

CIDDL Research and Practice Brief 1: Micro-Credentials: Personalized Professional Development



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Dear stakeholder,

Thank you for engaging with the Center for Innovation, Design, and Digital Learning ([CIDDL](#)). The work that you are about to access is supported with funding from the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education.

The CIDDL Center is striving to impact the use of educational technologies into preparation programs, including special education, early intervention, and related services personnel preparation and leadership personnel preparation programs that prepare professionals serving students with disabilities.

CIDDL Research and Practice Briefs

[CIDDL Research and Practice Briefs](#) is a series of reports on research and practices regarding the innovative use of technology in special education, early childhood, related services personnel preparation and leadership personnel preparation programs as well as K-12 educational settings. For each brief, an expert or practitioner in the field is invited to discuss their research and practices. In addition, experts and practitioners will share their insights into opportunities and challenges about applying their research and practices to professional preparation programs.

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Guest Expert: Richard Allen Carter, Jr

The guest expert of this CIDDL Research and Practice Brief is Dr. Richard Allen Carter, Jr., an assistant professor at the University of Wyoming (UW). Dr. Carter researches the education of students with disabilities in modern learning environments and the design of personalized professional learning.

Topic: Micro-Credentials: Personalized Professional Development

What will you learn from this Brief?

In this brief, Dr. Carter discusses his research and practices about micro-credentials as well as how he has utilized the innovation in special education teacher preparation programs at UW.

Context

In recent years, micro-credentials have emerged as an innovative approach to providing personalized professional development for educators. Micro-credentials are often defined as [small certifications](#) that are competence-based, on-demand, sharable, and tailored to educators' professional learning needs, preferences, and goals. In his [recently published article](#), Dr. Carter and

colleagues provided step-by-step guidance for interested educators to select, engage in, and earn a micro-credential. In another policy analysis article, Dr. Carter and colleagues found that nine states in the United States have provided guidance on integrating micro-credentials into their teacher professional development. In addition, Dr. Carter provides insights into opportunities and challenges that micro-credentials might have for improving professional preparation.

Key Insights

Micro-credentials allow for innovative, technology-enabled, flexible, and personalized learning opportunities for educators. As an emergent field, micro-credentialing is faced with challenges that require more research attention and policy guidance to ensure better development and implementation of this type of personalized professional development.

Dr. Carter: “In some ways, the beauty of it is personalization. You get to kind of go your own route, with some structure. But then, that’s also the challenge in that: One, how are we sure that the micro-credentials that are offered are giving that quality experience? Two, who’s going to do the assessing?”

Educators will be awarded a digital badge after completing a micro-credential, which can stack up to a larger accomplishment. This is often viewed as a means of gamifying professional development and has potential to better support educators in demonstrating mastery of discrete sets of skills and knowledge.

Dr. Carter: “They are all connected. ... your micro-credential is connected to your badge. Your badge is connected to your repository of badges. It’s just those steps to move through and to be aware of how they kind of stack on each other.”

While micro-credentials provide personalization in professional learning, a certain level of guidance and structure needs to be put in place. Stakeholders need to establish a purpose at the most basic foundational level and align the purpose with specific state standards. Stakeholders can start small to ensure quality within the micro-credential and seek granularity as opposed to creating a full module.

Dr. Carter: “In the state of Wyoming, what we’ve done is negotiated with our PTSB (i.e., Professional Teaching Standards Board) that one micro-credential equals .5 credits. ... you need one credit a year to maintain your licensure. So, the way it works is that you would do your PD and then, if you wanted to do micro-credentials, you did two, and you’re well on your way.”

Resources

Dr. Carter suggests some of the following platforms for educators to use and analyze different architecture in place:

[Learning Designed](#)

[Digital Promise](#)

[NEA](#)

Link to Video

This Research and Practice Brief can be viewed on video online at

<https://youtu.be/wfV2JCTsUaY>

Suggested Readings

Crow, T., & Pipkin, H. (2017). [Micro-Credentials for Impact: Holding Professional Learning to High Standards.](#) Learning Forward, Digital Promise, Oxford, OH, Washington, DC.

Hunt, T. L., Carter, R. A., Jr., Yang, S. & Zhang, L., & Williams, M. K. (2020). [Navigating the Use of Micro-Credentials.](#) Journal of Special Education Technology.

Zhang, L., Yang, S., & Carter, R. A., Jr. (2020). [Personalized learning and ESSA: What we know and where we go?](#) Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 52 (3), 253-274.

Transcription of Interview

Transcription of the interview can be found at https://ciddl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Brief1_Interview_Transcript.pdf

For More Information

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