

Micro-Credentials and Professional Learning

Who can best transform K-12 education to student-centered learning? The answer is simple: educators. But what's not as simple is how to get them there.

One way that innovative educators are building the capacity to transform education is through micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials are a way of creating new pathways for professional development: helping learning to become more competency-based, personalized and relevant to a teacher's needs. They are competency-based credentials for professional learning that recognize demonstrated mastery of skills. This allows learners to build up a portfolio of certified knowledge.

Micro-credentials are a more flexible and modular way of designing professional learning experiences. Some micro-credential strategies are similar to badging, which recognizes the mastery of knowledge as it is demonstrated. Other common characteristics of micro-credentials include:

- Educators must demonstrate competence in discrete skills in their practice (either inside or outside the classroom);
- Teachers select which micro-credentials they wish to pursue based on their professional needs, the challenges and strengths of students, instructional shifts, or district priorities;
- Educators use an online system to identify competencies, submit evidence, and earn micro-credentials; and
- Educators can share micro-credentials across social media platforms, as well as use them on blogs and resumes.

Districts are exploring more personalized approaches to professional development—such as micro-credentials—to provide recognition of new knowledge, skills and abilities. As competency-based education systems evolve and develop, there will be more specialization and differentiation of teaching roles. Whether it's performance assessment, literacy strategies or any number of other desired competencies, micro-credentials enable accessible pathways for educators to gain the skills they need, both now and for the future.

Just as students have personalized learning plans showing evidence of learning outcomes, states could use micro-credentials to transform teacher licensure, as educators will need to demonstrate the competencies required to support student-centered learning environments. States or districts could also align to micro-credentials so educators could better receive on-demand, job-embedded and competency-based learning opportunities.

New approaches such as micro-credentials can support educators as they adopt new roles while building the skills necessary to realize the systemic transformation toward student-centered learning.