From November 2021 through January 2022, digiLEARN and The Hunt Institute partnered to host a three-series webinar event on micro-credentials. Below is a compilation of questions from all three webinars, along with other frequently asked questions we have received. To watch the full webinars, see the links below:

- Webinar 1: Micro-Credentials — Why were they developed, What they offer, and How they are rewarded and recognized (Video)
- Webinar 2: States Leading on Micro-Credentials (Video)
- Webinar 3: Policies to support micro-credentials (Video)

Micro-Credentials: Frequently Asked Questions

Definition and general questions

Q: What types of micro-credentials are available? Who offers micro-credentials?
A: There are hundreds of micro-credentials available to educators with varying levels of rigor and requirements. Some micro-credentials are "open access," so anyone can view the topic, the content, and the evidence requirements. Different vendors offer multiple micro-credentials utilizing different technology platforms. The National Education Association (NEA) offers a scannable "certification bank" of the micro-credentials it offers that provides a sense of the variety and content of micro-credentials. Digital Promise also offers an easily searchable database of its micro-credentials.

Q: Who tracks who has completed a micro-credential?
A: Typically, the earner has kept track. One of the elements of a micro-credential is that it includes a digital record of its earning, sometimes referred to as a "digital badge," that can be shared by the earner on platforms like Credly or Accredible. IMS Global has been working to develop something called a "comprehensive learner record" (CLR) that would be able to capture things like the actual artifacts/evidence that individuals submitted to earn the micro-credential, so that they could collect and share all of their achievements in one place. This is an area that is more technical in nature.

Q: Is there an industry standard for micro-credentials?
A: No. The inconsistency of quality and rigor is one of the major challenges that digiLEARN found as part of its work with North Carolina. This is one of the reasons the Micro-Credentials Partnership of States was created to develop consistent quality assurance standards for educator micro-credentials. For more information, please reference *Recommendations to the NC State Board of Education* on how to effectively implement micro-credentials.

In conjunction with the Chief Council of State School Officers, stakeholders have developed a set of principles to guide educator micro-credentials quality. But these are quite high-level, and not all micro-credential providers meet even these. New America provided deeper best practices for ensuring micro-credential quality in its report *Harnessing Micro-credentials for Teacher Growth: A National Review of Early Best Practices*.

Q: Is there a cost to teachers to earn a micro-credential?
A: Some micro-credentials are free and others require a payment, depending on the issuer/provider. With some providers, such as Digital Promise's and NEA's (free to members), teachers can view the micro-credentials, but they may be required to pay for the assessment/earning of the micro-credential. In some states or districts, the teacher may pay for the micro-credential, and in others, it is subsidized or covered in full as part of the teacher's professional learning.

Q: Is there a single repository for educators and leaders to source a catalog of available micro-credentials?
A: No, not currently. Each micro-credential platform has its own catalog. Digital Promise and the NEA both offer publicly accessible catalogs. Bloomboard's catalog is available only to those states and districts interested in becoming a paid subscriber. For other vendors, including higher education and local school districts, there is not a single source catalog for the many micro-credentials offered. This is one of the reasons digiLEARN is pursuing developing quality assurance standards so states and districts have some measure of quality when pursuing micro-credentials.

Q: Is there a move toward developing graduate-level certificates (master's level)?
A: Micro-credentials are not based on or aligned with a specific formal education level. Micro-credentials are a type of credential like a certificate but are focused on a demonstration of competency of a specific skill. Micro-credentials explore various levels of skill and competency, with some specifically targeted at more experienced/advanced teachers. In fact, most districts and states that have embraced micro-credentials are using them to determine who is eligible for teacher leadership roles.

There are colleges and universities that offer competency-based degrees, typically online, where a person works at their own pace and demonstrates mastery rather than earned credit hours. This should not be confused with competency based micro-credentials, which are a demonstration of a discrete skill or competency. Some vendors offer "stacked" micro-credentials, which can lead to a certification in a specific area, i.e. computer science or literacy.

Q: If I understand correctly, micro-credentials are separate from teacher licensure. Is this correct?
A: Every state determines its own licensure rules and regulations as part of the Human Capital Continuum from recruitment to development to career advancement. Therefore, digiLEARN approaches micro-credentials as a tool that should be integrated into the professional development system. As a standalone, micro-credentials have less potential for impact beyond a teacher's personal satisfaction. However, if micro-credentials are integrated into the human capital system, then the state and/or district is clear about which micro-credentials can be used for development or career advancement. By integrating them in the system educators would know which ones may impact teacher practice and student achievement, the value or currency such as the kind of credential.

Micro-credentials are most often offered online or in a hybrid situation, which gives greater flexibility to teachers to take advantage of professional learning at times convenient to their schedule. It also gives them a chance to personalize their own learning, much as they are expected to personalize learning for

students. It is not the expectation that micro-credentials replace high-quality professional development but that it is another tool that has high potential for ensuring the development of effective teachers.

As noted, every state determines its own licensure rules and regulations. A few states have modified their licensure policies to allow micro-credentials to count toward licensure status or endorsements (i.e., Kentucky allows teachers to move up a licensure "rank" by completing a comprehensive micro-credential plan in place of accumulating continuing education credits). Read more about these policies in New America's report, *Harnessing Micro-credentials for Teacher Growth: A National Review of Early Best Practices*.

Q: Does the research support the completion of "stackable," or skill specific, micro-credentials in career education (i.e., a Coursera certification in specific programming languages)?
A: Micro-credentials are relatively new, and more data is needed to determine their effectiveness for teachers. There may be more data available with application to the general workforce at higher education, including those provided by Coursera and other higher education institutions and providers. Micro-credentials are demonstrations of discrete skills, while Coursea and other online universities offer competency based degrees. Check with Bloomboard about any evidence they may have with stackable MCs especially in CTE which they provide.

Q: What software companies are being used for micro-credentialing?
A: There are multiple mechanisms being used to display and award badges including:
- learning management systems such as Blackboard, Google Classroom, Canvas, Edmodo, Haiku, Moodle, Schoology;
- badging systems such as Canvabadges, Openbadges.org, Credly, Openbadges.me, Mozilla Open Badges; and
- vendor platforms to manage micro-credentials such as Digital Promise, NEA, or Bloomboard, among others.

While there are many providers and platforms, it is important to note that for micro-credentials to be successful, they must be portable between schools and local education agencies within a given state. This means that micro-credentials must carry real value, both in impact and in currency, and that the level of quality is high and consistent. Without integration into a system of professional development, the potential for micro-credentials to impact teacher practice and growth will be limited.

Measurement, effectiveness and outcomes

Q: Do micro-credentials need to be renewed?
A: No. Like other types of credentials (degrees, certificates, etc.), micro-credentials do not currently need to be renewed.

Q: How are assessments structured for inter-rater reliability?
A: It depends on the micro-credential issuer and provider. In most, if not all, the assessors of micro-credentials receive training so their ratings align with scoring expectations. In some, there are recurring reviews of assessors' reliability relative to scoring expectations and retraining for assessors whose ratings are deviating from scoring expectations. And in a few, more than one assessor reviews each portfolio of evidence submitted, and if there is significant discrepancy between their ratings, a third assessor reviews before issuing a determination that the micro-credential was earned or not.

Q: What research shows the effectiveness of micro-credentials as compared to alternative professional development opportunities? If none, what research best supports a micro-credentials approach?
A: Research has shown that many professional development initiatives are not effective at supporting changes in teacher practices and student learning. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) report [Effective Teacher Professional Development](#) by Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hyler and Madelyn Gardner, with assistance from Danny Espinoza, provides a good overview of a number of studies about effective professional development for teachers. It outlines the elements of effective professional development as well as policy implications for states.

Studies about micro-credentials as a tool for professional development are limited, which is why digiLEARN encourages that micro-credentials be aligned with effective professional development and that a rigorous research component be included for states or districts implementing micro-credentials.

Early findings about the impact of micro-credentials on teacher practice are also limited because micro-credentials are a new practice. Through our new multi-state partnership, digiLEARN will be working with other states to build a deeper database about the impact of micro-credentials on teacher practice and student learning. For additional information please refer to: [Micro-credentials for Teachers: What Three Early Adopter States Have Learned So Far (air.org)](#).

Other documents and reports include:

- [Collection of New America publications identifying the potential and challenges of micro-credentials for educators](#) (New America)
- [Developing and Retaining Strong Teacher Talent in North Carolina with Micro-credentials](#) (New America)
- [The Impact of Micro-credentials on Educator Practice](#) (Digital Promise)
- [Micro-credentials and Teaching Policies in the United States](#) (Berry, B., 2019)

Q: Student achievement is a distal measure of professional learning. How can other measures of professional learning impact be measured and validated as growth that may ultimately impact student learning and achievement? Many "professional learning investments" are deemed ineffective because the timeline to measure impact is too short and the measures are too distant from the activity itself.
A: We absolutely agree—student achievement is a distal measure. Research also shows that an effective teacher is the single greatest indicator for student success, so it behooves education leaders to ensure that they invest in effective professional development for teachers. As noted in a [Learning Policy Institute report](#), "well-designed and implemented PD should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning that supports students to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to thrive in the 21st century." Integrating micro-credentials into a coherent ecosystem supports teacher growth and development across the entire professional continuum—an ecosystem linked to preparation and induction, teaching standards and evaluation and leadership opportunities all focused on teacher growth and development.

Micro-credentials offer a way for teachers to engage in short- and long-term cycles of inquiry. [Ben Jensen's documentation](#) of how top-performing education systems use "cycles of improvement" and lesson study as the foundations of teacher-led learning. There is a great deal that needs to be learned from Singapore. Jensen notes:

> Significant investments are made in teachers as professional learning leaders, not just school leaders. New roles have been created for teachers to lead professional learning in their own

schools, helping to align teacher needs and broader school objectives. In a similar fashion, a small cohort of expert teachers are professional learning leaders at a system level. This group of teachers is ultimately responsible for researching, designing and leading professional learning in their subject area, and linking it to broader system objectives for education.

A rigorous system of teacher appraisal holds teachers accountable for collaborating and improving practice. Differentiated job descriptions make the best teachers responsible for developing others, and their promotion depends on it. Teachers who lead learning communities and mentoring are well trained and prepared in how to best develop other teachers.

Last but not least, there is a deliberate policy to ensure teachers have adequate time for their own development in everyday practice. Trade-offs are made in other areas to quarantine this time – an expensive policy. Extra funds are provided to schools.

Q: If a teacher earns a micro credential for a particular skill or set of skills and then does not continue to implement those practices in their classrooms/with their students or there isn't an intentional focus on them, then skills acquired through the micro-credential might be lost, but the educator continues to hold the micro-credential. Is there any expectation for principals/school leaders to continue to reinforce these skills over time or is it just about the teacher's own professional learning?
A: Micro-credentials reflect a point-in-time demonstration of a skill, not a reflection of whether the teacher is continuing to implement that skill in their ongoing practice. This is the same reason that any degree or certificate is insufficient by itself – to know what teachers are doing in practice will always have to include a focus on school leaders and peers observing and discussing teachers' actual classroom practice. Micro-credentials should be integrated into the state system so that it becomes a part of the teacher's professional growth and ultimately as another tool for determining leadership roles for teachers.

Q: There is often a lag between changes in teacher practice and some kind of change in student achievement when measured on standardized assessments. Most state rubrics for teacher standards are based on practices that influence student growth, which is different from being able to collect evidence of a direct correlation between the micro credential and student achievement growth. Has thought been given to different or shorter-term indicators of success?
A: Yes, micro-credentials should utilize formative assessment practices also. Looking at current student work, rubric development and alignment to best practices and evidence-based research that is known to produce the student result desired.

First, the micro-credentials that are currently available don't utilize standardized student assessments to determine whether a teacher has demonstrated competency (for all the reasons outlined in the question). If there is a request to understand impact on student learning, it is based on a teacher's use of formative assessments. Second, as micro-credentials become more ubiquitous, it will be helpful to understand what, if any, long-term correlation there is between earning a particular micro-credential or stack of micro-credentials and impact on student learning. Here standardized student assessments could play a useful role.

Q: Are there any examples of micro-credentials that employ the use of educator coaches to help facilitate the learning?
A: Many vendors, including the three largest providers—Digital Promise, NEA, and Bloomboard—all include coaches and assessors. In all of digiLEARN's recommendations, including those from New America and RTI, mentors, coaches, and assessors are a critical component of supporting teachers who are working to achieve micro-credentials.

Here is one example of how assessor/coaches are used. You will also find examples of the assessor/coaching process in the companion email to this Q&A.

Q: I'm finding it very concerning that micro-credentials are being used as a workaround to the bare-minimum qualifications used for licensure in already low-requirement states. This feels like a move towards de-professionalization rather than re-professionalization. Any comments?
A: This is one of the reasons digiLEARN chose to move into this area of work. While there are multiple organizations offering micro-credentials, the level of rigor, market value for teachers, impact on continuing education units (CEUs), and impact on licensure remains unclear. It's also unclear how these credentials are recognized by states, or if they affect improved student achievement. Those issues are why digiLEARN is developing the Partnership of States – to address those concerns and determine how micro-credentials can be integrated into professional learning systems as another tool for teacher growth and development.

Teachers have demonstrated their interest and desire to pursue micro-credentials, and we believe we are at a critical juncture for their success. Teachers will become frustrated if their efforts to improve their professional practice through micro-credentials are not recognized. Micro-credentials are personalized and can be done in each teacher's own time and in their own way with support of an assessor or coach.

Competency based and personalized professional development is fundamentally different from the standardized seat time (CEU) approach that our licensure and professional development systems are currently based on. We encourage states and others to consider micro-credentials as a tool for transformation to broaden the human capital continuum for the teaching profession. Micro-credentials, if implemented correctly and with the necessary support, expand opportunities to improve teacher's skills and their professional growth.

In Arkansas, the department of education allows the alternative assessment plan option to teacher candidates who have successfully completed the content course work required by the Educator Preparation Program. To be placed on the alternative assessment plan, a candidate for licensure must also meet the following requirements:
- *Be employed as a classroom teacher.* The district may take into account the teacher's prior experience related to the profession, the content area in which the teacher is seeking licensure, and recommendations from cooperating teachers and EPP supervisors.
- *Receive extra mentoring support from the district.* The hiring district agrees to provide the licensure candidate with additional mentoring (beyond what a typical novice teacher receives) from a veteran teacher with content expertise.
- *Have a content area Praxis score within -2 Standards Errors of Measurement.* We are not replacing the Praxis, but allowing licensure candidates to supplement their Praxis score with a micro-credential that allows the licensure candidate to "show what they know" concerning the actual delivery of content to students in a classroom setting.

The Praxis provides a "snap-shot" of content knowledge for the candidate's performance on that particular day at that particular time. Arkansas adopts licensure scores based on the recommended study value of a test's multi-state standards setting study, provided by ETS and Pearson. This score represents a starting point for new teachers, who – if given the opportunity – can continue to grow and learn more in their content area through professional development opportunities and mentoring from veteran teachers.

Arkansas, like many other states, finds itself in a precarious time when a higher number of teachers than ever before are leaving the profession. We are committed to building a robust pipeline to fill the vacancies, which requires our division to find the delicate balance between the application of standardized tests for licensure and the application of classroom pedagogy. We believe that micro-credentials are part of this balance, and one of the many reasons Arkansas wants to join the discussion around standards for micro-credentials.

Q: How long typically does it take (hours) to complete one micro-credential?
A: One would need to measure in terms of days or weeks, because it's a rather involved process. The bulleted items are all variables related to the time it takes create a micro-credential:

- *The writer's expertise or knowledge of the skill presented in the micro-credential.* If the writer needs to become an expert, he or she will need additional time to read and research.
- *The writer's connection to and knowledge of current classroom practices.* If the writer has not recently been in a school and class setting, he or she will need time to consult with teacher practitioners to create realistic expectations for how a skill will look with real students in real time. COVID, remote and virtual learning, and learning loss are all very real and relevant to teachers, and the writer should be aware of how these elements affect classroom practices.
- *The time it takes to get feedback and collaborate with trusted colleagues*. The artifacts and evidence teachers are asked to provide should be connected to relevant tasks that will support a teacher's professional practice. The educator should not view the artifacts and evidence as busy work, but as meaningful learning that contributes to professional growth and student achievement.
- *The time it takes to research and vet materials to include in the Research and Resources section of the micro-credential.* Resources need to represent the "best of the best" on the topic.
- *The time it takes to pilot the draft version of the micro-credential*, determine if the rubrics accurately reflect what the writer wanted to measure, and make revisions as needed.
- *The time it takes to train assessors and calibrate their scoring of submissions*. The writer of the micro-credential may not actually train assessors, but the writer's input may be value added for assessors.

National efforts

Q: Is there a national database or workgroup that evaluates micro-credentials in each state and whether they are equivalent in other states?
A: No. This is one of the reasons digiLEARN is pursuing developing quality assurance standards so states and districts have some measure of quality when pursuing micro-credentials catalogs. There are hundreds of micro-credentials available to educators with varying levels of rigor and requirements. Different vendors offer multiple micro-credentials utilizing different technology platforms. The National Education Association (NEA) offers a scannable "certification bank" of the micro-credentials that provides a sense of the variety and content of micro-credentials. Digital Promise also offers an easily searchable database of its micro-credentials. Bloomboard's catalog is available only to those states and districts interested in becoming a paid subscriber. Other vendors including higher education and local school districts also develop micro-credentials; however, there is not a single source catalog for the many micro-credentials offered.

Q: What are the federal barriers on this issue of micro-credentials?

A: Professional development, licensure and certification are a state or local responsibility, so federal barriers are not an issue. In fact, there is a wealth of workforce development policy at the federal and state level that undergirds competency-based approaches to learning and "badging" or micro-credentials.

Oversight, accreditation, and evaluation

Q: Who is providing oversight and accreditation?
A: At present, each vendor—public or private (including higher education, teacher developed, nonprofit, for profit)—develops its own standards and processes for micro-credentials. digiLEARN developed the Partnership of States, which includes North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas and Wyoming, to develop a common definition, quality assurance standards and impact data for micro-credentials so they have currency and can be portable in and across districts and states. This work will serve as a model for other states.

In the absence of quality assurance standards and process, if micro-credentials are to carry any type of value outside of a specific school or district (i.e., be "portable"), New America recommends that states create a list of approved micro-credentials to ensure consistent quality, and that they create recommendations for the currency that those micro-credentials carry (e.g., additional status/responsibility, additional compensation, etc.). digiLEARN recommends that states integrate micro-credentials into its educator professional development system. This will provide consistent policy for quality assurance standards, compensation, and portability across schools, districts, the state and ultimately all states.

Q: Is earning a micro-credential based on completion of a mini-course or is work by the participant evaluated? If so, who is evaluating the participant's work and based on what criteria? Does the participant have to show mastery?
A: A micro-credential is not a course. It reflects a very specific "bite-sized" competency, rather than a broad area of knowledge or skill. They are earned based on demonstration of a specific competency rather than time spent in a course or program or a formal degree. The process includes the teacher submitting some evidence to be evaluated by an assessor. Defining micro-credentials was the topic of the first webinar and a short summary of the discussion can be found in New America's blog post: [Everything You Wanted to Know About Educator Micro-credentials: Fundamentals (New America)](#)

Q: As a provider, the assessment (grading) of micro-credentials is most taxing. What advances have been made to increase efficiency for providers?
A: A number of providers are doing a better job of developing sound scoring rubrics and training scorers to rate the MC submissions. Scorers need to know the rationale for the rubrics; the reasoning and backing that supports the elements or dimensions set forth in the rubrics; and the procedures used in their application to the evidence. This takes training. I believe there is a lot to learn from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as well as Digital Promise in developing more efficiencies in the assessment of micro-credentials. CCSSO produced a [very useful guide](#) for the "Design, Assessment, and Implementation Principles for Educator Micro-credentials." This topic was discussed in our first webinar with The Hunt Institute: [Micro-credentials: Why They Were Developed, What They Offer, and How They are Rewarded and Recognized](#).

First and foremost, micro-credentials must be anchored in a baseline of evidence that provides a warrant for effectiveness. Based on this initial evidence of actual accomplishment, guides, rubrics and scoring criteria must be used in evaluating submissions. Peer evaluation is the key here, with teachers themselves taking the role of standard setters and evaluators. Training is paramount and assessments

need to be calibrated. This kind of enterprise cannot be layered on top of existing archaic PD. Several years ago the Gates Foundation commissioned a [study](#) and found about $18 billion was spent on PD annually—and not many educators were satisfied.

State-led efforts

Q: How do we get this started at the state level?
A: Put together a group of your stakeholders in the state to start the conversation. Include all levels of education to ensure everyone is at the table. I would also include government leaders—your governor and/or legislators that are champions of education—along with industry people wanting to connect skills to education, nonprofits, etc.

If you are interested in an example of one state's approach using stakeholders to develop a micro-credentials initiative, please go see the [NC Partnership for Micro-Credentials Status Report to the North Carolina State Board of Education](#).

Q: Are there current examples of adopted or draft regulations or policies available?
A: The structure and organization of each state, district, and school will drive micro-credential policy development. Below is a list of resources that provide some examples of approaches as well as considerations for state-led micro-credentials. It is our recommendation that states should lead on the development of policies around micro-credentials so they can be fully integrated into the human capital continuum where teachers can be recognized or rewarded as professionals. In the absence of a definition, quality assurance standards, and impact data, states need to develop a comprehensive and strategic approach when implementing micro-credentials.

Resources:
- North Carolina: [The North Carolina Partnership for Micro-Credentials Final Recommendations](#)
- South Carolina: [CarolinaCrED](#)
- Texas: [Statewide micro-credential certification as approved by the Texas legislature](#)
- Kentucky: [Micro-Credentials – KEDC Project CHARGE](#)
- National Research: *[Harnessing Micro-credentials for Teacher Growth: A Model State Policy Guide](#)* (New America)
- Higher Education: [Micro-credentials at SUNY](#)

Q: I would love to hear examples of where education systems are using micro-credentials as part of a structured teacher professional development and/or licensure program.
A. One great example is the University of South Carolina College of Education and CarolinaCAP, which offers "an innovative, competency-based, personalized experience for prospective teachers to positively impact education in their districts." CCAP in its first two years has had 441 diverse applicants. Certification pathways are offered in Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle Level Science and Math, Secondary Science and Math and Multi-categorical special education. The launch of personalized assessment and learning of specific competencies via the use of micro-credentials provides each candidate an individualized means to demonstrate competency in a variety of skills and content areas. The CarolinaCAP CRM and micro-credential platforms are designed to provide one central location in which applicants, candidates, coaches, districts and internal CarolinaCAP leadership team members can interact. Users have varying levels of access within the system depending on their roles and responsibilities in CarolinaCAP.

Q: In Arkansas and other states, the Statewide Professional Development Grant (SPDG) was involved in creating some of your micro-credentials. Please share more about this and whether you know if other state SPDGs are doing the same.

A: Arkansas has been awarded SPDGs prior to this current grant, which was written specifically to support collaboration and inclusive practices between special education and general education teachers within their school and classroom context. Part of the professional development and coaching for teachers included funding to develop micro-credentials that teachers could earn to demonstrate competency with high leverage practices and Universal Design for Learning. Part of the grant funding is going to be used to offer stipends to teachers participating in the grant who earn micro-credentials. Other states with 2020-2025 SPDGs are developing online modules, courses, and perhaps micro-credentials:

Oklahoma:
- Oklahoma Tiered Intervention System of Support (OTISS): http://www.otiss.net/
- OTISS includes academics and behavior. The project is a continuation of the 2011 SPDG grant.
- The Swipe Project for Parents – Literacy modules for parents on core literacy components (most include short videos that are parent friendly)
- The Swipe Project for Educators – Sequenced "chunks" of professional development to provide just-in-time training on MTSS

Montana:
- The Learning Hub: https://learninghub.mrooms.net/index.php
- An online learning platform that provides professional learning for Montana educators

Florida:
- BESE Portal: https://fl-pda.org/#/home
- The BESE Portal offers facilitated courses and independent courses for educators.

Colorado:
- CO-MTSS: http://cde.state.co.us/mtss/spdg
- Currently, the CO SPDG offers on-demand training across multiple topics related to MTSS.
- CO SPDG was recently awarded a new grant in 2022 with plans to continue with MTSS. I believe they are developing an online academy that will include micro-credentials.

Teacher involvement

Q: As a veteran teacher, I wonder about getting involved with advocacy for the profession, students and the community at large. I like the notion of disrupting the status quo surrounding teacher placement in the classroom. How might teachers become more involved in this or related activities by bringing their perspective?

A: Teachers can absolutely get involved and guide the changes to the profession before others do it for us. Taking micro-credentials is a great way to start. Digital Promise and NEA have free ones that are great to start on. Bloomboard also has some micro-credentials to explore. Finding out what is being offered in your state, and what is lacking in your education system to build your own.

Q: With the micro-credential as a prerequisite for teachers to receive their licensure in North Carolina, what roadblocks are you all running into with this process or with trying to start this process?

A: We anticipate the shift to demonstrated competency/skill from seat-time for professional learning to be a major issue for our educators.

When the current system is based on a standardized approach for teacher development and licensure, it requires strategic development and implementation of micro-credentials. [NC's recommendations](#) provide a framework for implementing state lead MCs that you may find useful.

Institutes of Higher Education and other industries

Q: How are Institutes of Higher Education connected to micro-credentials? Are there examples of universities accepting micro-credentials and converting them into course credit for teachers pursuing continuing education?

A: At the University of South Carolina, CarolinaCrED offers the most comprehensive personalized professional learning experience in South Carolina, featuring micro-credentials that address the SC Teaching Standards 4.0 indicators. A library of over 200 micro-credential stacks, developed by SC educators for SC educators, continues to expand in content areas (e.g., literacy, mathematics, science, special education) as well as special topics (e.g., bullying, diversity, equity, inclusion). We also deliver two programs, leveraging the power of micro-credentials, designed to address the state's persistent educator recruitment and retention challenges: Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (CarolinaCAP) and the Carolina Teacher Induction Program (CarolinaTIP). Learn more at: https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/education/partnerships_outreach/carolinacap/index.php

One of the issues that needs to be explored is the conversion of micro-credentials into course credits or hours. Granting CEUs for micro-credentials by using an inconsistent exchange rate that does not address the issue of seat time versus skill acquisition or competency. One primary objective of incorporating micro-credentials into human capital systems is to move away from a compliance oriented, time-based approach and move toward a focus on what teachers know and can do. Any attempt to convert micro-credentials to CEUs is arbitrary, because the length of time it takes educators to complete a micro-credential varies by teacher and the rigor of the micro-credential depends on a variety of factors, including their initial level of teacher expertise. For more information and broader discussion please reference: [NC Partnership for Education Micro-credentials recommendations.](#)

Q: What is happening in other fields (e.g. general and special education, related services, educational administration)? How can we work together across the fields involved in education?
A: This [report](#) from EdSurge, A Lifetime of Back to School: Micro-credentials in Higher Education, is a good one. They have set out to explore the microcredential landscape with a series of articles.

Equity

Q: How are employers shifting their screening/hiring processes to include applicants and make hires among people with micro-credentials who don't have associate or bachelor's degrees? What incentives are states using to get employers to hire people based on their demonstrated skills, not their degrees, and what are the racial equity implications of this approach?
A: [Sean Gallagher](#), Executive Professor of Educational Policy, Northeastern University has written extensively about micro-credentials in the workforce and its implications for higher education. Please reference his book: "The Future of University Credentials: New Developments at the Intersection of Higher Education and Hiring," was published in 2016 by Harvard Education Press.

Benefits to Educators

Q: What are the tangible benefits to educators to participate in micro-credentials?
A: The benefits are obviously learning first and foremost; recognition of what has been learned; a body of evidence to show how they not only learned the content but have applied it as well; and a reflection on how the process went. From what we have seen in Wyoming, the educators who have participated in our micro-credentials said they had never learned and applied the information in this kind of manner, which made them more excited to teach and continue learning. We are hoping in the next few years to have data on how that will impact student learning as well, and eventually have students taking and earning micro-credentials to have a portfolio for future employers, colleges, universities or other programs/trades.

Q: I have a question about the value of micro-credentials for aspiring teachers. Breakthrough Collaborative runs a teaching fellowship for over 1,000 college students annually across 24 sites that is designed to be an early clinical experience that builds meaningful skills and competencies. We're exploring a micro-credential for our aspiring teachers because we have a hypothesis that it would help remove barriers along the pathway to becoming a teacher by either supporting them to translate their clinical experience into college credit or setting them up to have access to teacher prep programs that recognize the skills they have coming in. Does the panel have a reaction to this hypothesis and/or any advice for us as we work to build and diversify the teacher pipeline?
A: We have a lot of experiences with our CarolinaCAP program (see above). Again what we are learning is that micro-credentialing needs to be grounded in teacher-led inquiry. As we think about MCs for aspiring teachers what can we learn from new teacher performance assessments (like edTPA) to inform how we create the professional learning environments for new recruits to teaching to learn and document what they know and can do as well as the impact of their efforts to improve outcomes for PK-12 students.

I think if you look at the evolution of micro-credentials starting around the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) era, looking at open access for all to education, I absolutely believe micro-credentials have the potential to break down barriers. Focusing on a skill instead of an entire content area or program allows earners to start learning and applying the content while earning some form of recognition (badge, etc.) in much smaller segments. Also, in our current pilot programs in Wyoming, our micro-credentials earners have an assigned mentor to keep them motivated and to troubleshoot. This has proven to be an excellent way to gain an additional layer of perspective and data on how the pilot is going and potential gaps.

Funding

Q: Do participants or school districts pay to participate in micro-credential experiences? If so, what is the pricing model? (Actual dollars and cents, please!)
A: Different models exist. Some micro-credentials are free, and others require a payment, depending on the issuer/provider. With some providers, such as Digital Promise's and NEA's (free to members, small cost to non-members), you can view the micro-credentials, but they may require payment for the assessment/earning of the micro-credential. In some states or districts, the teacher may pay for the micro-credential, and in others, it is subsidized or covered in full as part of the teacher's professional learning.

Recognition

Q: Would open courses offered through college collaboratives throughout the world be recognized toward achieving micro-credentials?
A: One earns a micro-credential based on demonstration of competence – micro-credentials are agnostic as to the method by which the candidate has developed the competency represented by that specific

micro-credential. That said, it is possible for an open course that meets the overall stated standards to be used to earn a micro-credential.

Early Childhood

Q: How do micro-credentials fit within or apply to the Power to The Profession's Unifying Framework, Levels I, II, III? How does it intersect with licensure of the EC teacher?
A: Many states don't require licensure of the EC teacher but do require certain credentials (a certificate, a BA, etc.). If high-quality micro-credentials exist that would signal the possession of necessary EC teaching competencies, then EC advocates may want to encourage their states to accept those micro-credentials as alternatives or additions to the commonly required credentials.

Q: Can you give any examples of micro-credentials for early childhood teachers, and where to find them?
A: It depends on each state's definition of early childhood. Most micro-credentials that have been developed to date are for teachers in elementary and secondary schools. Here is one example of a stack of micro-credentials from Bloomboard for early elementary teachers focused on literacy: https://bloomboard.com/program/openliteracy/. Delaware is also working with Digital Promise to create a set of early literacy micro-credentials: How one state develops own micro-credentials for teachers (districtadministration.com)