



Learning Forward
504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056

Tel: 800-727-7288
Fax: 513-523-0638

Email: office@learningforward.org
www.learningforward.org

Digital Promise
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 830
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: 202-450-3675

Email: contact@digitalpromise.org
www.digitalpromise.org

Citation for this work:

Author: Tracy Crow
Contributing author: Hashim Pipkin
Designer: Jane Thurmond
Photo credits: Getty Images

©Learning Forward and Digital Promise, 2017. All rights reserved.

These materials are copyrighted. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA, 94105.

Learn more at
www.learningforward.org
www.digitalpromise.org/micro-credentials

Micro-credentials for Impact:

Holding Professional Learning to High Standards

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Professional Learning's Future	5
How to Achieve the Vision: The Intersection of Standards and Micro-credentials	7
Learning Communities	8
Leadership.....	9
Resources	10
Learning Designs.....	11
Data.....	12
Implementation.....	13
Outcomes.....	14
Maximizing the Promise of Micro-credentials.....	15

Micro-credentials

Met June, an experienced and dedicated teacher, excited to kick off a new year of learning for her fifth graders. With several years of teaching experience under her belt, June can draw upon an internal warehouse of strategies and experiences to create rich learning for her students daily.

June loves her job, and aims to do her best at it. She has colleagues she trusts and supports, and eagerly looks forward to opportunities to learn with them. She is reflective: she knows, both from formal analysis of data and from evidence she gathers informally every time she is with her students, where there are gaps in student understanding and performance. These gaps help her decide what she will work on next to continue to improve.

Thanks to her social media network, June discovered an online learning opportunity that looks like just what she needs. She has been eager to expand her repertoire of instructional strategies to help create a classroom environment that encourages her third-grade class of mostly first-generation Americans to communicate with one another in meaningful ways. June engaged in the online professional learning experience she found through Facebook to build competence in that skill.

She developed a classroom video that showed her facilitating a student check-in circle, a best practice explored on the learning platform. June submitted the video, which was assessed by experts in the field. Based on the assessment, she received a micro-credential, certification of this skill in creating a classroom climate where students feel cared for and that they belong. June eagerly shared the new strategy of student check-in circles with her colleagues. She and her third-grade teacher team are now using this strategy daily.

Like many teachers, June has embraced a commitment to continuous improvement. Some educators work in districts with fully envisioned and implemented professional learning systems that allocate resources — money, time, and people — to support the kinds of job-embedded learning that are essential to continuous improvement. Others work in districts that have some, but certainly not all, of the supports they need to learn effectively and continuously as professionals.

While all educators' learning environments are unique, what is constant is a need for meaningful, ongoing, professional learning. Fortunately, emerging technologies and learning innovations enable schools and schools systems to provide the educators the real-time support they most need.

Professional Learning's Future

Teachers, school and district leaders, and other stakeholders are driving a serious conversation to make sure the significant investment in professional learning is resulting in real impact on students. While ensuring engaging and effective professional learning for educators remains a struggle for many districts, professional learning remains a critical lever for districts in building the capacity of educators to achieve ambitious student learning goals.

The need for professional learning isn't in question: rigorous student standards, changing demographics, and shifting priorities all require highly skilled teachers and leaders in every school. If we truly want every student to have access to an education that prepares them for success in a 21st-century world, then educators must be supported in environments that prioritize and embrace personalized, technologically rich learning for all.

The challenge, then, is creating such environments.

Digital Promise and Learning Forward are ready to address this challenge. As the expectation for more demonstrably effective professional learning for educators grows across the nation, both organizations have committed to a vision of ensuring that every educator engages in the kinds of learning that improves their practice and contributes to better outcomes for students. Digital Promise is advancing its mission through the development of an ecosystem of educator micro-credentials, and Learning Forward through their Standards for Professional Learning. These standards and micro-credentials, applied together, set a course for educator professional learning that is personalized, relevant, and results oriented.

There is a growing knowledge and research base about the elements that make professional learning effective. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning outline the elements of and conditions for impact-driven professional learning. The

standards clarify what a system of effective professional learning entails and shape directions for policy and system shifts that can make such professional learning accessible to all educators.

The most recent edition of the Standards for Professional Learning was developed in 2011 in collaboration with more than 40 other organizations and associations committed to establishing high expectations for professional learning. The standards outline the research-based conditions and elements essential for professional learning that lead to changes in educator practice and improvements in student results.

Standards for Professional Learning

- Learning Communities
- Leadership
- Resources
- Learning Designs
- Data
- Implementation
- Outcomes

Learn more at

www.learningforward.org/standards/

The standards are not a roadmap or how-to guide. However, as teachers and leaders plan, implement, and evaluate effective professional learning and comprehensive learning systems, the standards provide a framework that ensures stakeholders at all levels consider the factors that support results-oriented learning.

The standards have been adopted or adapted in more than 35 states to help shape policies and guidelines that touch professional learning. As more schools, districts, states, and provinces concentrate their efforts on implementation of the standards, more educators benefit not only from more meaningful learning but also from a more widespread understanding on the part of all stakeholders about what it takes to support the continuous growth of educators at all levels.

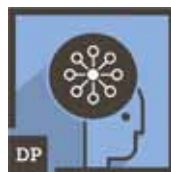
At the same time, micro-credentials are an emerging learning design that shows promise for offering educators an on-ramp for identifying and meeting classroom-specific professional learning needs.

Four key features define educator micro-credentials: They are competency-based, personalized, on-demand, and shareable. As a personalized learning design, micro-credentials allow educators to focus on a discrete skill related to their professional practice, student needs, or school goals. For instance, they may want to explore ways of checking for student understanding across their whole class. They learn a particular method and collect the required evidence such as a classroom video to demonstrate their understanding. Through an agile online platform that clearly identifies the competency associated with each micro-credential as well as the required evidence, educators can complete the process of earning micro-credentials at their own pace.

Because educators are able to select the micro-credentials they wish to earn, they can create their own professional learning journey. Once micro-credentials are earned by educators, they can display those digital badges and the supporting portfolio of evidence on a profile, blog, website, or signature to signal their demonstrated competence wherever their professional journey might take them.

June, our third-grade teacher, experiences this above. She earned the [Belonging and Caring](#) micro-credential, part of Digital Promise's set of Deeper Learning micro-credentials, associated with skills teachers need to engage students in deeper learning experiences and prepare for success in an increasingly complex world. June explored the online platform, found the micro-credential related to the skill she wished to develop, and used the provided resources to develop the skill and gathered classroom evidence showing competence in building supportive classroom culture.

The micro-credentials that educators earn exist within a larger micro-credential ecosystem. This ecosystem requires three unique and distinct roles: issuers, earners, and recognizers. Issuers are the organizations — non-profits, universities, etc. — that are supported by Digital Promise to develop the content of the micro-credential. Earners are the educators — classroom teachers, librarians, instructional coaches, principals etc. — who seek a micro-credential and develop the evidence of learning to submit in order to earn the credential. Finally, recognizers give the micro-credentials value and accept them as evidence of learning. They are the districts, states, and others that define the various ways micro-credentials have value in an educator's professional career.





Micro-credentials have the potential to become a vital source of effective learning for educators. They allow teachers to build a portfolio of skills and practices that will support effective classroom learning environments.



How to Achieve the Vision: The Intersection of Standards and Micro-credentials

Micro-credentials don't exist in a vacuum. They, like any other form of educator professional learning, exist in a larger context filled with unique needs, circumstances, resources, and both formal and informal learning opportunities. This report seeks to chart a course for leveraging a micro-credentialing system to enable more educators to achieve the potential of professional learning. Secondly, this report provides guidance to micro-credential issuers, earners, and recognizers to ensure that when educators pursue micro-credentials that they experience the research-based elements of professional learning essential to achieving ambitious outcomes.

The Standards for Professional Learning chart a course for meeting these two purposes. Below, we detail how each of the seven Standards for Professional Learning connect to micro-credentials. These Standards for Professional Learning offer a guiding framework for ensuring that micro-credentials support an outcome-focused, rigorous, and effective comprehensive professional learning system. In each section, we list specific recommendations for ensuring effectiveness of micro-credentials.

The supportive learning conditions, structures, and policies outlined through each standard below certainly aren't applicable just to educator micro-credentials. A learning system that attends to such actions creates all types of more effective professional learning. However, the recommendations in each section are tailored to help those who recognize, create, and experience educator micro-credentials in particular.

Learning Communities

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

About the standard

Learning Forward lists the Learning Communities standard first among the seven standards intentionally, and it is from this standard that all others follow. We believe in the importance and power of collaborative learning to spread effective practices from room to room, building to building, and system to system. Through ongoing collaboration, educators identify their students' greatest needs and together find the means to address them, continuously strengthening their own capacity and prioritizing their own learning.

Such collaboration happens through intentional design and deliberate structures for learning, and requires dedicated time and leadership so that educators have specific skills for effective collaboration. Learning teams engage in a cycle of continuous improvement, using data to identify learner needs, establishing goals, creating learning agendas, applying new practices and knowledge, monitoring progress, and making adjustments as necessary.

Collaborative learning and collective impact go hand in hand, encouraging educators to take responsibility for not only the students they face each day but also their peer teachers and the students of their peers.

What this means for micro-credentials

Aligning micro-credential learning with the Learning Communities standard may present a challenge, given the individual nature of earning micro-credentials. However, educators can intentionally create connections between their learning and the learning of others and the achievement of collective goals.

Additionally, there are opportunities to emphasize the Learning Communities standard through micro-credentials. When learning teams set their learning agendas, they often identify opportunities particularly for individuals, and those opportunities can likewise support the team. Team members may also choose to achieve particular competencies, with their learning team, and submit individual examples of their own work for review. Micro-credentials are also ripe for helping educators develop collaboration skills essential to effective learning communities, whether in the realm of team facilitation, communication, or conflict resolution.

When it comes to the Learning Communities standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- What collaboration and communication competencies do I need to gain?
- How will my achieving a particular competency support the achievement of team or school goals?
- How might I support my colleagues in attaining their selected competencies?
- Where does gaining a particular competency best fit within my team's learning cycle?
- Who on my learning team would benefit from gaining this competency with me?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Learning Communities standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore policies that embed weekly released time for grade-level/content area team professional learning • Ensure that any state-developed learning dashboards or platforms support team learning cycles and can be adapted for local uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Digital Promise and issuing organizations to develop team learning opportunities. • Recognize micro-credentials' role in team learning agendas. • Create opportunities for teachers to share and celebrate their micro-credential learning and competencies gained. • Encourage school- or district-level cluster teams to gain micro-credentials together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize development of collaboration competencies in micro-credentials offered to teachers. • Consider how local teams or peers might use micro-credential learning to achieve collective goals. • Create mechanisms for sharing knowledge gained through earning micro-credentials.

Leadership

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

About the standard

Education leaders at all levels must have a deep understanding of effective professional learning and its role in school improvement and make learning opportunities available to educators. Additionally, effective leaders develop their own knowledge, skills, and practice related to their job responsibilities, including leading learning, and they make their learning visible to educators, parents, and students. Leaders seek opportunities to learn alongside other educators, joining learning teams composed of multiple roles including teachers as appropriate.

Learning leaders, who may serve at classroom, school, district, higher education, external provider, and policy levels, have a responsibility to advocate for professional learning in their spheres of influence including making the case for adequate resources. Their work to build and sustain professional learning structures and systems is critical to ensuring coherence and alignment of learning.

What this means for micro-credentials

Micro-credentials show great promise for supporting the development of leadership in schools. Teachers can customize their learning to develop the leadership knowledge, skills, and practices they seek. Educators in other roles can pinpoint specific areas for growth and seek out specific learning opportunities to fill gaps.

Because of their responsibility to stay informed about new developments in professional learning, learning leaders need to understand what micro-credentials are and the role they can play in advancing a comprehensive professional learning system.

When it comes to the Leadership standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- What micro-credentials are available that align to teacher leadership competencies?
- How will gaining this competency enhance my leadership knowledge and skills?
- What support do I need from my principal, instructional coach, or district leaders as I undertake developing my leadership competencies?
- How can I share stories of my success in this learning experience to advocate for and sustain this kind of learning?
- How might leaders in my school or district better understand or advocate for the kinds of learning that are valuable to me?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Leadership standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity of state-level leaders and policymakers to understand and advocate for micro-credentials and their role in professional learning systems. • Consider how micro-credentials can support state-developed leadership and succession pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop capacity of school and district leaders to understand and advocate for micro-credentials and their role in professional learning systems. • Encourage school, district, and teacher leaders to engage in micro-credential learning. • Create opportunities for teachers to share and celebrate their micro-credential learning and competencies gained. • Consider how micro-credentials can support district-developed leadership and succession pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage development of leadership competencies in offerings for teachers. • Create offerings specifically for educators in a range of leadership roles (instructional coach, department chair, etc.). • Partner with states, districts, and CMOs to support leadership development and succession pathways.

Resources

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

About the standard

Resources for professional learning include not only money but also time, people, materials, technology and more. Coaches are a valuable resource, as are other staff or external technical assistance providers dedicated to supporting learning and learners. Dedicated workday time makes classroom-focused collaborative professional learning possible, and creating schedules that allow teachers such time is among learning leaders' most critical responsibilities.

Effectively prioritizing resources for learning requires that those with authority over resources have a solid understanding of professional learning and how to support it. Allocating adequate resources, understanding how time and money are spent on professional learning, and making connections between investments and results are important responsibilities for school and district leaders.

What this means for micro-credentials

One draw of micro-credentials is the convenience of scheduling learning during open windows of time outside of the school day or week. However, this doesn't remove the need for dedicated professional learning time during educators' workdays. Districts should allocate resources to support a system of options that accommodate the professional and unique needs of individual educators.

As more educators select micro-credentials for their learning, schools and districts will need to maintain an awareness of the resources personalized professional learning requires and support it accordingly.

When it comes to the Resources standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- Is gaining this competency the best use of the time and support I have available to me?
- What resources and support would help me gain competency associated with my selected micro-credentials?
- What resources, including time, coaching, and peer collaboration, are available to me?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Resources standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate how decisions are made about prioritizing learning investments and what and how learning will be funded and supported. • Create structures to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities. • Invest in technology and other resources to support flexible and personalized learning for educators. • Create guidance or policies that articulate the role micro-credentials play in compensation, licensure, and career pathways or lattices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include micro-credentials as a method to support transparency around how decisions are made about prioritizing learning investments and what learning will be funded and supported. • Create choices for educators to ensure professional learning is aligned with needs of the students, professional interests, and school and/or district goals. • Develop capacity of district and school leaders and coaches to support personalized professional learning. • In order to support resource allocation and decision making, gather data associated with resource usage (time, money, coaches etc.) for earning micro-credentials. • Monitor resource use related to micro-credential learning to ensure equity and impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in staying abreast of new research around content and instructional topic areas of interest. • Provide multiple resource types for gaining competency to accommodate a variety of professional learning scenarios.

Learning Designs

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

About the standard

Adult learners have access to more learning options by the day, and micro-credentials are a huge part of that expansion of opportunities. The Learning Designs standard makes clear that when educators are determining precisely how and what to learn, they first need to articulate the desired outcomes of the learning, and then match that outcome to the learning agenda they build. Educators also develop and integrate their understanding of how learning happens, and the ways in which that learning is different for adults and for children. Any learning will be stronger when it promotes active engagement between learner and content and incorporates good learning design.

In considering learning options, educators also weigh their own preferences, opportunities for embedding learning in the workday versus finding time beyond the workday, personalization and technology possibilities, and the ways that individual and collaborative learning interweave. Adults also benefit when they can experience the kinds of learning they are expected to facilitate for students.

What this means for micro-credentials

Micro-credentials are ripe for personalization and choice, which is critical to this standard. Because micro-credentials are awarded for evidence of competence rather than the way the learning occurred, multiple options are available. Importantly, having multiple learning options makes it more likely that educators will find an option that is aligned to the learning outcomes they have identified. Educators will need to use a critical lens as they evaluate options, considering not only what their learning goals are but also how any opportunity will build in good learning design including active engagement and reflection.

When it comes to the Learning Designs standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- How does gaining this competency align with the learning outcomes I've identified?
- How will the learning option I have chosen engage me in experiencing the kinds of learning I need to be able to offer for my students?
- What is the design of the learning experience I am choosing to engage with?
- What constitutes active engagement in this learning experience?
- How might I combine this learning experience with others in ways that lead to desired outcomes and individual and collective learning?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Learning Designs standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create guidance, structures, or criteria that ensure any learning is consistent with research or evidence-based practices. • Consider role of learning design, active engagement, and adult learning needs when broadening opportunities for re-licensure with micro-credentials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create guidance, structures, or criteria that require learning to be consistent with research or evidence-based practices. • Develop capacity of district leaders to select and support selection of professional learning aligned to outcomes; develop staff capacity to make smart choices including combining multiple learning strategies. • Facilitate support to integrate individualized learning in ongoing team learning. • Provide coaching to support educator choice based on learning design and the development of effective team and individual learning agendas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider including reflection in the learning process as a way to extend the evidence of competence for any micro-credential. • In the key resources for any micro-credential, consider including suggested options for active engagement in learning, including opportunities for reflection, discussion, practice, and collaboration. • In the key research sections, include information regarding good learning design. • Consider developing micro-credentials about effective adult learning to support educator competence in this key area.

Data

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

About the standard

When educators align their learning with the Data standard, they use multiple sources of data to inform their planning, progress, and implementation. They dig deep into student data, from such sources as summative and formative assessments, end-of-unit assessments, student observations, and more, to pinpoint specific needs. They examine attendance, demographic, behavior, and other data for contextual information as they set learning goals. Educators also look at data about their own performance and consider their individual growth plans and other information about their needs and strengths to inform their professional learning priorities.

Educators at the classroom, school, and district level also have a responsibility to continually monitor progress using formative assessments and student work. Such progress data can help educators make adjustments in the classroom day to day as well as inform ongoing professional learning. Ultimately, educators at every level will also use data to evaluate the impact of professional learning on student learning to determine future choices and investments.

What this means for micro-credentials

While micro-credentials can help educators develop the capacity to achieve a whole universe of student outcomes, data analysis pinpoints the specific student needs that inform their own learning goals. Educators will need to synchronize the convenience of any-time, any-place learning with the focused learning needs they identify. The Data standard highlights the difference between what an educator may want to learn because of high levels of interest and perceived importance and what an educator needs to learn because of identified gaps in student learning and educator performance.

Aligning professional learning with the Data standard doesn't mean that teachers lose autonomy in choosing their learning pathways. Information about student learning needs gives teachers more power to grow in ways that matter to students.

When it comes to the Data standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- What process can I use to ensure my learning choices are informed by data? Where can I find that data and who can help me in this process?
- What are the data telling me are my students' most critical needs that I can address through my professional learning?
- How will I know this new competency makes a difference for me and my students? How can I assess my progress along the way?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Data standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data platforms or dashboards to facilitate access to multiple, state-wide sources of student and educator data for appropriate use. • Create guidance, structures, or criteria that facilitate the collection and use of impact data from professional learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple sources of data for educators to use in determining learning needs. • Facilitate data analysis throughout the year by collecting individual and team learning data and offering support through coaching or other means. • Evaluate investments in professional learning including investments in educator micro-credentials to understand impact of investments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in opportunities for data collection and analysis as appropriate, within any micro-credentials developed. • Consider role of frequent formative assessments and student work analysis as part of gaining credentials. • Create and make transparent a process for micro-credential development and continued improvements. • Partner with states and/or districts to create data collection mechanisms. • Work with researchers to develop a research agenda associated with micro-credentials to determine effectiveness.

Implementation

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

About the standard

The Implementation standard asks educators to carefully consider the importance of the change process in supporting learners to implement new practices and sustain beliefs and attitudes along with building their knowledge and skills. In districts and schools, achieving the Implementation standard requires intentional resources and structures that give adult learners opportunities to follow up their learning through practice, coaching, and constructive feedback. Supporting resources might include coaches, opportunities for practice and observation within the context of a learning team cycle, and focused feedback from principals or other supervisors related to the application of new learning.

Learning aligned with the Implementation standard isn't one-time or episodic but rather is sustained and intensive, allowing learners ongoing time and resources for exploring new content and considering how their new knowledge will be most meaningfully applied. For teachers, application will often take the form of new classroom lessons and assessments or the use of new instructional strategies in the classroom.

What this means for micro-credentials

Micro-credentials offer teachers great flexibility to individualize and learn at their own time and pace, supporting the opportunity to intentionally implement new learning in their classrooms. Micro-credentials are competency-based and provide opportunities for feedback. Because micro-credentials in most instances require evidence of application, they require practice of new learning.

When it comes to the Implementation standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- What evidence am I collecting as I implement my learning in the classroom?
- What resources can I access to help sustain my learning as I gain competency in this area?
- How will colleagues and coaches play a role in offering input and feedback as I practice new skills and strategies?
- How does this opportunity support substantive, continuous improvement over time?

Recommendations to ensure micro-credentials align with the Implementation standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish guidance to create parity among micro-credentials that will count toward re-licensure or credentialing for particular roles. • Create criteria and/or a review mechanism to qualify micro-credentials for application for credit or re-licensure. • Review certification and assessment practices to account for rigor and reliability. • Consider statewide structures to offer equitable access to job-embedded follow-up support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide implementation support in the form of coaches and time for team practice. • Provide opportunities for coaches and other district leaders to develop expertise in supporting and sustaining teachers' learning, no matter where, how, and when teachers are learning. • Address how personalized professional learning will be integrated and sustained in district, individual, and team learning plans and cycles. • Build in or offer guidance for practice before an educator submits evidence for a micro-credential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require student work samples as evidence where appropriate to demonstrate authentic application of learning. • Make recommendations to states and/or districts to create practice and follow-up mechanisms for particular areas of expertise. • Share lessons learned and publish exemplary evidence garnered as part of the assessment process.

Outcomes

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

About the standard

The Outcomes standard underscores the core purpose of professional learning — to advance educators’ knowledge and skills in ways that directly tie to what students need to know and be able to do. Schools will be more successful when there is precise alignment between what adults are learning and what students are learning.

Student and instructional frameworks are the most common means schools, districts, and states use to articulate their visions for student learning. They define what teachers will teach and assess and the content students will master. Educator performance standards, which include teaching frameworks, subject-area standards, or leadership standards, to name a few, define the competencies required of educators. Such standards cover not only content-area knowledge but also skill expertise in classroom management, cultural proficiency, parental engagement, technology integration, and responsibilities for colleagues and the profession. Educators may have role or subject specific standards that help to delineate learning goals, but overall, their learning needs will be directly tied to what their students need, as we discuss in more detail related to the Data standard.

What this means for micro-credentials

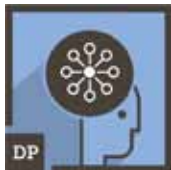
There will be a multitude of competencies for which educators can earn micro-credentials, but if the ones a teacher selects don’t advance his or her capacities related to the district’s identified student learning priorities, students aren’t likely to benefit. When it comes to the Outcomes standard, critical questions for teachers to consider include:

- How will demonstrating this competency help me be more effective in helping students achieve a particular content standard?
- How will earning this credential strengthen my expertise in a priority area identified in our district instructional framework?
- How will this content advance my knowledge and skills in a specific teaching domain?

Recommendations for ensuring micro-credentials align with the Outcomes standard

States	Districts and CMOs	Micro-credential Issuers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize micro-credentials for use in re-licensure that are grounded in the state’s framework for teaching and advancing college- and career-ready standards for students. • Support career pathways and lattices through micro-credentials to qualify mentors, instructional coaches, department leads, etc. • Explore creating micro-credentials that are not currently available to align with your state-identified teaching and learning priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a cross-mapped guidance document that spotlights priority areas within the district’s instructional framework and available micro-credentials. • Ensure that district-mandated individual professional learning plans offer guidance on integrating micro-credentials into a coherent learning agenda. • Support district-level learning leaders in developing their expertise in how micro-credentialing can contribute to a coherent professional learning system. • Explore creating micro-credentials that are not currently available to align with particular teaching and learning priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create alignment between micro-credentials and widely used student and educator standards. • Ask those seeking micro-credentials to articulate how the competencies they seek align with local instructional frameworks.

Maximizing the Promise of Micro-credentials



We all know June. Her story is not unusual. Schools are filled with teachers driven to be their best every day — teachers who find ways before, during, and after school to find a solution to a problem of practice or learn an effective strategy. Micro-credentials are a gift to educators, offering autonomy, choice, variety, and challenge, while building rich, powerful student learning experiences.

If June learns and earns her micro-credential in a district that has considered how such professional learning will integrate into district and schoolwide systems — and followed the recommendations detailed above — she is more likely to be able to sustain her skills and practices, and to fully support the success of her students. She is also more likely to be connected to her peers through a shared commitment to professional learning and shared responsibility for all student learning, both of which sustain her continuous improvement.

If June earns her micro-credential in a state that has established career pathways that qualify her accomplishment for additional roles and responsibilities, she is likely to be motivated to continue to pursue these opportunities. She is likely to be proud to be part of a profession that recognizes and rewards competency, and thus will embrace the opportunity to chart her personal learning journey and have a plan for achieving it. States will benefit as countless educators will develop the leadership and learning skills essential to achieving the goals they have set for their students.

All educators deserve an experience like June's. The Standards for Professional Learning and the possibilities micro-credentials offer, can, together, make outcomes-driven, effective professional learning a reality for educators across the nation.

Micro-credentials For Impact: Holding Professional Learning to High Standards

is a co-publication of Digital Promise and Learning Forward.



Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Information about membership, services, and products is available from:

Learning Forward
504 S. Locust St.
Oxford, OH 45056
Tel: 800-727-7288 Fax: 513-523-0638
www.learningforward.org



Digital Promise works at the intersection of education leaders, researchers, and entrepreneurs and developers to improve learning with the power of technology. Our work is guided by four principles: leveraging *networks* to connect people with ideas; creating and sharing *stories* to inspire investment and incite action; advancing cutting-edge *research* to inform decision making and design; and spurring *engagement* to connect people with learning experiences that will create meaning in powerful ways.

Digital Promise
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 830
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-450-3675
www.digitalpromise.org

