Digital Promise
Accelerating Innovation in Education

Nearly Two-Thirds of K-12 Teachers Say They Are Likely to Try Micro-credentials as Part of Their Professional Development

Survey finds teachers view micro-credentials as an appealing way to learn new skills and hone existing ones

WASHINGTON, D.C. I October 1, 2015 — Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of U.S. teachers say they are likely to try micro-credentials as part of their ongoing professional development, according to a new survey commissioned by education nonprofit Digital Promise and conducted by Grunwald Associates LLC, a leading research firm. The survey of a nationally representative sample of 856 teachers in both public and private schools and across the K-12 grade levels also found that the most appealing aspects of micro-credentials are opportunities to learn new skills or hone existing ones.

Micro-credentials are an emerging solution for identifying, articulating, capturing, recognizing, and sharing the best practices of America's educators. To earn a micro-credential, teachers select the specific competencies they wish to develop, submit evidence of their competence, and receive recognition through digital badges.

The findings of the Digital Promise survey on "[Making Professional Learning Count: Recognizing Educators' Skills with Micro-credentials](#)" point to greater teacher interest in micro-credentials based on opportunities to learn than on the recognition they might gain by earning them. Given a list of features of micro-credentials and asked to indicate how appealing they are, teachers rated those that improve their capabilities in the classroom far higher than those that allow them to display or share digital badges they might earn. For example, 69 percent of teachers said the chance to learn new skills is "extremely" or "very" appealing, while 23 percent said the same of having their micro-credentials displayed as a digital badge.

"Teachers earn credentials at the beginning of their careers, but they learn new skills every day," said Karen Cator, President and CEO of Digital Promise. "Yet this lifelong commitment to learning is rarely formally recognized. What teachers learn once they are in the classroom does not appear on their resume or in their employment

records, and there are limited pathways for them receive recognition for their professional learning and growth, or share learning with their peers. Over time, a system of micro-credentials has the potential to transform professional learning and strengthen professional practice."

Other findings from the survey include:

- Teachers know very little about micro-credentials today. Despite high interest in micro-credentials when presented with a description of them, just 15 percent of teachers surveyed considered themselves even "somewhat" familiar with micro-credentials.

- There are important differences between potential early adopters and late adopters of educator micro-credentials. Potential early adopters are spread fairly evenly by years of experience and are motivated by the desire to become better teachers. Potential late adopters are clustered among the most experienced teachers and are driven primarily by factors such as the need to satisfy professional development requirements or desire to earn higher pay.

- Teachers want professional development that is easy to use and access, tailored to their specific needs. Teachers view micro-credentials as adaptable to their needs, focused on continuous learning, and based on competency, not seat time.

Making Professional Learning Count: Recognizing Educators' Skills with Micro-credentials is available to download today from Digital Promise. A more detailed market research report based on this survey, including findings of interest to industry, is available from Grunwald Associates.

Digital Promise is working with partners to develop a micro-credentialing ecosystem as a new way to satisfy teachers' love of learning, recognize their accomplishments, and empower them to drive their own professional development.

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About the Survey

This study is based on teacher responses to a 20-minute survey conducted online. The survey was administered to a nationally representative U.S. sample of 856 teachers in grades K–12. Respondents from both public and private schools were included. All respondents were recruited and completed their surveys online, and were compensated for their participation. All differences reported between subgroups of teachers are statistically significant at the 95 percent level of confidence ($p < 0.05$), unless otherwise indicated.

About Digital Promise

Digital Promise is a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress to spur innovation in education in order to improve the opportunity to learn for all Americans. Through its work with educators, entrepreneurs, researchers, and leading thinkers, Digital Promise supports a comprehensive agenda to benefit lifelong learning and provide Americans with the knowledge and skills needed to compete in the global economy.