentials, many of the policies put in place were strikingly different across programs.

Getting the Word Out

Each initiative introduced micro-credentials to educators in different ways. Communicating with district teacher leaders and visiting schools to answer questions was a key strategy to spur interest in micro-credentials. In Lake County, most administrators relied on district staff to lead the recruitment efforts. Juab selected the teachers for their pilot before opening up micro-credentials to any interested teacher.

Lake County used their learning management system to introduce every teacher at a

personalized learning school to the micro-

credential process. District leaders even designed a prerequisite personalized learning micro-credential as a means of exposing teachers to the process and content covered. Juab similarly introduced micro-credentials through a self-paced Nearpod—an interactive slide deck that allows teachers to ask their questions—before sending district learning coaches out for on-site visits. After the pilot, district learning coaches became ambassadors for the micro-credential opportunity.

“This is a nationwide effort, I suppose, but in our state specifically, we are undergoing some systemic changes to move towards student-centered learning. In order to get to that environment in a classroom with the students, we need to get our teachers and our adult learners learning in the same environment. It’s a radical change in professional development if you’re not used to it.”

Kevin Beaumont

Arkansas Department of Education

Other districts/states opened up the micro-credential opportunity to any interested teachers from the start. Baltimore County chose to formally introduce their pilot at a launch event after marketing the opportunity in memos and on social media. In Seminole County, staff reached out to a group of principals in person and offered the choice of how the micro-credentials were delivered at the building level. Almost half the schools opted in, and each building had their own strategies. Some offered teachers incentives to complete a particular set of micro-credentials. Others wanted to offer as much choice as possible, and picked out at least a dozen micro-credentials for their staff to choose from. Kettle Moraine introduced micro-credentials in conjunction with a new salary schedule for all district staff, clearly tying micro-credential submission to professional growth opportunities.

The Value of Micro-credentials

There were a diverse set of approaches to valuing micro-credentials across the projects. Baltimore County, Seminole County, and Lake County offer in-service credit for micro-credentials. In Baltimore County, participants in their four month pilot could earn one unit of continuing professional development (CPD) after earning two micro-credentials. Baltimore County has paused their micro-credential program after the pilot in order to take stock of learnings to inform district micro-credential policy decisions. Baltimore County has more than 9,000 teachers, and the administrators are excited about the concrete transfer of micro-credentials to practice. However, since many teachers in the pilot struggled with submission, BCPS administrators want to ensure that they have the best supports and incentives set up before scaling up micro-credential efforts.



MOST COMMON MICRO-CREDENTIAL INCENTIVES Among Case Study Participants



Seminole County supports the conversion of specific micro-credentials into continuing education points by letting schools select which stacks they would like to offer. Most micro-credentials are valued at six continuing education points by the district. Specific schools can choose to offer stipends for micro-credentials as part of their professional development plans. In addition, Seminole County actively encourages teachers to put micro-credentials on their resume and helps principals understand how to interview candidates who have earned micro-credentials. Lake County offers in-service hours with each micro-credential being valued at four hours, and there are opportunities for teacher leadership positions upon completion of a full micro-credential content pathway. Lake County administrators cannot offer pay bumps as that is determined by state-level accreditation programs.

Kettle Moraine and Juab were the only districts to offer salary-based incentives. During the pilot phase, Juab offered a \$200 stipend for each earned micro-credential. After the pilot was complete, they changed their salary schedule to include a 5% increase in base salary, up to a certain limit. Kettle Moraine instituted micro-credentials after developing a revamped salary scale that included salary bumps for micro-credential completion. By starting with a new salary structure, Kettle Moraine leaders wanted to send the message that micro-credentials were not a fleeting trend, but a permanent development in professional learning. Additionally, both Kettle Moraine and Juab see salary bumps as a permanent valuation of micro-credentials that will follow teachers should they transfer out of their district. In their eyes, a higher salary clearly communicates the value of that learning if a district is unfamiliar with micro-credentials. In Arkansas, it is up to each region to determine how to incentivize micro-credentials as part of their professional development plan.

“At this point there are still so few people, when you think about the scale of the district, who know about micro-credentials. So the value in general, principals aren’t looking for them yet on resumes. There isn’t any value yet at that level because people don’t know what they are.”

Jill Snell
Baltimore County Public Schools

All districts and states that offer micro-credentials have seen increases in the number of participating teachers across years. Decisions around incentives rely heavily on district autonomy, budgetary constraints, and teacher accreditation systems. Further research into micro-credentials as a currency can support the effectiveness and legitimacy of micro-credentials.



Selecting Micro-credentials

District and state administrators could choose to design their own micro-credentials or use micro-credentials (hosted on Bloomboard) from Digital Promise, an education technology nonprofit. Three out of the six initiatives—Kettle Moraine, Lake County, and Arkansas—decided to design their own unique micro-credentials. Decisions to design micro-credentials arose out of a mix of budgetary constraints and gaps in available micro-credentials. For Lake County and Arkansas, a second motivation was to better scaffold the micro-credential process for their teacher-learners. Lake County, which self-published, was the only district to limit teachers to using their micro-credentials, while Kettle Moraine and Arkansas still offered micro-credentials hosted on Bloomboard.

Districts using Digital Promise offered varying selections of micro-credentials. Baltimore County pre-selected 24 of the micro-credentials offered on Bloomboard as eligible for stipends during their pilot. Kettle Moraine, Juab, and Seminole County opened up selection to any micro-credential hosted on Bloomboard. However, each district put in place an internal approval process to ensure alignment of selected micro-credentials to district and school teaching and learning practice goals, as well as district capacity to monitor and support submission. Arkansas allowed the most choice, with novice teachers and districts able to select micro-credentials based on their own professional development goals and district-specific priorities.

“In a perfect world, you would want to be able to offer all [300 micro-credentials] to your [teachers] because then you have teacher voice and choice. However, the way we are structuring it right now with it being in our learning management system and administrators at the school having the sign-off on [final approval] and then assigning the [professional development points], logistically it’s going to be overwhelming for them to have 150 different choices for 150 different staff at their school.

Ryan Peetz
Seminole County School District

These differences in micro-credential selection came with varying opportunities and challenges. Districts that designed their own micro-credentials had to set up a review process. In Arkansas, the review process was handled at the local level with district administrators, principals, and department heads completing a two-part micro-credential on inter-rater reliability and calibration to ensure consistency in scoring and approving completion of micro-credential portfolios, while providing valuable data on ways that teachers might need support during the development and submission processes. Kettle Moraine and Lake County also had district staff review micro-credential submissions. Although scoring at the district level

created closer connections between submitters and reviewers, it also created a heavier lift for the limited staff at the district and state level. Due to budgetary constraints, Seminole County primarily used Digital Promise micro-credentials and instituted a peer review process instead of direct submission to the Bloomboard platform. This required professional development around micro-credential design and submission.

Participating districts and states identified challenges with the submission and review process. Baltimore County and Juab School Districts used the Bloomboard platform for submission and highlighted the unique challenge of relying on “remote” reviewers who were often in other states. In some cases, depending on the micro-credential-issuing organization, teachers did not receive feedback in time for resubmission; or received conflicting feedback from different raters. When these issues



arose, district staff in Baltimore and Juab adapted their strategies to build closer relationships with Digital Promise who communicated directly with the various micro-credential issuers.

Supporting the Learning

While micro-credentials are meant to be personalized learning experiences with multiple pathways to demonstrating mastery, all administrators acknowledged the importance of providing coaching to teachers in order to scaffold and troubleshoot the micro-credential experience during the pilot phase. Much like students transitioning to personalized learning, teachers needed support in figuring out what it means to demonstrate competency through artifacts and navigating new technology. Coaching or cohort models supported teachers exploring this new territory.

In Kettle Moraine and Baltimore County, the Assistant Superintendent and Resource Teacher in the Office of Organizational Development personally communicated with individual teachers as they applied to complete micro-credentials. In Baltimore County, teachers working on the same micro-credential were virtually connected through email.

In Lake County, district administrators and teacher coaches were trained to be “badge facilitators” for specific micro-credentials by going through the micro-credential process themselves with a high level of mastery. As “badge facilitators,” they provided one-on-one coaching to teachers throughout the process, ensuring adherence to deadlines and comprehension of requirements. As an incentive, career pathways emerged directly from the need to build capacity for coaching micro-credentials. They offered a built-in value-added opportunity for teachers who might be interested in flexible leadership positions. Additionally, through the design of their micro-credentials, teachers in Lake County were able to choose to access the content by blended online and face-to-face interaction, or individual research.

Although Lake County’s structured approach to training “badge-facilitators” was unique, other districts offered strategies for creating space for teachers to engage with micro-credentials. Seminole County and Arkansas both offered flexibility within schools and districts respectively to use micro-credentials to set coaching, teacher-leadership positions, and common planning time priorities. In Juab, teachers had the option of joining a voluntary in-person cohort. The in-person meetings offered a space to work through challenges. On top of that, they were invited to submit their evidence to a district coach for review before formal submission. Arkansas and Seminole County relied on virtual platforms to establish a community of support across schools.

STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING MICRO-CREDENTIAL LEARNING



**One-on-one
Coaching**



**In-person
Cohort**



**District
Support**



**Virtual
Community**



“What we have is a badge facilitator check-in. A teacher maybe says she/he is going to develop a three-week unit on something and do all this stuff to demonstrate mastery and they only need 20 minutes to put together a quick narrative. We have that safety net where the badge facilitator could say, hey maybe you want to reconsider and think about how you are going to use these with kids.”

David Hass

Lake County School District

In Arkansas, each region has existing regional cooperatives and other offline supports which are used to foster a cohort model for cross-school micro-credential initiatives. When the novice teacher micro-credentials policy was still in place, one-on-one mentorship helped new teachers navigate the process. More experienced teachers supported novices with the educational language, and helped them set personal goals. However, in some cases

experienced teachers were less comfortable with the technological requirements of micro-credentials to support novice teachers fully, making it a mutual learning experience for both.

Platform & Scoring

In the first year of the pilot, Seminole County used Bloomboard to manage the submission process, but struggled with supporting teachers through the resubmission process. Misunderstandings about micro-credentials' requirements and lack of clarity in some submission procedures frustrated teachers. As a result, in the second year of the pilot they set up their own learning management system (LMS), inputting and operationalizing tasks into smaller parts from Bloomboard micro-credentials so as to develop internal structures for supporting teachers through submission and a peer-review process. Additionally, this enabled micro-credential work to be saved on a district system. Copies of the teacher-portfolios were saved to Canvas and Google Drive, allowing teachers to edit submissions and easily share learning.

The organic, applied nature of professional development required by the pursuit of micro-credentials builds continuous improvement. The necessity to include applied evidence of newfound knowledge and skills within portfolio submissions requires teachers to actively transfer and apply ideas learned from professional development to the classroom.

However, the process of peer-reviewing and assessing micro-credential portfolios of evidence can be difficult to sustain as it requires ongoing human-resource and technical support. Administrators in districts that created one or more micro-credentials commented on the need to create and expand a network of teacher-leaders and coaches who can become a team of reviewers. In Arkansas, state-level staff had the expertise to develop micro-credentials, but felt that publishing them publicly on Bloomboard was not an option because they could not sustain the review process. Kettle Moraine relies on a review committee, consisting of district and school-based personnel, to accept micro-credential submissions and have seen success using this model.

“There’s this idea of, 'I think I’m good at this thing or I think I’m proficient,' but it requires a little bravery to really do it. Some of our new teachers are not successful on their first time, so that’s hard for them as new learners. You really have to bolster and support. We offer to review evidence before it goes to Bloomboard if that increases confidence.

Krystle Bassett

Juab School District



Celebrations of Learning

Beyond official professional growth opportunities, districts also sought to change the teaching culture through celebration of learning. Lake County, Juab, and Baltimore County provided micro-credential earners with “swag.” They printed out paper badges with the earned credential on them, tweeted to the district as teachers earned micro-credentials, sent congratulatory messages to earners, and sent open memos announcing achievements to district and school leaders. Beyond informing principals of their teachers’ accomplishments, these visual cues were also meant to facilitate the strengthening of professional learning communities by raising the visibility of what each teacher had to offer to support ongoing community professional growth.

In spite of anecdotal feedback from administrators who named the challenges of time management and the time-intensive submission and feedback cycle, districts felt the benefits of micro-credentials outweighed the challenges. Each district continued to present micro-credentials as an option for professional development. Districts have seen an increase in the number of teachers earning one or more micro-credentials and as a result an increase in collaborative practices. When rolling out a personalized learning framework, administrators realize that a fundamental paradigm shift needs to take root. Micro-credentials represent a shift in practice that is different from what teachers had experienced as learners in their early careers. The hope is that this personalized voice and choice process of professional growth, which teachers view as empowering, will spur teachers to also empower their students in similar ways, providing them with greater freedom and pathways to demonstrate proficiency over what they know and are able to do.

Recommendations

Learning from these case studies, we have developed the following recommendations about how micro-credentials are used and how to roll them out to support district and school goals and capacities.

1. Micro-credentials Need to Be Tied to School/District Goals

Teachers need to pursue completion of a micro-credential with a clear idea of how it connects to their teaching context. Micro-credentials are meant to support learning rather than be an evaluative piece at the end of a semester to assess teacher quality. Ensuring that teachers selected micro-credentials that were tied to district, school, or team goals was accomplished by either limiting micro-credential options, as in Seminole County and Lake County, or developing an internal approval process to complete micro-credentials, like in Juab and Kettle Moraine.

2. Carefully Select a Web-based Platform

Developing an internal platform to host micro-credentials makes it easier to set up micro-credentials using language that is familiar to teachers, monitor teacher progress, and directly support feedback cycles. However, housing a micro-credential system on a district platform increases the demand on district staff. Using a non-district platform allows a district to outsource coding and tap into robust resources that are readily available, but doing so increases district costs, can leave teachers struggling to understand feedback from external reviewers they do not know, and can make it more difficult to troubleshoot technical issues.



3. Provide Coaching for First Time Micro-credential Submitters

Coaching support helps teachers with pacing as they juggle the everyday demands of their job while pursuing their professional learning. Teachers benefit from discussing their learning agenda with someone local. Coaching should support teachers in micro-credential selection, developing a work plan, and maintaining momentum. Coaches can ensure that teachers fully understand micro-credential requirements, and can provide feedback on a teacher's portfolio of evidence before final submission. Lake County's "badge facilitators" offer a strong example of what coaching can look like.

4. Institute Peer-Review Processes That Complement or Supplement Official Review

Micro-credentials are a great way to support collaborative practice. Consider ways in which teachers can give and receive feedback from colleagues through the micro-credential process. Juab created a cohort model as a place for feedback. This structure supports colleagues continuing to learn from each other. Additionally, establishing review processes before submission helps support high quality submissions, avoiding many of the challenges that can arise through the resubmission process.

5. Tie Micro-credentials to Positional and/or Monetary Motivations

Be it through graduate credit, in-service hours, new positions, salary increases, or a combination of incentives, micro-credentials need to have some currency. While the intrinsic motivation to demonstrate learning is present in most teachers, the everyday demands of teaching make it hard to be motivated by that lone inclination. By starting with the salary schedule, Kettle Moraine was able to build legitimacy which contributed to their success with micro-credentials. Public celebrations of micro-credential success are important, yet not sufficient. For teachers to fully invest in micro-credentials, they also need to be tied to marketable positional and/or monetary promotions that will follow teachers through their professional careers for educators.

6. Be Mindful of Teachers as Adult Learners

Micro-credentials require a mindset shift for teachers. There are many reasons why teachers may not obtain a micro-credential on their first try. It is essential to communicate with educators that micro-credentials are competency-based. A denied submission doesn't mean you aren't proficient, it just means not yet.

Future Implications for the Work

As administrators explore ways to sustain and grow micro-credential initiatives, they are focusing on policies that create structures to support micro-credential completion, ways to value micro-credentials for professional growth, and external partnerships with higher education and pre-service programs that support adult learning. Districts are working out strategies for how to determine the number of hours or dollars micro-credentials are worth, and ways of ensuring that micro-credentials follow a teacher through their career if they change districts. Teacher-leadership positions, increases in salaries, and graduate credit are among the pathways being pursued. Micro-credentials have the power to shift the professional learning landscape towards personalized experiences for teachers. With the right support and continued innovation by states and districts, micro-credentials will continue to gain the currency to be an education reform with staying power; a reform that espouses a deeper respect for teachers as adult learners.



Appendix: Overview of Six Micro-Credential Programs

Below are brief overviews of the pilot micro-credential initiatives discussed in this white paper. The overviews are organized alphabetically and give specific details about each pilot's setup and learnings.

Arkansas

In 2015, as part of their Every Student Succeeds Act state plan, the state department of education decided to pursue micro-credentials with leadership and novice teachers. The state knew they wanted to transition away from traditional professional development delivery models and create coherence across the many pathways for becoming a licensed teacher. The state decided to design their own micro-credentials based on three learning modules they were using in the existing teacher certification program system – classroom management, classroom procedures, and discipline. As micro-credentials were rolled out across the state, the department of education supported the use of externally developed micro-credentials hosted on Bloomboard.

With novice teachers, the micro-credentials were first used for accountability through one-to-one mentorship with experienced teachers. Mentors were required to guide novice teachers through the micro-credential process; this was a large undertaking for many first-year teachers. This model was changed after one year when the state realized micro-credentials needed to be voluntary to take full advantage of the opportunity they offered. Micro-credentials are currently instituted as an option for professional development should a region elect to use them in place of traditional “sit-and-get” style professional development.

Baltimore County Public Schools, Maryland

In April 2016, as a member of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools, Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) was provided the opportunity to pilot micro-credentials. After some discussion, the district decided that engaging in the pilot would be an opportune learning experience as BCPS considered enhancing the personalized professional development program for its educators. Headed by the Office of Digital Learning and the Office of Organizational Development, the district decided to open up an active pilot to any interested educator. Students and Teachers Accessing Tomorrow (S.T.A.T.) teachers, who serve as school-based professional learning facilitators and instructional coaches, were in a newly evolving role focused on transforming teaching and learning through personalized and customized education for all students. They were identified as key players in rolling out micro-credentials.

The only requirement for inclusion in the pilot was that the S.T.A.T. teacher at a participant's school was also involved. The support of a S.T.A.T. teacher ensured every participant had school-based support. Over 100 educators attended the micro-credential event and in the end 27 educators earned at least one micro-credential. The submission period remained open for two months, until June 2016. The short submission period at the end of the year presented some challenges for many teachers who were balancing many end of the year priorities. In response, the district extended the submission period into the following school year for teachers who had personal or technical difficulties completing the micro-credentials on time. BCPS is currently taking stock of what was learned during the 2015-



2016 pilot through a focus group. The goal is to utilize micro-credentials to enhance the personalized professional learning options for BCPS educators.

Juab, Utah

Juab School District in Utah is a small rural district of 2,500 students and 120 teachers. In 2015, Juab School District joined the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools. In choosing to pursue educator micro-credentials, the district focused on credentials related to their “Core Four” (student voice and choice, technology in the classroom, growth mindset, and data driven instruction) in alignment with the district’s focus on personalized learning. The district’s micro-credential exploration started with a focus group of 25 teachers including novice teachers, transfer teachers, and learning coaches. As part of the pilot, participants could earn \$200 per credential awarded. Twenty-two teachers ultimately submitted micro-credentials.

After the pilot, the district rolled out micro-credentials to all educators through a new micro-credential teacher leader pathway. This pathway parallels the traditional pathway to teacher leader roles through higher education degrees and years in the classroom. As part of the new policy, teacher leaders can build their own stack of micro-credentials in conversation with their school administration. The district requires a minimum of 12 micro-credentials for the teacher leader pathway. Once the administrator approves the identified goals and accompanying micro-credentials, teachers go on Bloomboard to submit and earn the specified micro-credentials. Following the earning of the credentials, the teacher schedules an internal review of the pathway with a committee of three administrators to share their artifacts and discuss the value of the created stack. Upon the successful completion and approval of a micro-credential stack, the teacher can request a 5% increase in their base salary and a promotion. Thus far, 30 teachers have engaged in the micro-credential process earning around 60 micro-credentials.

Kettle Moraine, Wisconsin

Kettle Moraine, a small district in Wisconsin, has a well-established approach to support educator micro-credentials. In the 2014-2015 school year, the district piloted a new compensation model that recognizes professional development through salary increases. Micro-credentials were incorporated into the new structure as a way to recognize what the district values most—growth. In aligning the new teacher growth plan with micro-credentials, the district wanted to show teachers that they valued their learning not just in word, but also with permanent monetary incentives.

The pilot met with success and has since remained policy with a few adjustments to the processes, structures, and tools employed to support micro-credential work. Before beginning a micro-credential, the teacher must acquire pre-approval from a micro-credential review committee. In this application, the teacher must show how the selected micro-credential aligns to school and district goals, as well as their plan for completion. The district determines whether a teacher can earn a micro-credential based on the alignment to school/district goals as well as budget constraints. Teachers must receive pre-approval from the district committee in order for the teacher to earn the salary increase. As part of the submission process, they describe what was learned, share the artifacts required by the micro-credential, provide a student and teacher reflection, and share their next steps for changing their classroom practices. This can be done through the Bloomboard platform or through the district's



submission process.

Close to 90% of teachers in Kettle Moraine have earned a micro-credential since the policy was instituted.

Lake County, Florida

Lake County School District in Florida was awarded a grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to foster personalized learning. The personalized learning grant was rolled out incrementally starting in 2014. Today, 20 out of 47 schools in the district are implementing personalized learning for students. Ahead of the personalized learning roll-out, “tiger teams” worked together to set out goals for changing practice. The tiger teams consisted of representatives from all levels of the district. Instead of using Bloomboard micro-credentials, Lake County designed micro-credentials around the goals identified by the tiger teams: School Culture, Curriculum Transparency, and Elements of Personalized Learning. Over the course of a year and a half, they designed a micro-credential pathway with a prerequisite badge focused on the three core learning goals, with four micro-credentials focused on each of the three areas. About 150 teachers have completed 447 micro-credentials across the district.

Each micro-credential is now facilitated by a coach called a “badge facilitator.” Mastery of a “badge facilitator” pathway opens up the opportunity for teachers to become badge facilitators themselves. Badge facilitators learn to be evaluators as a part of their training, thus building a model to ensure sustainability as micro-credentials scale throughout the district. As the micro-credentials initiative grows, Lake County administrators are still thinking about the conversion between earned micro-credentials and in-service hours.

Seminole County, Florida

Seminole County School District participated in statewide Growth-Mindset and Personalized Learning initiatives launched in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 school years respectively. Adoption of these two initiatives spurred the need for a shift in professional development so that teachers could participate in and model personalized learning. The district representatives talked to all school district principals to offer the use of the research-backed micro-credentials on Bloomboard.

The district built a robust platform on Canvas to provide information about the micro-credentials offered on Bloomboard. By including guidance on a district-supported platform, Seminole County had more control over translating micro-credential requirements by breaking down the rubrics, tracking micro-credentials progress, and supporting peer review of submissions. The district administrators relied heavily on school leaders to determine the scope of micro-credential work. Many schools took advantage of early release on Wednesdays to facilitate micro-credential work during common planning time. Submissions were reviewed by school colleagues before getting final approval from a school administrator. Following the pilot, Seminole County now offers in-service hours and some schools choose to offer stipends for relevant micro-credentials. Teachers prominently display the micro-credential badges they earn so that colleagues know who to ask for support as they learn new skills. Overall, 33 schools and the district’s department of assessment and accountability have adopted micro-credentials.





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