

CLI micro-credential pilot

To: Lilla Toal-Mandsager and Olivia Ortmann
Fr: Jennifer Barnett
Dt: June 26, 2019
Re: Pilot results (Phase 2)

Phase two of the South Carolina micro-credential pilot began in October 2018. This memo provides an overview of the results of that work.

Pilot goals and focus

The micro-credential pilot was a component of the larger Collective Leadership Initiative. The goals for the micro-credential portion of the project included the following:

- To improve teaching and learning with particular focus on literacy; and
- To learn more about what it takes to create a system of personalized professional learning that includes micro-credentials, placing emphasis on participation, practice, and policy.

Micro-credentials recognize a discrete skill of educators, related to their practice, based on evidence that demonstrates competency of that specific skill. This pilot offered three stacks of micro-credentials: eight in the Collective Leadership stack, three in the Basic Performance Assessment stack, and three in the Advanced Performance Assessment stack. (See Appendix for the complete list of micro-credentials with links to the submission guidelines.)

Although teachers were recruited for the pilot in the fall, fewer than ten attended the information and orientation sessions offered. One of our primary concerns was lack of context and information. While some teachers indicated incentives were not present to pursue submission of a micro-credential, most shared they lacked basic information about what micro-credentials are and how they work.

A new approach by the Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development (OEELD)

By October, the OEELD staff shifted strategies. Since early data had indicated educators were uncertain about micro-credentials and the purpose of the pilot, OEELD staff created a new approach. To speak with credibility and fully understand the micro-credential process, they committed themselves to experiencing the submission process first-hand. Each staff member selected at least one micro-credential, studied the submission guidelines and criteria, gathered the evidence to demonstrate competence, and submitted a portfolio.

Most OEELD staff members chose a micro-credential in the Collective Leadership stack, including Understanding Your Leadership Strengths, Assessing How Time is Currently Used, and Managing Change. Others chose micro-credentials in the Effective Coaching stack. Regardless, most OEELD staff worked collaboratively through the process, supporting one another with video preparation, edits and revisions of written responses, and reflections on the process upon completion.

The OEELD staff not only gained an intimate understanding of the process; they modeled effective leadership. By adjusting their strategy and completing micro-credentials themselves, they were able to advocate for a program with the authenticity and credibility teachers appreciate.

OEELD's Principal Induction Program (PIP)

As the OEELD staff worked on their selected micro-credentials, the PIP program coordinator incorporated the opportunity to complete a micro-credential into the PIP curriculum. By working specifically with administrators, a more informative foundation was established for administrators to share micro-credential opportunities with teachers.

Since the majority of the participants in the pilot were administrators, the Collective Leadership stack resonated with their interests. None selected micro-credentials from the Basic or Advanced Performance Assessment stacks.

Pilot support

CTQ supported South Carolina's micro-credential pilot using the following strategies:

1. **Two Information sessions** were offered for participants to learn what they needed to know about the pilot in order to commit to the process;
2. **The micro-credential pilot orientation** was offered for pilot participants. The purpose of the orientation was to outline the expectations and the specific process for submitting a portfolio and provide participants with information on how they would be supported throughout the process;
3. **"Office hour" sessions** were offered to pilot participants during the pilot on a "come and go" basis. These sessions provided participants with the opportunity to receive individual support as they worked on portfolio submissions;
4. **Tips and strategies** for completing a micro-credential portfolio were shared in a newsletter format during the pilot period. The tips and strategies served as a useful guide for the work and offered reminders of deadlines, upcoming support sessions, and how to find more personalized support.

Submission results

The following section outlines the submission results of phase two of the micro-credential pilot. These results are based on data from October 2018 through May 2019. In June, a feature was added to Digital Promise's technical platform to alert issuers to resubmissions. Due to lack of specific data on resubmissions during this pilot, we cannot determine how many of the awarded micro-credentials were, in fact, resubmissions. Thus, the numbers represented here indicate the number of submissions, not the number of individuals denied or awarded.



Awarded	Denied	Total submissions	86% success rate
151	23	174	

Micro-credential	Awarded	Denied
Assessing How Time is Currently Used	126	9
Creating a Plan for Redesign Learning	1	0
Cultivating a Shared Purpose	4	3
Engaging Stakeholders	4	1
Ensuring Alignment to the Shared Purpose	1	3
Managing Change	7	3
Understanding Your Leadership Strengths	8	4
TOTALS	151	23

Principal Induction Program cohorts

The majority of the submissions came from the cohorts of first-year principals in South Carolina's Principal Induction Program. We gathered insights on their experience through the micro-credential submissions and a survey they completed in late spring. We sorted the 118 responses into two categories: Encouraged and Skeptical. Sample responses are provided below.

Encouraged (100 responses)	Skeptical (18 responses)
Micro-Credentials allow for a personalized professional development opportunity to learn a new skill or strategy to impact the lives of those you serve every day.	There are other ways (besides micro-credentials) to enhance/provide personalized professional learning.
It is flexible in a busy day-to-day schedule, yet meaningful because you have the time to read, study, and reflect on your learning where it works best in your schedule.	Liked individual nature but did not receive as much feedback as I would have liked in order to improve practice.
Worth its weight in Gold.	The process could be more user friendly.
The feedback from the micro-credential is intentional and personalized.	It is a good option to have however, when it's mandated, it is not in the spirit of personalized learning.
I believe the micro-credential is an excellent way to provide personalized professional development because it allows the educator to choose what PD best meets their needs.	There need to be more micro-credentials that are exclusively designed for admin. Right now they have to be adjusted to fit an admin's context. True admin PD/modules would be ideal.
I think any learning that can be personalized so it will have a direct impact on an individual and not just a group is very powerful and will have a lasting impact. I feel that the micro-credential process did exactly that for our professional development.	It was ok. Honestly, it felt like another thing to do in an already busy school year. It became less relevant and meaningful to me because I simply did it in the end to get it done as a requirement. I know that I had a substantial amount of time to do it. However, I did



	not take advantage of this and rushed to get it done in the end.
It will definitely help you as leader, focus and act on specific leadership characteristics.	It seemed like a hoop to jump through.
It is a great PD tool for teachers to choose a growth area that best suits their personal needs.	Topics were vast and not always relevant. PL was isolating and could easily be forgotten.
Micro-credentials provide opportunities to learn and grow in a personalized professional learning platform that is flexible and easily accessible.	Selecting topics to best fit my needs and not given an assignment that would not be considered a waste of time.

Feedback on the most popular micro-credential

The “Assessing How Time is Currently Used” micro-credential from the Collective Leadership stack was the most popular choice with the PIP cohort. Some of the principals shared valuable feedback on the micro-credential process in the reflection section of their submissions. Below are the reflections of three principals who found the micro-credential experience particularly worthwhile.

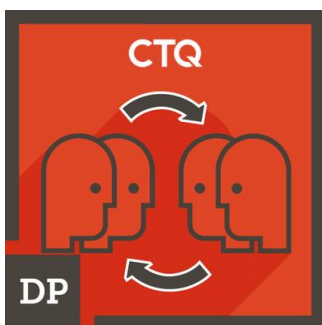


I did get a sense of how to begin managing my time once I met with my mentor. It was all about putting what needed to be done on the calendar. I appreciated having a sounding board to learn from. My mentor is a retired principal who was at three different schools so his advice helped me reflect as we look at numerous days as well as plan for the next days.

—Janice Hyatt, Principal, Richmond Drive Elementary, Rock Hill

Leading the effort of using data to make instructional decisions is critically important. So, the observations and planning, and assessment work in tandem. As I observe the classroom looking for effective instructional strategies, we can then ensure that the assessments are aligned to improve student growth.

—Patrice Green, Principal, Hand Middle School, Richland One



While this has been a valuable reflection for myself, I truly feel that the ultimate value will come when we as a staff take this challenge. I have seen where my choices have taken valuable time away from our priorities, and I am committed to allocating that time. Imagine if the entire staff reflected and committed to this change. It is now my priority to make effective choices with my time and work to create opportunities for my teachers to make similar choices through a reflection on their own time tracker.

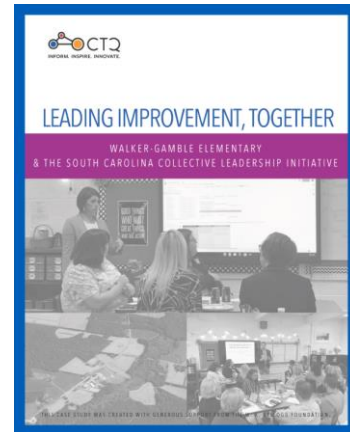
—Matt Sherman, Principal, Blythewood High School, Richland Two



Walker Gamble Elementary

Twenty-two teachers and administrators at Walker Gamble Elementary completed micro-credentials that built their competencies for better using instructional time and resources. Superintendent Connie Dennis joined one team, extending shared learning and practice from the school building to the district office.

In [this case study](#), read how engaging in the South Carolina Collective Leadership Initiative helped this school leverage the collective talents and expertise of all educators in the school to make a difference for students.



A panel of Walker Gamble leaders shared their experiences with collective leadership and micro-credentials in October 2018. Here are a few takeaways from that panel discussion:

I completed the Time micro-credential. I was not using my time wisely. I am now doing more of the right things for those who matter most, and that's those 11- and 12-year-olds I teach.

—Kim Drigger, 5th grade teacher

I also completed the time micro-credential. I knew there were just so many hours in the day but I was not able to do what I need to do. It [the micro-credential] was something I could do while I was teaching. It did not take time away from what I was required to do.

—Deanne Burrows, 4th grade teacher

I feel like I need to be in the schools and be with teachers and principals. It made me look at how much time I was spending on busy work, documentation for SCDE and others.

—Dr. Connie Dennis, Superintendent

Lessons

We've learned several important lessons from the micro-credential pilot. When explaining the value proposition for micro-credentials we frequently share a slide describing the difference between them and traditional professional learning opportunities. Our first takeaway from this pilot is we are more convinced than ever that the value of micro-credentials resonates with educators. They want professional growth which is competency-based, personalized, and self-directed. They are enthusiastic about on demand opportunities which are job-embedded and practical. And they embrace the notion that the recognition of their skill becomes a shareable, portable currency.

We've taken away other important lessons, as well.

A closer look

What is the difference between micro-credentials and other professional learning opportunities?

Micro-credentials are	Micro-credentials are NOT
• Competency based	• Seat time-based
• Personalized, self-directed	• One-size-fits-all professional learning
• On demand, responsive to teachers' schedules	• Limited by their availability
• Shareable portable currency	• Minimal in their public value
• Job embedded, practical	• Limited in contextualized learning



Collective opportunity

While the growth individual educators experience with micro-credentials can be tremendous, the most promising opportunity for schools is when teachers and administrators work together. We've seen seismic shifts occur when collective teams pursue, reflect, and submit together.

Lead by example

Principals and other administrative leaders are instrumental in helping teachers realize the potential micro-credentials can have for professional growth. When principals model professional learning with micro-credentials, teachers are quick to embrace the process.

Support and expectations

We can attribute much of the success of the PIP cohort to the built-in expectations and support for micro-credential submission. The success rate of 86% aligns with previous data from our Tennessee pilot. When educators were supported in Tennessee, the success rate was approximately 30% higher than for educators who received no support (54% to 82%).

Next steps

To fully understand what it takes to create a system of personalized professional learning that includes micro-credentials, placing emphasis on participation, practice, and policy, we recommend the following moving forward:

1. **Gather data** from principals from the PIP cohort who launch micro-credential initiatives with their staff;
2. **Expand the micro-credential opportunity** for the next PIP cohort by including a broader selection of micro-credentials;
3. **Invite participation** of other key state departments into the micro-credential process as a means of influencing the policy shifts necessary to continue momentum; and
4. **Convene an advisory panel** of teachers and administrators to inform decision-making and maintain close connection to the field.



Appendix

Digital Promise Micro-credentials

Note: Viewer will need to create an account to browse the micro-credential catalog.

Collective leadership micro-credentials

Micro-credential	Description	Key Method
Understanding Your Leadership Strengths	Educator assesses and reflects on the leadership strengths he or she brings to a teacher-powered team or project.	Educators deepen their understanding about their leadership strengths and apply that knowledge to leverage strengths in teacher-powered projects.
Building Your Team	The educator builds an effective team based on the strengths of participants.	The educator builds an effective teacher-powered leadership team based on individuals' strengths in order to implement a project plan.
Cultivating a Shared Purpose	The educator will cultivate a shared purpose with a team for a teacher-powered project.	The educator will identify a team of educators to engage in the design of a teacher-powered project based on an identified need. The team will also cultivate a shared purpose (mission, vision, values, and goals) for its project.
Ensuring Alignment to a Shared Purpose	Educators will work with a team to create a process to ensure that the shared purpose (mission, vision, values, and goals) of the team's teacher-powered project is clearly communicated and collectively upheld.	Educators will work with a team to identify behaviors that align with the team's shared purpose and create protocols to ensure alignment with the shared purpose.
Assessing How Time is Currently Used	Educator assesses and analyzes how student and/or teacher learning time is currently used in his/her classroom or school.	Educator uses a tracking tool to examine how time is used in his/her classroom and/or school schedules in order to identify areas that might be redesigned to allow for more effective learning opportunities for students and/or teachers.
Creating a Plan for Redesigned Learning	Educator develops a plan for redesigning learning time to better meet the personalized learning needs of students and/or teachers.	Educator reviews a variety of approaches to redesigning learning time, and then applies the lessons learned to create a plan for redesigned learning time for his/her own classroom or school.
Engaging Stakeholders	Educator engages with different stakeholders in order to advance his/her leadership plan.	Educator considers the perspectives of different stakeholders, and then engages with them in order to gain support and advance his or her leadership plan.



Managing Change	Educator creates a change plan that will guide the implementation of a new approach.	Educator develops a plan that may support other staff members, students, parents, and community members to ensure an effective transition to a new approach to something in his or her school.
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Basic and Advanced Performance Assessment

Micro-credential	Description	Key Method
Basic Performance Assessment		
Performance Assessment Design	Educator creates original, fair, and authentic performance assessments (PAs).	The educator creates original, fair, and authentic performance assessments, which allow for student voice and choice and provide multiple ways for diverse learners to demonstrate their mastery of academic discipline-specific content at high levels of cognitive rigor.
Competency-based Rubric Design	Educator designs rubrics with clear criteria aligned to appropriate standards.	The educator designs rubrics with clear criteria aligned to appropriate standards, competencies, or learning targets to communicate expectations for student performance at each level. The educator uses rubrics in ways that provide consistent, timely, and appropriate feedback to encourage students to set learning goals and reflect on personal growth.
Performance Assessment Validation	Educator analyzes a performance assessment and rubric for qualities of validity.	The educator analyzes a performance assessment and rubric for qualities of validity (alignment, fairness, clarity, engagement, and scoring criteria). This micro-credential focuses on giving and receiving feedback based on task quality criteria and receiving feedback and making revisions.
Advanced Performance Assessment		
Embedding Habits, Skills, and Disposition in PAs	Educator develops performance assessments that embed and assess one or more Habits, Skills, and/or Dispositions.	The educator incorporates habits, skills, and dispositions into performance assessments by either adapting an existing assessment or designing a new assessment from scratch.
Performance Assessment Reliability	Educator ensures technical quality through reliability by analyzing student work and scoring calibration.	The educator scores student work reliably by using protocols to engage in collaborative, structured discussions. These discussions will focus on accurately and consistently documenting evidence within the student work of achievement of the learning target(s).



Using PAs Formatively to Provide Feedback	Educator uses performance assessment formatively to provide feedback and improve student learning.	The educator uses performance assessment to provide formative feedback to students to improve student learning of standards and competencies.
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