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Establishing A Program For Teacher Micro-Credentials To Support Individual Professional Learning

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Establishing A Program For Teacher Micro-Credentials To Support Individual Professional Learning

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ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM FOR TEACHER MICROCREDENTIALS
TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Andrew P. Kohl

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

National Louis University

March 17, 2019

A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

ONE-TO-ONE LEARNING: SUCCESS FACTORS FOR MEANINGFUL
TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

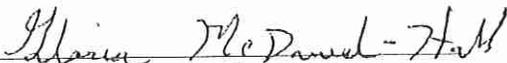
CREATING A SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION
THROUGH JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

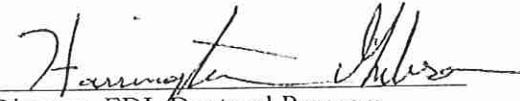
ESTABLISHING A PROGRAM FOR TEACHER MICROCREDENTIALS TO SUPPORT
INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Andrew P. Kohl

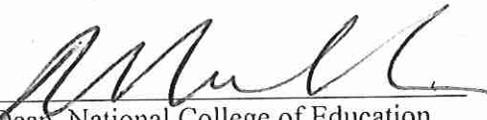
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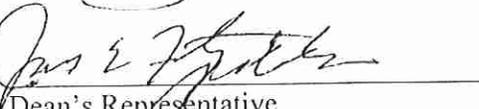
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This document was created as *one* part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the **Program Evaluation** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the **Change Leadership Plan** candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the **Policy Advocacy Document** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

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ABSTRACT

This policy advocacy document discusses a change in local board of education policy in a school district to require the annual approval of a professional learning program which includes options for a micro-credentialing, a self-directed, job-embedded professional learning practice which allows teachers more freedom to choose a focus and pacing for their learning experiences. Currently, board policy directs the creation of a staff development committee to plan professional learning activities but does not require an approved formal plan or the establishment of a credentialing system to evidence teacher learning. A local policy that requires the annual approval of a professional learning plan would provide a direction for professional growth in the district, as well as an alignment with the board and school goals. Additionally, a credentialing system would provide teachers with opportunities for guided self-study and opportunities to work with coaches and colleagues in a structured manner. The district could also use a micro-credentialing program to establish base competencies that new teachers could build upon as they enter the district. Veteran teachers could pursue more advanced credentials, continuing to build on their practice as their careers progress. This document analyzes the context of this change and the conditions under which it could be implemented and thrive.

PREFACE

In my work as a technology specialist, I have met with many teachers and coached them in technology integration and planning. From this work, I have gained an appreciation for the complexities of professional learning in schools. Time is at a premium for teachers, who are asked to do so many things. A system for professional development that provides clarity for teachers, as well as opportunities to work independently and explore their passions would be a welcome change for many districts. I hope that this policy advocacy paper introduces a plan for my district to evolve its professional development practices and empower teachers in their professional learning practices.

The lessons that I learned in year three of my coursework focused around a change in school policy and the complexities that must be considered with advocating for such a change. Even at a local level, financial, legal, cultural and organizational impacts need to be considered, in order to establish a lasting, sustainable change. It is critical that there be a gradual approach to the change, introducing it slowly and in a way that is clear and supported. Also, there needs to be a system by which the change can be evaluated and adjusted as we learn more.

Most important, as the policy change is understood, refined and carefully planned, it must then be communicated to all stakeholders as clearly as possible. As I mentioned before, teachers have such challenging jobs and so many demands on their time; it is critical that leadership inform them about changes in a way that takes these pressures into account, and explains the advantages of the change to them, as well as the details of the plan in place to support them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my wife and children for all of the sacrifices that they made in helping me complete my doctoral degree. For the many early mornings, late nights and days that I was off writing or attending classes, they have been patient, supportive and inspiring to me. I could not have completed this work without them. All my love and appreciation to Karen, Caleb and Maddy.

Thank you to Dr. Brian Wegley and all of the members of my school district's administrative team. Thank you also to my Board of Education and every teacher who took the time to honestly inform my work. You inspire and challenge me every day, and help me to be a better colleague and educator.

Thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Gloria McDaniel-Hall for the time she has taken to guide me in my work. You have been patient with me as I've worked, and encouraging throughout. Thank you also to Dr. Jason Stegemoller, for your insight, feedback and encouragement. You have both helped me to be a better writer and researcher, and this work has been possible because of your example.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my NLU cohort classmates, especially Dr. Scott Carlson and Lauren Schulman, who never gave up on me and continue to inspire me to learn and grow. You are both amazing. Thank you.

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SECTION ONE: VISION STATEMENT

Awareness of Need for the Policy

This policy advocacy project is part three of a three-part dissertation. I have chosen to continue an exploration of professional learning practices, as a way of increasing technology integration in the classroom and advocate for a change in local school policy which encourages more opportunities for teachers to engage in self-directed learning within the structure of a staff development program. More specifically, I am suggesting that existing professional development policies be evolved to require the annual approval of a professional learning program which includes options for micro-credentials, a self-directed, job-embedded professional learning practice which is tied to research and classroom practice, but allows teachers more freedom to choose a focus and pacing for their learning experiences.

During part one of my dissertation (Kohl, 2018), I conducted a program evaluation for our district's one-to-one technology program and surveyed teachers attitudes towards classroom technology, as well as the support and professional development of the program. Both survey and focus group data with teachers revealed a desire for more opportunities for collaborative learning. Teachers felt that there were administrative support and adequate resources for staff development, particularly around technology integration. However, they also felt that many professional development decisions were handed down from the central office and they did not have options to choose areas of learning that were meaningful to them. Also, some Grove teachers were growing in their comfort level towards collaborative learning with their colleagues, but

they felt that time constraints and the current professional learning structure impacted their ability to learn in this manner.

In my second paper (Kohl, 2019a), I initiated a change plan to introduce a formal instructional coaching program into Grove School District. Currently, Grove approaches job-embedded professional development through instructional specialists, who serve teachers in a variety of ways, either providing resources or planning with staff. Research for this paper revealed differences between how staff viewed specialists and what they knew about a traditional instructional coaching cycle. Even among building principals, there were significant differences in how leaders viewed instructional coaching, as well as the role that they would play in a program like it. The change plan sought to restructure roles, hire additional staff, and work with a representative group to clearly define a coaching plan, its parameters, and expectations. Most important, the new program would be communicated to staff and would put a process in place to orient all teachers to the benefits of a coaching cycle.

I became aware of this policy issue through the work in my first two papers. As instructional coaching emerged as a possible solution for embedding technology professional growth into classroom practice, survey data suggested that Grove needed a structure that would help guide the cycle between coaches and teachers, and also present a choice to teachers regarding what the focus of their professional learning would be. Also, Grove's administration was uncomfortable with relinquishing too much control over the professional development direction. Grove's administration felt it essential to maintain a voice in determining goals and priorities.

While I was attending the SxSWedu conference in 2017, I participated in a session led by Digital Promise, on the topic of micro-credentials. This approach to professional development, which allowed a district to create paths of individual study for teachers, seemed like an excellent solution for the challenges of the first two parts of my dissertation. In a micro-credentialing program, a school district establishes "courses" focused on individual topics or skills, rooted in classroom practice and backed by data. Teachers who pursue micro-credentials would select an area of study, work independently or with a coach or colleagues to learn more about the skill and apply it to their classroom practice. The teacher would then collect artifacts and evidence that verifies their mastery of the skill. If approved, the teacher would receive a micro-credential, or digital "badge", which they can include in their resume, portfolio and use for recertification. The Illinois State Board of Education (2017) is one of several states that accept micro-credentials towards staff development credits. Other school districts attach stipends to micro-credentials or allow the credential to move teachers up the salary scale. Ultimately, micro-credentials enable district leadership to balance rigor and relevance with self-directed, job-embedded professional growth.

Ellie Drago-Severson (2008) defines growth as "increases in our cognitive, affective, interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities that enable us to manage better the complex demands of teaching, learning, leadership, and life" (p. 60). As school districts face the distinct challenges of an increasingly diverse student body, complex curriculum, and new technologies and practices, leadership must steward professional growth and develop teachers who are nimble-minded and committed to lifelong learning. As the Grove School District implemented a one-to-one technology program and adopted new,

common core aligned curriculum for English and Mathematics, challenges in meeting staff development needs have become clear. And there is an opportunity for a more progressive professional development policy to serve teacher learning.

Grove launched their one-to-one technology program in 2010, beginning with a pilot of fifth-grade teachers and eventually growing to include all students in grades 3-8. The program included professional development around the use of the iPad device, as well as a discussion of curriculum planning utilizing the SAMR and TPACK frameworks for technology integration. Over time, as the district adopted the Common Core curriculum and prioritized specific training about English and Mathematics instruction, professional development time for the one-to-one program decreased. During my recent evaluation of Grove's one-to-one program (Kohl, 2018), over 60% of surveyed teachers felt that the professional development offered did not reflect their needs in integrating technology in their instruction. Similarly, teachers felt that the rigidity of the professional growth related to the English and Mathematics curriculum did not allow for them to explore innovative practices or technology integration.

Shortly after the one-to-one program launched, in response to the adoption of the Common Core curriculum, Grove implemented additional English Language Arts practices, including readers and writers' workshop. Priorities for the district shifted, causing a reallocation of staff development time and resources towards addressing staff capacity in these new goal areas. However, over time, teacher understanding of and proficiency with the workshop model grew at different paces. In addition, new teachers were hired with differing levels of familiarity with the model. This situation illustrates the need for more differentiation of our staff development, to prevent teachers from

having to sit through the same training multiple times. Also, the district needs a way to encourage teacher initiative in their learning, whether that is a more in-depth knowledge of pedagogical practice or a deeper exploration of innovative ideas like technology integration.

Grove's Board Policy on professional development states that

The School Board recognizes the fact that its professional staff should continue to improve their competencies throughout their years of service. To that end, the Board directs the Superintendent to organize a Staff Development Committee whose purpose shall be to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive in-service program which includes professional development activities related to Board and District goals.

The District Staff Development Plan follows the approach suggested in the board policy, with a focus on alignment of goals and a plan for evaluation of professional growth experiences. As survey feedback from teachers suggests, there is a need for more significant differentiation among teachers, allowing for a common understanding of key practices, as well as an opportunity for deeper knowledge in areas of interest and passion. To address these challenges, the existing board policy for staff development needs to include a structure for micro-credentialing, which will allow Grove to establish base competencies and practices for district goals, while also creating paths by which teachers can dig deeper into areas, pursue innovative practices and work with coaches and colleagues to create meaningful professional learning experiences for themselves.

Critical Issues

The critical issues that make this policy proposal a solution to an issue in the district include a need for differentiation among teachers on our core instructional initiatives, a desire to foster collaboration and innovation among staff, and the desire for a mechanism by which teacher choice in professional learning can still be quantified and guided by leadership.

As Tracy Crow (2017) wrote in her recent whitepaper for Learning Forward, *Micro-Credentials for Impact*, “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” (p. 5). Grove has a staff of highly qualified teachers who have expressed an interest in more relevant professional learning opportunities and more choice in the areas they pursue. While Grove wishes to maintain a high standard for professional learning and align staff development with the district and school goals, a system of micro-credentials would establish a base of knowledge for staff, aligned to goals, while also introducing paths of study that teachers could choose or propose for themselves. This change would ensure a level of quality and also establish an approach to professional growth that honors the personalized learning approach that is key for 21st century learning.

Policy Recommendation and Envisioned Effect

I am recommending an update of the existing Board Policy on Staff Development to include language that supports the establishment of a micro-credentialing system for professional development, with an established structure for micro-credential tracks, a

clearly-defined connection between this professional development option and Grove's PERA program, and funding to support a micro-credentialing program.

The effect of this program could be profound for Grove. First and foremost, the district will create micro-credential "tracks" for common practices like writing workshop, technology integration or differentiation, with "base units" which would cover foundational principles and practices of these methods. Beyond the basics, teachers could earn additional micro-credentials by exploring more in-depth aspects of these practices. Teachers could earn these higher-level credentials by working with a small group, coach or virtual group. Teachers would then submit video or portfolio artifacts as evidence of participation. This structure would allow the district to orient new staff to foundational practices, allow for opportunities for teachers to revisit concepts they are not secure with and dig deeper into some advanced concepts. For topics like technology integration, micro-credentialing would create time to explore topics that are often competing for time and attention during regular PD days. This structure would also create a system that would acknowledge work that teachers may be currently doing in this area, using informal learning networks and self-study.

Also, a micro-credentialing system would allow Grove to explore new approaches to staff development, but also conform to certain expectations and rigor. Teachers would need to curate their learning as part of this process and produce artifacts that earn the credential. In turn, the credential would then be a tangible acknowledgment of the teacher's mastery in this area, and something that could become part of their portfolio and also a part of the PERA process.

The overall effect of this policy is that it would become a catalyst for change in professional development practices, moving the district beyond a top-down approach to a more relevant, personalized approach to teacher learning. Also, the policy would create a commitment from the board of education to progressive, 21st century teacher learning. Finally, the policy would support the use of time and money towards the kind of professional learning that both allows for teacher choice and ensures strong common practice from all staff.

SECTION TWO: ANALYSIS OF NEED

In the previous section, I explained how a vision for a micro-credentialing program policy would support rigorous professional development in Grove, while also encouraging innovation and collaboration in teacher learning. In this section, I will apply an educational, economic, political, social, ethical and legal analysis to the proposal. Adding a micro-credentialing program, as defined by Digital Promise, to the existing Grove board policy will form my analysis. The following is my review of this potential policy.

Educational Analysis

Education is a constantly changing field, and new curricula and new initiatives often necessitate study and work towards mastery. As Guskey (2002) wrote, “like practitioners in other fields, educators must keep abreast of emerging knowledge and must be prepared to use it to continually refine their conceptual and craft skills” (p. 381). Drago-Severson (2008) goes further to suggest that adult learners have terrific potential for deep learning if they build their professional development experiences upon her *pillar practices* of teaming, collegial inquiry, mentoring and providing leadership roles for teachers. In short, the more a teacher has a voice and a choice in their professional learning, the higher the impact is for the learning experience.

A system of micro-credentialing can help to ensure that teachers have a variety of opportunities, to acquire and refine core teaching skills within the curriculum. As I discussed in Part One of this paper, the structure of "courses" in micro-credentials can allow a district to scaffold skills and knowledge about key instructional practices, allowing teachers to build their knowledge as they enter the district and eventually

deepen their knowledge further through independent study. Micro-credentialing can also provide a chance for teachers to document their formal and informal learning and submit evidence of their competencies, earning “badges” that can identify their skills to colleagues and on their resume. It is a system that encourages teaming and collaboration between learners, as ownership of the learning experience (Center for Teacher Quality, 2016). This type of effective professional development results in better teaching and better student learning. Unfortunately, too many schools structure professional development around control and micro-managing the content teachers receive. For teachers who have moved beyond the base level of content knowledge and are seeking deeper exploration of a topic, this can be dispiriting and frustrating. As the educational blogger and teacher John Spencer (2016) has said, “if we want to see schools embrace student choice, we need to design professional development that embraces teacher choice. If we want to empower students to own their learning, we need to empower teachers to own their learning” .

The Grove Staff Development Plan, in accordance with board policy, describes the goals for staff development as centered around constructivism and job-embedded learning. In both of these concepts, teachers should be encouraged to construct new knowledge in the context of their practice. While the district may structure professional growth against the school or district goals, teachers can find their way through the content in a way that is meaningful to them. Micro-credentialing, coupled with a robust instructional coaching program and clearly structured strategic goals, can allow teachers to learn in a way that is “grounded in the realities of practice and as close to the

classroom as possible” (Killion & Harrison, 2006, p. 17). Or, as John Spencer (2016) put it, allowing teachers to “own” their learning.

There is much research to link *quality* professional learning with student growth and achievement. Thomas Guskey (2002) discusses multiple measures of evidence that leaders should consider when evaluating professional development. Included in these measures are teachers use of new knowledge and skills, as well as student learning outcomes. Grove School District commits to collecting student formative and summative assessment data, which can be useful in evaluating the success of the micro-credentialing program. More important, the observational data that principals collect during the teacher evaluation process can help to evidence teacher application of the skills and knowledge acquired during micro-credential studies.

Economic Analysis

The same theories that drive funding for all professional growth support the economic need for introducing a policy for micro-credentialing. As Odden and Picus (1992) explain in their book *School Finance: A Policy Perspective*, school funds have been used to address many new issues that schools now face. Safety issues and special education complexities are good examples of issues that may impact school finance. However, the core mission for school finance is to allocate resources that impact student achievement. In each school district, effective professional growth programming requires that resources be “prioritized, monitored and coordinated for educator learning” (Killion & Crow, 2011). Too often, districts allocate significant staff development funds to traditional, unfocused or ineffective programs that do not impact student learning. This practice not only diminishes available funds for more effective practices, but it also

diminishes how teachers regard staff development in general (Odden, Archibald, Fermanich, & Gallagher, 2002). In short, districts should spend their money wisely on professional growth experiences that engage teachers, align with goals, and lead to student growth outcomes.

With such funding comes a need to also account for the professional growth experiences offered. While some schools fall back on traditional "sit and get" methods for professional growth, since it can be documented and accounted for, this method does not easily allow for differentiation of teacher knowledge and skills. In fact, in a recent study, a sizable majority of teachers report that their professional learning experiences are "dictated by others" and only 30% of surveyed teachers reported that they could choose a majority of their professional growth options (Center for Teaching Quality, 2016). A system of micro-credentialing would not only introduce a new level of choice to district professional growth but also install a system of accountability for professional growth choices. Evidencing and earning micro-credentials will automatically create an audit of professional development taken and the amount of time that was involved.

An underlying challenge with professional growth budgeting is also deciding what constitutes professional growth in the first place. Some administrators consider professional growth in a very traditional way and look at workshops and classes as the only acceptable methods to which they will allocate funds. However, this approach is costly, as districts need to pay for tuition, enrollment, and facilitators. Other forms of professional growth, including coaching, mentoring, independent study and communities of thought, encourage more teacher collaboration, self-exploration, and choice. These

forms of professional growth often carry a smaller price tag, while also carrying a more substantial impact on learning.

It is difficult to determine exactly how much funding districts should provide for professional development. In 2010, Odden estimated that an urban school district would spend between \$6,000 and \$8,000 per teacher on professional growth (Sawchuk, 2010). In 2012, Odden revised his estimate to about \$14,000 per teacher per year, around 21% of a teacher's salary. Regardless, such a significant cost requires mindfulness and intention when planning and providing professional growth for staff. A model needs to address learning for all teachers, meeting them where they are and challenging them.

Political Analysis

American education is under a great deal of scrutiny at this time. Standardized testing continues to exist as a scorecard of student achievement, and annual district report cards are published, quantifying school districts' demographics, student scores, and teacher credentials. In 2017, the Illinois House of Representatives approved legislation based upon Picus and Odden's "evidence-based funding model," as a way of more fairly allocating state funds to schools. The model calculates the cost of educating each student as an "adequacy target" and then determines each district's resources against this target (ISBE, 2017). The model uses the identified gaps to determine how to allocate state funding. The model does attempt to address the equitable distribution of funds; however, the model's suggested staffing numbers and allocations do not always align with the current practices in schools and districts. For example, their class size recommendations and staffing suggestions for special classes, like PE and Art, as well as student services are well below the numbers employed by many schools. Nevertheless,

the current political climate has created an increased need to account for the money spent on resources, including staff development. It would be beneficial for schools to not only implement a system that has accountability, but also that leverages teacher collaboration and mentoring, which makes use of existing human resources and has a high impact for growth.

In February of 2017, the Trump administration proposed \$3.6 billion in cuts to the Education Department. Of that amount, the budget plan suggests eliminating the Supporting Effective Instruction State Grant program, for a savings of approximately \$2.1 billion (OMB, 2018). This grant program is the federal funding source for teacher and administrator improvement and is a crucial source to support teacher training. According to the Center for American Progress, this grant not only supports professional development but also helps establish networks for hiring teachers and fostering collaboration (Johnson, 2018). The Trump administration justifies this cut by describing the program as “ineffective and redundant” (OMB, 2018).

While there is indeed research to support the virtues and benefits of professional development for teachers, there is, unfortunately, also data to support the opinions of the Trump administration. Research from The Center for Public Education reports that teachers do not feel that they receive adequate support for personal learning and collaboration. The report also suggests that schools have difficulty tracking exactly how much they are spending on professional development. Finally, the report suggests that current PD models could find savings and efficiency by looking closer at the costs of teacher time and the benefits of utilizing more collaborative PD models like mentoring, coaching or professional learning communities (Gulamhussein, 2013). With so many

questions surrounding the accountability and effectiveness of professional growth, these programs often become targets for potential savings.

While signs from the current administration do not suggest a change in their budgeting for public education and teacher learning, there is data to suggest that teachers are pursuing and benefitting from alternative approaches to professional growth and informal learning channels. A 2015 study from Digital Promise reports that 72% of surveyed teachers have participated in informal professional development activities, and teachers regard these activities as equally useful and satisfying as conventional professional development (Berry & Cator, 2016). With avenues for financing traditional professional development getting thinner, perhaps there would be a benefit in exploring how these informal channels can help add depth and differentiation to school professional growth. A well-organized micro-credentialing program can help offset funding, incorporate informal learning channels and add structure and reporting to the program.

Social Analysis

The social need for instituting a policy for micro-credentialing centers around Learning Forward's *Standards for Professional Learning*. The standards include learning communities, as well as appropriate learning design (Killion & Crow, 2011). The learning communities' standard acknowledges that learning is a social process, but it should also have a design and structure to it, which supports the outcomes. According to Digital Promise, micro-credentials have four key features to them: they are competency-based, personalized, on-demand and shareable (Crow, 2017). A micro-credential system, where a teacher can identify a skill area to learn, gather knowledge, practice and evidence their learning, is a system where there is a structure and accountability, but also takes

advantage of the social aspect of learning. Teachers can work together to gain a credential and specialists or coaches become more valuable commodities in these schools, as they can help to design and support the pursuit of micro-credentials. As both my program evaluation and change plan evidence (Kohl, 2018, 2019a), many Grove School District teachers value learning with and from their colleagues, but desire a structure that can help direct this collaboration, as well as a way of acknowledging the learning that occurs in these groups.

Beyond the standards, we look to Ellie Drago Severson's (2008) *pillar practices* to determine the types of experiences that lead to deeper understanding and professional growth. Included in the pillar practices are mentoring, teaming and collegial inquiry. All three of these practices are social, collegial and foster deeper learning because they are rooted in practice. They allow teachers to learn from each other and within the context of the organization.

Organizationally, micro-credentials can have a significant benefit on a school or district. The program can help to identify areas of expertise within a building and can help to forge networks between teachers, sharing knowledge and increasing teacher capital among all educators. For leadership, a system of micro-credentials can help to identify teachers in a district with specific skills or knowledge and utilize those people in areas of leadership. This data can also help to identify which subjects and learning activities have been most successful with teachers. Ultimately, it can help a district identify how well people are utilizing their resources, and how to use them more wisely.

Moral and Ethical Analysis

As the noted speaker and educator, Sir Ken Robinson and L. Aronica (2016) wrote, “continuing professional development of teachers is not a luxury. It is an essential investment in the success of students, their schools and their communities” (p. 235). The empowering of children through education indeed is the key to a better future for children and our society, and Guskey (2000) is correct when he stated that teachers must continually refine their craft and knowledge, in order to best serve students. Teachers have a crucial role to play in the betterment of our society, and they should be provided the best professional development possible, in order to remain nimble in their learning and masters of their craft.

Jim Knight (2010), noted expert on professional learning for teachers, remarked that in his interviews with over 300 teachers “one finding that surfaces from those conversations is that traditional forms of professional learning (workshops without follow up) do not make an impact on teaching or student learning” (p. __). When describing his vision for impactful professional learning for teachers, Knight centers his approach around equality – professional learning done *with* teachers and not *to* teachers. He also focuses on teacher choice, voice, and collaboration in professional learning. He advocates for a system that teachers and leaders build together, focused on student impact but rooted in collaboration and personalization (Knight, 2010). Micro-credentials are built to support this shift, allowing teachers to build their content knowledge and pedagogical skills while collaborating and customizing the approaches they take towards mastery. It connects colleagues in learning and also involves principals, coaches, and specialists in the design and learning process.

In our age of accountability, students, teachers, and families are feeling the pressure of scrutiny. As was discussed earlier, school report cards and published test scores have put achievement under the microscope. The passage of ESSA evidences an acknowledgment that accountability needs to include multiple measures of competence, and school resources need to be utilized to serve these outcomes. Also, models like evidence-based funding have attached more accountability to budgeting, staffing and allocating funds to programs. A system such as micro-credentialing allows teachers to assemble a wide range of evidence to support their professional learning and provides leadership with data and accountability measures for professional growth.

It is also incumbent upon school leaders to help build relevant and vital structures for professional learning. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning specifically state that effective professional learning for teachers "requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning" (Killion & Crow, 2011). Knight (2011) puts it more plainly when he writes that "if a school is going to be an Impact School, the principal must roll up her sleeves and be at the heart of professional learning" (p. 50). If schools are going to implement a system around teacher choice and differentiation, as well as focus on instructional impact, then they need a leader who has trust in teachers and who is also willing to involve themselves in keeping the focus of professional learning on the correct targets.

In reviewing the need for a micro-credentialing policy at Grove, there is a clear educational and economic benefit from implementing a system of professional learning that marries choice and differentiation with accountability and documentation. Micro-credentialing is a system that can encourage more use of existing resources, such as

coaches, specialists, mentors and also technology. The system is also designed to encourage practices that have been proven to have an impact in the classroom, as opposed to traditional methods of professional learning that have not shown as deep an impact. Essentially, micro-credentialing can help to address the needs of our current social climate, while also empowering teachers to work together and learn together. Students can benefit significantly from this synergy and this policy.

Legal Analysis

The Grove School District teacher contract specifies the Board of Education's financial commitment to professional development for its teachers, establishing a professional development fund which the district will use for workshops, classes or tuition reimbursement. Also, the language in the contract defines professional development as "participation in programs including, but not limited to, workshops, seminars, and conventions" (p. 31). The contract also restates the board policy, committing to the creation of a professional development committee to establish guidelines and distribution of funds.

While the contract's language around professional development is sufficiently broad, if there is a change in the board policy, to account for the creation and funding of a micro-credential program, the contract may need to be amended, to include this type of professional development in the definition, as well as any funding changes that may accompany this change.

Also, in 2018, the Illinois State Board of Education began a pilot program for micro-credentials, accepting them as viable professional growth experiences for recertification and licensure (ISBE, 2018). If this policy continues, this will create

greater incentive for teachers to pursue micro-credentials and also more incentive for Grove to expand its professional development to include this type of collaborative learning.

SECTION THREE: ADVOCATED POLICY STATEMENT

During my program evaluation of Grove School District's one-to-one iPad program, several teachers discussed their changing professional development needs and their desire for more choice in their professional learning. One middle school teacher said

I'd love to be able to choose where I go in my learning, based on my interests and where my kids are at. I know that we've been imprisoned recently in one kind of professional development (about a new report card model), so maybe that can change in time. (Kohl, 2018)

The sentiment for more choice and flexibility in Grove's professional development model was a common theme at all grade levels. While teachers appreciated the quality of professional development they had received and the resources available to them, they craved a model that would provide more personalized professional learning opportunities, in addition to the "top-down" professional development that Grove needed to undertake.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of this policy advocacy proposal involves evolving Grove School District's board policy around professional development, to one that embeds a philosophy and foundation for choice in professional learning, specifically a program of micro-credentialing. This policy has two main objectives. First, the revised policy seeks to require the development of a professional learning program into Grove's professional development committee's planning and organization. Second, the revised policy requires that the district develop a system by which teachers can receive credentials for their professional learning. While the policy language is broad, it allows Grove to utilize

resources like Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Killion & Crow, 2011) to focus its vision for professional growth and to also apply any number of micro-credentialing models to the plan. This section will outline the advocated policy goals and objectives, stakeholder needs, values, preferences, and benefits of the policy to be considered.

The purpose of this policy is to build upon Grove School District board policy 520.03 to include the annual development of a district learning program, which aligns board goals with a system of continuous improvement. The policy will also expand the definition of professional learning programs to include experiences that are self-directed, job-embedded, competency-based and research-based. This redefinition allows for several rich professional development experiences, including instructional coaching, professional learning community (PLC) work, and independent study. However, while allowing for greater options and choice in professional growth, the program will still connect this work with the board and school goals, creating a common direction for Grove but allowing more opportunities to meet teachers where they are in their thinking and their professional journey.

Stakeholder Needs, Values, Preferences, and Benefits

The primary stakeholders of this local board of education policy include teachers, students, and district administrators. For each of these stakeholders, I will consider their needs, values, preferences, and benefits concerning the proposed policy change. Thomas Guskey and Dennis Sparks (2004) discuss the complex assortment of factors that impact teacher education initiatives and improvements in student learning. Included in these factors are content, process, and context of the professional development, as well as

administrator, teacher and parent knowledge and practice. Well-planned professional development is only part of the equation. Every stakeholder and what they bring to the educational environment has a profound impact on the success of professional development and the results that students experience in the classroom.

In my program evaluation's review of the literature (Kohl, 2018), I include an overview of professional development's role in a successful one-to-one program. While it is clear that professional development has a significant impact on any program's success, research conducted by Storz and Hoffman (2013) singled out job-embedded professional development, focused on a single topic or content area as especially impactful. In this study, teachers also expressed a preference for learning from a coach or colleague. Focus group data from my program evaluation confirmed these findings, as teachers hoped for more choice in the content about which they received professional development, as well as more opportunities to work with colleagues on professional learning goals.

Drago-Severson (2009) discusses several drivers for successful professional development, including culture, feedback, sustainability and use of “pillar practices” to support transformational learning. These pillar practices include teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, and mentoring. All four of these practices invite collaboration between professionals as well as an opportunity for a teacher to reflect on their practice. Research from my program evaluation (Kohl, 2018) also reinforces the importance of collaboration between colleagues as a learning engine. Simmons and Martin (2016) highlighted several teacher respondents who discussed the value of one-to-

one teacher collaboration. One teacher respondent stated that “what I have seen in my area is that we feel safer in small groups.... We feel safer in our learning.” (p. 30).

When constructing a policy to support micro-credentialing, it is essential to foster an ecology for professional growth that invites collaboration and informal learning opportunities for teachers, as well as a rigorous structure, rooted in research. If given the ability to choose their focus, and the opportunities to form learning partnerships with colleagues, coaches and specialists, teachers can dig deeper into content and “feel safer in their learning.”

The challenge for the proposed policy change and subsequent professional learning program is to create opportunities for choice and collaboration, which are still rigorous, relevant and able to be documented for administration. Through micro-credentials, Grove can construct levels of learning opportunities from which teachers can choose. Some teachers may prefer an option to work with a coach, or with their team members. A well-constructed micro-credential plan (see Appendix D) will guide any individual or group through a deep dive into content, as well as the collection of artifacts to evidence their learning. Finally, all teachers will complete a reflection of their learning. All of this data is important, not only for the teachers but also for administration, as well as the staff-development committee. From this information, the committee can determine how well the learning experience was for the teachers, as well as assess its quality of information.

Too often, teachers walk away from professional development without anything tangible to show for their work and time. Even presentations and workshops that are considered worthwhile do not always have a valuable product attached to them. When

working through their micro-credential, teachers will create and collect artifacts to evidence their learning. All of these artifacts become resources which they can use with students or colleagues. Also, with micro-credentials, teachers can attain digital badges or certifications, evidencing their mastery in a subject area. Teachers will utilize these credentials in their professional portfolio, towards recertification, and potentially towards salary changes in the district. This benefit is great, in addition to the benefits that they can bring with them into the classroom.

While the creation and support of a micro-credentialing program will require a great deal of planning and work for the administration, the eventual benefits will be excellent. Grove will have a framework for professional learning which will be updatable and can evolve as the curriculum grows and changes. Also, Grove will have a built-in structure for new teachers, allowing them to become familiar with the curriculum and practice that Grove values, without needing to revisit content with veteran teachers. Instead, veteran teachers can go deeper into the curriculum, expand their practice, and serve as mentors and coaches for the new teachers who are working through more foundational credentials. Running through all of this revised process is a structure and purpose for the professional development committee, which will oversee the micro-credentialing program and work together to refresh it and assess its success every year.

In addition, Grove's administration will benefit from a system of professional development that has data built into it. Teacher artifacts and reflections will form anecdotal data that tell the story of the professional learning experience, while the completed micro-credentials and teacher surveys will help to assess the success of the program.

Finally, Grove's students are the most significant beneficiary of a robust professional development program. Grove will align the proposed professional learning plan with district strategic goals, which include goals for student achievement, and this focus when designing professional growth opportunities will result in a much more lucid professional development environment altogether. Also, the collaborative nature of micro-credentials may allow more advanced teachers the opportunity to help their colleagues improve their instructional practice, which can only benefit students in the classroom.

SECTION FOUR: POLICY ARGUMENT

In this paper, I have argued for the expansion of Grove School District's board policy regarding professional development, to expand the role of the Staff Development Committee and introduce a program of micro-credentialing in the district. In this section, I will introduce the counterargument to this policy, as well as the argument for continuing the policy revision and development of micro-credentialing in the district.

Counterargument to the Policy

A substantial change in professional development policy will represent a disruption for many stakeholders in the Grove School District, and it's important to consider any barriers to implementation that might exist. Through an examination of the counterarguments, the planning and implementation of change can only improve, addressing more challenges and ultimately attracting more participants to the change.

One common argument against micro-credential programs is that the credential often acknowledges what a person *did* and not necessarily the outcome of the learning. For instance, when completing a micro-credential, the participant will follow the structure of the micro-credential, complete tasks and collect artifacts to evidence their completion. Finally, the participant may be required to submit a reflection on the experience and their learning. Some critics feel like this process celebrates the tasks, but does not necessarily ensure that the participant applied their learning or gained as much knowledge as in a different form of professional growth. Two responses to this argument are to make sure that the available micro-credentials align directly with the goals brought forth by the professional development committee and to make sure that the rubrics used in evaluating completed micro-credentials are tied directly to learning. Ultimately, this is

a model for staff development that is based on evidence-based learning and not just the completion of tasks. It is the responsibility of the professional development committee to communicate this and ensure that it is present in the micro-credentials that they offer to teachers.

Another argument against micro-credentialing is that it is not as rigorous as more traditional forms of professional learning. Some of this argument is rooted in a concern that self-directed learning does not guarantee the recorded time-on-task that a half-day full group session can provide. However, it is also important to acknowledge that all professional development can be subject to this criticism and that it is important to remain vigilant in assessing the quality of what professional development Grove is offering to teachers. Like in the first counterargument, aligning professional learning with instructional goals will help ensure quality, as will establishing a sufficiently rigorous rubric for conferring the micro-credential. Another response to this argument is to utilize coaches, specialists and other experts as mentors for teachers pursuing their micro-credentials. These individuals will help to ensure that there are depth and rigor to professional learning and that the micro-credential aligns with district goals in a relevant way.

Time constraints will be another counter argument to the change in professional development policy. As the data in my program evaluation (Kohl, 2018) and change plan (Kohl, 2019a) confirm, teachers and administrators currently struggle to find time for teachers to collaborate and learn together. The changes that I am proposing to Grove's staff development policy and the committee will require more time and effort to implement. Also, more time will be needed to select, construct and manage the micro-

credentialing system. Grove will also need to consider additional staffing, In order to ensure the proper quality of micro-credentials and reliability in scoring. Also, the time required to manage and implement these changes may take attention away from other district initiatives and affect the time needed for district administrative and staff meetings.

Finally, some administrators may be uncomfortable with giving up control of professional development in the district. Currently, professional development decisions are made by a very small group, with the staff development committee serving as a consulting body that helps to operationalize the decisions made by the central office. The new board policy would give more power to the staff development committee, to establish goals and procedures regarding professional development offerings and processes. While central office will still, ultimately, have verification that teachers completed professional development, the timing of the data and accounting will require the administration to trust teachers more and work more closely with the committee to approve and document the work. Since micro-credentialing is a more self-directed form of professional learning, some administrators may not see the value in this approach, as opposed to more traditional forms of professional development.

Pros of the Policy

In reviewing the arguments against this policy change, I feel that the time needed to implement the change and manage a new model of staff development is well worth the effort. Grove School District has spent a great deal of time over the past four years, crafting a vision and a procedure for regular review and revision of board goals. These goals focus on student success and creating an optimal learning environment.

Professional development is a crucial approach for realizing these goals, and every effort should be made to ensure that the two areas align in ways that are relevant for teachers and effective in the classroom. Currently, the staff development committee is underutilized in Grove School District, and tighter alignment with board goals will provide direction for this committee and a structure to their conversations. Similarly, a micro-credentialing program should also align with board and committee goals, and Grove will need to spend time in aligning these experiences and establishing the appropriate routines around them. As this approach positively affects student learning in Grove School District, the work will reveal itself to be worth the effort.

Also, aligning professional development opportunities, whether through micro-credentialing or another form of professional growth, will create more opportunities for collaboration between coaches, specialists, and teachers. Specialists will be able to pinpoint experiences that may be needed by teachers, and they can help to work through lessons and collect evidence with teachers. Similarly, as teachers work together, a goal-aligned professional development model will give direction for this collaboration, making outcomes more explicit as well as paths that teachers can follow to achieve these outcomes.

While the change in board policy at Grove, as well as the introduction of micro-credentials, will require the administration to give up some control over professional development, the potential for this change to transform teacher learning is excellent. Michael Fullan (2011) discusses the concept of "realized effectiveness" as the condition where members of an organization gain momentum when they see the effectiveness of the change. As teachers witness success, buy-in, and support for the change increases.

Teachers will not only see the impact that this professional development has on identified goals but will also see their colleagues completing and attaining credentials which they can display and acknowledge. These examples of effectiveness will increase enthusiasm for and ownership of professional development in Grove. From this momentum, a shift towards a more innovative and collaborative culture can emerge. The administration will undoubtedly maintain a hand in directing and shaping professional learning at Grove, but an increase in teacher voice and choice will impact the energy of the program and the possibilities that exist for student learning.

Throughout this policy paper, I have identified several advantages to micro-credentialing as a form of professional development. I acknowledge the arguments against them and assert that it will be important for Grove to carefully select and develop stacks of micro-credentials that align with professional development goals and contain rubrics that evidence learning and not just completion. In 2018, Digital Promise, the largest provider of micro-credential curriculum to the district, had all of its protocols approved as counting towards educator license renewal, salary advancement and graduate credit (Brown, 2019). Choosing quality credentials such as these can assure administrators and teachers that they are sufficiently rigorous, while also allowing teacher choice in terms of what they study and whom they may partner with in this work. Beyond this, however, it is important to note that micro-credentials can also identify teacher skills, knowledge and specialties that a resume will not show. Teachers can use micro-credentials to note their achievements in specific areas of instruction, technology or data analysis. They can then identify themselves as experts in these areas and become

resources for other teachers in the district. From this, unexpected partnerships and coaching relationships may emerge.

SECTION FIVE: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In this section, I will review a design for implementing a school policy change that better engages the Grove School District Staff Development Committee with crafting a vision for professional growth and also establishes a foundation for a district micro-credentialing program. While Grove School District's current professional development program is high-quality and rigorous, a policy change will allow it to involve teachers, specialists, and administrators in planning more effectively, and also allow for a greater variety of collaborations between teachers within the construct of professional learning. Fullan (2012) argues that schools are often conservative institutions towards policy and less comfortable with change. Alternatively, schools are more likely to reject a change if it is not a sustained, comprehensive initiative, addressing all stakeholders. A robust implementation plan focused on all stakeholders and taking into consideration educational needs, timing, budget and progress monitoring must be developed and communicated throughout this process. As Guskey and Sparks (2004) stress, changes in professional development must be looked at from a systems perspective, considering all of the factors and stakeholders that are involved. Thorough, careful planning and implementation, this policy change can move professional learning forward in Grove School District.

Educational Needs and Implications

As John Kotter (2012) writes in his book *Leading Change*, it is essential to create a sense of urgency among stakeholders regarding change and any necessary resources and policies. Urgency is most tangible when stakeholders are given a role in the change and a lens from which they can view the desired outcomes. Fullan (2011) writes that "all

successful change eventually must revolve around collective ownership. Central leadership is still important, but it fosters and relies increasingly on the peer culture to achieve deep change" (p. 76). Three stakeholder groups that are intimately affected by this proposed policy change are administrators, teachers and the board of education. It is vital that all of these groups are engaged in the policy change. More specifically, the district must orient these groups to the mechanics of a micro-credentialing program and the research base that informs this system. Each stakeholder must also understand the responsibilities that they have within the new professional development policy and the roles that they can play in making it a successful evolution in professional learning at Grove.

In advancing a change in board policy around staff development at Grove, it's important to make sure that all stakeholders understand that this change is meant to be an enhancement of the existing policy, introducing more opportunities for involvement by the members of the staff development committee as well as more flexibility in professional development options for all teachers.

As the proposed policy requires the creation of a professional growth program, to align the staff development vision with the board and school goals, a framework for professional growth in the district can help to establish a common language among all stakeholders, as well as a system by which the plan is developed and evaluated. Grove School District has enjoyed a partnership with Learning Forward, using their resources in educating administrators and structuring some staff development. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Killion & Crow, 2011) provide a strong theoretical base and common language about best practices and instructional planning. Learning

Forward's standards include a cycle for standards-based professional learning, a simple construct, linking professional learning, rooted in standards, to changes in educator knowledge and skills. This change in instructor knowledge leads to changes in classroom practice and ultimately student learning. Both of these resources can help all stakeholders focus on the purpose and outcomes for professional learning in Grove. Moreover, as the committee begins to investigate a micro-credentialing program, it can also provide a standard and focus for the initial credentials that the district offers to teachers.

With a theoretical foundation for the policy change established, members of the Staff Development Committee will need orientation to the new responsibilities for the committee, how the framework can assist them in crafting their program, and specific roles that each member may play in this new approach.

The introduction of a micro-credentialing program for Grove will represent a more significant change to stakeholders than the policy changes regarding the staff development committee. For teachers, while they have often asked for greater opportunities for collaborative learning and self-study, they have not had many opportunities to this point. For administrators, micro-credentialing will require a broader understanding of professional learning, as well as a different lens for viewing the work that teachers will be doing together. For the board of education members, it will require them to re-think some of the ways that they view, resource and measure professional learning in Grove. The Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning can provide an excellent bridge for stakeholders, as Learning Forward and Digital Promise have mapped each standard to a micro-credentialing program, illustrating ways in which

the standards can be taught and fostered through a micro-credentialing program (Crow, 2017). For stakeholders in Grove School District, the following chart (see Figure 1) illustrates how micro-credentials can align with and support the Standards for Professional Learning, and steps that leaders can take to foster the program. Using this framework, all stakeholders can not only grow to value self-directed and team learning opportunities, but they can also have a structure by which the program is aligned to goals, utilizing data and ongoing review to ensure sustainability.

District administration and the staff development committee will want to continue to build their knowledge of micro-credential programs. Lauren Acree and the Friday Institute (2016) have shared a great deal of research profiling school districts that have implemented such programs, and the successes and challenges that they experienced in the process. District committees can conduct site visits as well, connecting with schools that have implemented micro-credentialing programs and learning from their experiences. It is important to remember that district teacher association members should be involved in this discovery process, as their input and support will be critical to the successful change in policy.

At this point, district administration should also connect with state officials, to learn more about state policies towards micro-credentials for recertification and other state certificates. In 2018, Illinois became one of 11 states that allow micro-credentials to count towards teacher professional development credits (ISBE, 2018). As the Grove program matures, this partnership with the state will provide additional usefulness for teacher micro-credentials, as well as more incentive for teachers to take advantage of this program.

Learning Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-credentials that develop team learning opportunities. • Micro-credential’s role in team learning agendas. • Encourage schools or teams to cluster together in learning opportunities.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership-focused micro-credentials for leaders to participate in. • Encourage teachers to share their achievements and help facilitate micro-credentials with colleagues.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-credentials can provide transparency around decision making and resource allocation. • Create choices for teachers, to increase ROI on staff development. • Develop capacity of in-house specialists to lead PD and coaching.
Learning Designs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create guidance and a structure by which micro-credentials are consistent with research and evidence-based practices. • Develop capacity in leaders to select professional development that aligns with outcomes. • Provide coaching to support the choices educators make in micro-credentials.
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide micro-credentials to help educators learn data practices and expand knowledge. • Provide data to help educators select appropriate professional development.
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support in the form of coaches and time for team collaboration. • Provide opportunities for coaches and specialists to develop their abilities to support learners in all situation (including self-directed learning). • Address logistics for personalized professional learning.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create alignment between strategic goals and micro-credentials that are available for teachers. • Ensure that the district professional learning plan includes an aligned program of micro-credentials. • Support leaders in learning more about micro-credentials and planning future offerings to sustain the program.

Source: Micro-credentials for Impact, 2017.

Figure 1. Aligning Micro-Credentials with Standards for Professional Practice

Grove School District develops its policies through a Policy Committee, made up of the board of education members, administrators, and any relevant experts that might lend expertise to the writing of a policy. It will be essential to make sure all members of the policy committee have familiarity with Learning Forward's standards, as well as information about micro-credentialing. As the district works to collect research and inform all stakeholders about research on, and examples of, micro-credentialing, it is critical that members of this committee are involved, to carry the message to other board members and the rest of the Grove learning community.

Finally, Grove must educate stakeholders in the technology necessary for micro-credentialing. The district can manage micro-credentials through web-based systems, and teachers can also use these systems to record their progress, artifacts, and reflections. Administrators should work with the technology department, to make sure that the preferred system can work properly with teacher devices, as well as the district network. Also, the credentialing of teachers can be done through digital "badges" and managed through an online system. District administration also needs to make sure that this system can coordinate information with any district resources, as well as the state board of education's system. In order for teachers to feel comfortable with a technology-based system, it needs to be understandable for them and dependable.

Professional Development for Successful Implementation

Once Grove has used research to establish an educational context and goals, the successful implementation of a new staff development policy and a micro-credentialing program will require support and training for all involved stakeholders including teachers, administrators, and board members. The priority for professional development

will be to orient the members of the staff development committee on the changes in the committee's roles and responsibilities. Using Learning Forward as a framework, Grove will establish a strong theoretical foundation that teachers and administrators can work together to unpack and explore. In partnership with Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Practice (Killion & Crow, 2011), the committee may want to conduct a book study together, exploring the work of Eleanor Drago-Severson (2004, 2008) and her theories on the ways that adults learn best. Her pillar practices will provide an excellent foundation to both the Learning Forward standards, as well as the theoretical foundation of micro-credentialing.

Professional Development about micro-credentialing will involve every teacher, administrator, and board of education member in Grove. While the approach may be slightly different for different grade levels and buildings, the research conducted through Learning Forward and Digital Promise (Crow, 2017), as well as work conducted by The Center for Collaborative Education (Kuriacose & Warn, 2018) provide examples and a structure for that will serve as a guideline for the planning of professional development around micro-credentialing in Grove.

According to The Center for Collaborative Education (Kuriacose & Warn, 2018), most new micro-credential programs begin with a pilot group, who will experience the full micro-credentialing process and help to refine things before all staff participates. Grove School District will begin with a pilot group as well, choosing at least three teachers from each school. This pilot group, along with members of the staff development committee and administration, will participate in a micro-credential about personalized learning, which will educate them to the theory behind micro-credentialing

as well as the Grove School process. Essentially, a micro credential will be the first round of professional development on micro-credentials in the district. This first micro-credential will continue as a pre-requisite for anyone who is interested in participating in the program, serving as an orientation as well as an initial credential.

Coaches and specialists will participate in a group micro-credential on facilitating adult learning and Grove's coaching model. This training will help to increase specialists' capacity for assisting teachers through the micro-credentials and a better understanding of what is involved in the process. Coaches will also join Grove administrators in being trained as "badge facilitators" which is a role in micro-credentialing, providing one-to-one encouragement to teachers in the program and making sure that they stick to deadlines and requirements. Facilitators are responsible for the integrity of the program, and also for the quality of the experience that teachers have. This professional development will be a combination of micro-credential and small group workshops.

Finally, administrators, peer coaches, and members of the staff development committee will need to train in the scoring of micro-credentials. According to Kuriacose and Warn (2018), misunderstandings about requirements and lack of clarity about the program can be a crucial reason for teacher frustration and failure of the micro-credentialing program. Training in the area of scoring can create common knowledge about the program and more consistency in the scoring of the work teachers do. Also, it will further increase the number of leaders in the district who have an in-depth knowledge of the program and can help when needed.

Finally, as the program moves out of the pilot phase, all teachers will need to undergo the initial training, in order to understand the district philosophy on personalized learning and the requirements of the micro-credentialing program. Pilot group teachers and coaches can be facilitators of this training, while administrators can be knowledgeable advocates for the program.

As the program moves out of pilot phase, it is important that the members of the staff development committee, in cooperation with district administration, select first micro-credentials for staff that is aligned with professional development and student learning goals. As Digital Promise (2017) suggests, micro-credentials around professional learning community practice and data analysis may align with the Learning Forward standards, as well as Grove School District goals. Additional credentials in areas like technology integration and math workshop facilitation would also align with goals and provide a common language for teachers to move forward in these areas.

Timeline for Implementation

The timeline for successful implementation will be a critical component of both a change in board policy and the introduction of a successful micro-credentialing program. Grove will undertake the initial work at the board of education and policy committee level. We will make a case for a more active staff development committee and a charge to create opportunities for teachers to learn in different ways. This initial work will include sharing research and feedback from teachers, as well as utilizing the Learning Forward information to establish a framework and common language that the board can share with administration and teachers.

After the policy has been crafted and approved, Grove leadership will work with members of the staff development committee, to unpack the Learning Forward standards and practices, as well as to look at board goals and school improvement goals as they plan professional learning options for the coming school year. At the same time, the committee will begin to discuss personalized learning for teachers, and the concept of micro-credentialing. Since this practice is likely new to many teachers, care must be taken to clearly define this practice and allow time for everyone to understand the components and process of a micro-credentialing program.

Digital Promise has constructed an implementation roadmap (Digital Promise, 2019), which can be a useful guide to the steps that the district will need to take as they craft their program. Figure 2 breaks down the various steps in the roadmap, which include exploration, planning, preparation, implementation, support, and reflection. It is a cycle that Grove can repeat throughout iterations of the program. Since change can take time to establish itself in school culture, it should be assumed that this cycle will continue over three years, as micro-credentialing becomes more accepted and common in the Grove culture.

Phase	Goals	Activities
Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare district thinking about micro-credentials. • Assess readiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct internal evaluations • A resource collection of research. • Book study. • Site study
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set strategy for micro-credentialing program. • Align program with professional development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting • Selection of technology • Goal setting
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop internal resources and supports. • Write procedures and rules. • Initial training for pilot and leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete board policy • Staff Development begins • Creating communication items.
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch and monitoring of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching technology sites. • Begin pilot groups. • Regular meetings with administrative team and committee.
Supporting, Engaging and Tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and troubleshoot implementation. • Build “feedback loops” for program information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Data collection from LMS • Technical maintenance and followup.
Reflection, Calibration and Resetting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data from pilot against goals. • Formulate recommendations for next cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis • Budget adjustments • Reporting progress to all stakeholders. • Planning for next year.

Source: Adapted from Digital Promise Implementation Roadmap, 2019.

Figure 2. Implementation Plan for Micro-Credentialing Program

Initially, Grove administrators and members of the staff development committee will explore micro-credentialing, reading relevant research articles and site visits. Another essential component of this phase is the self-study that Grove needs to do, surveying and talking to teachers about the professional learning preferences. While data that I collected during my program evaluation (Kohl, 2018) suggested that teachers were interested in more opportunities to direct their professional learning, more information is needed to clarify teacher readiness for a program like micro-credentialing. Also, Grove will need to glean their understanding of a framework such as Learning Forward's standards for professional practice, which will be a key document in the planning of professional development in Grove. This initial phase will take several months, possibly the first half of the school year, as the staff development committee convenes, and begins their research at the same time that they are managing existing professional learning events.

After this initial phase, the planning and preparation phases will require Grove's administration and staff development committee to commit to developing a strategy for micro-credentialing and personalized professional development. In these phases, Grove will develop a strategy for the program and align it with board and school improvement goals, following policy. In this phase, Grove will also begin to allocate resources to the program and train pilot teachers and leadership members. It is preferable that the initial micro-credentials that Grove offers to staff are created by outside entities, such as Digital Promise. The state has approved these micro-credentials as professional development experiences, and Digital Promise aligns them to topics that I described in the staff development section of this paper. These initial micro-credentials will orient staff and

administration to personalized learning for adults, as well as the skills needed to coach and facilitate micro-credentials for teachers. The planning and preparation phases can begin in later fall/early winter and extend through the summer of year one.

During the preparation phase, critical communication pieces also need to be, which will help to orient all staff to the program and educate community members about the new initiative. At this point, it will be helpful to revisit the decisions made during the planning and preparation phase of implementation. As the first full year of this implementation ends, the staff development committee members and administration will have a clearer view of professional learning goals and will have crafted the start of a program to facilitate personalized and small group learning in Grove.

The implementation phase of the program involves the official launch of the micro-credentialing program. This phase will begin with pilot teachers participating in micro-credentials, along with all administrators and members of the committee. The district will launch the learning management system (LMS) that will facilitate micro-credentials and track teacher progress. Also, follow-up on the program will be a regular conversation topic at the staff development committee meetings and district administrative council. As the implementation moves into the second half of the year, the pilot may expand to add any interested teachers. Just like the first pilot group, a pre-requisite micro-credential will be required, orienting teachers to the program and the foundations of personalized learning.

After the implementation phase, an ongoing phase of support, tracking, reflection and calibration will continue. During these last phases, Grove School District will establish feedback loops by which they will continue to collect data around the program.

These phases will inform procedures, resources, and planning as the program progresses. Annually, the micro-credential offerings will be adjusted to include any additional board or school improvement goal needs, and an update on the program will be an ongoing portion of the professional learning plan that is presented to the board of education every year.

Program Budget

While the actual cost of changing the professional development board policy is cost-neutral, there will be several costs associated with changes in programming and committee activity that Grove will take into consideration. Grove currently budgets professional learning, as line items within the curriculum department, as well as a part of a training budget in other departments. Grove may also allocate additional resources through technology, facilities or administrative line items. Ultimately, professional development funding is a difficult number to identify.

Odden et al. (2002) constructed a cost framework for professional development, built around six key features: teacher time, training and coaching, administration, materials equipment and facilities, travel and transportation and tuition and conference fees. This framework, while requiring a great deal of data collection, does allow Grove to determine the actual cost across budget accounts and departments. Also, the more that Grove carefully plans and structures their professional development, the easier it will be to account for each of these features and adjust if necessary.

Teacher time is currently an expense because Grove's professional development often takes the form of half-day institute events or curriculum meetings during the day. Events that do not coincide with a non-attendance day for students require the hiring of

substitutes to cover classrooms while teachers attend professional development. While these expenses will remain for the foreseeable future, self-directed, personalized learning may require a different calculation of teacher time, or not require a calculation at all.

Grove School District has called together a time committee, comprised of teachers and administrators for all schools. The purpose of this committee is to identify opportunities in the school schedule for more regular planning and collaboration time for teachers. If successful, this committee's work may result in pockets of time during which teachers may collaborate on micro-credentials and other job-embedded forms of professional development.

Fixed costs around the micro-credential initiative will include any professional services used for training and implementation, as well as the use of an LMS to track and facilitate micro-credentials. Professional Services can include on-site facilitation, which will introduce the leadership team to micro-credentials and orient them to the use of an LMS. Typically, costs for professional services are about \$3,000, depending on the services chosen. Also, an LMS with access for all teachers would cost around \$5,000 for the first year, with the price dropping to \$4,000 after the first-year implementation.

In addition to the technical platform, Grove intends to purchase their initial micro-credential packages, rather than develop them in house. Also, in order to create an added incentive for utilizing micro-credentials, it is important to select options for teachers that are high-quality and accepted by the state for professional development credit. Digital Promise, a high-profile leader in this area, offers some micro-credentials for free, which Grove can select and offer to staff. Another micro-credentials cost around \$25 per staff member to take. A reasonable budget for the first year, which would allow all pilot

teachers and committee leaders to take three micro-credentials would be \$2,500 for the implementation year. Depending on subsequent data, this amount may change.

Travel and tuition fees are allocated by Grove's board of education, which designates a pool of money to teachers, which they may use for college course tuition, workshop and conference attendance, or anything that may foster their professional growth. District administration has an approval process in place, which teachers complete in order to have access to funds. For the initial year, this funding model may not change, except for the possible alignment of approved activities with board and school improvement goals. However, as the micro-credentialing program grows, this fund may be adjusted to allow for additional micro-credential study and other forms of self-directed professional growth.

Grove School District is in the process of developing a coaching program, which was the topic of my change plan (Kohl, 2019). Currently, Grove employs several content specialists at the district level, who conduct professional development courses for staff members and provide some job-embedded coaching for teachers. A program such as micro-credentials can be a powerful conduit for instructional coaching, creating opportunities for collaboration and conversation among teachers and coaches. As Grove clarifies its view of instructional coaching and educates teachers on a job-embedded coaching model, additional staffing costs may be required to hire more instructional coaches.

Progress Monitoring

While the Grove School District board of education has primary responsibility for overseeing the progress of the policies it sets, Grove's administrative council has local

responsibility for monitoring the implementation. Like similar programs, such as Grove's pre-school program and one-to-one implementation, staff development and micro-credentialing can become standing items at weekly or monthly meetings. During these meetings, the administrators who are involved in the initiative can report to the group with data that they have collected. This report can be the start of useful conversations, addressing questions and solving problems. Administrative council reports are also a useful venue for ensuring that the committees are meeting benchmarks and deadlines. Before the annual report to the board, committee members can share data with the administrative council and receive feedback and perspective on their findings. Most important, since board policy requires that staff development goals align with the board and school improvement goals, the administrative council can be useful in making sure this alignment is present and also reviewing student data to determine how professional development has been impacting student achievement.

Next, the Grove staff development committee is responsible for the professional development program, which the committee will present to the board of education. The board can review data to monitor the progress of both staff development goals and the success of the micro-credentialing program. The board can also help to ensure that there is alignment between micro-credentials for teachers and the professional growth goals that the committee shared with the board. This calibration should be an annual process.

Administrators in the areas of curriculum, student services, and technology must coordinate with the staff development committee to make sure that they have also aligned their goals and professional development offerings to board goals. These administrators are often members of the staff development committee and are indeed part of the

administrative council, but they currently oversee a variety of professional development experiences for teachers which are not always represented in a cohesive plan. As the board policy takes shape and the staff development committee shifts its function, they must work with the committee to communicate and collaborate in setting priorities and focus for professional development.

The Technology Department has added responsibility for managing the technical aspects of the micro-credentialing program. The members of this department need to collect and share data about program usage, reliability, and completion. They may also be called upon to help administer surveys and other data collection with teachers, which will help to make adjustments to the program in the critical first years.

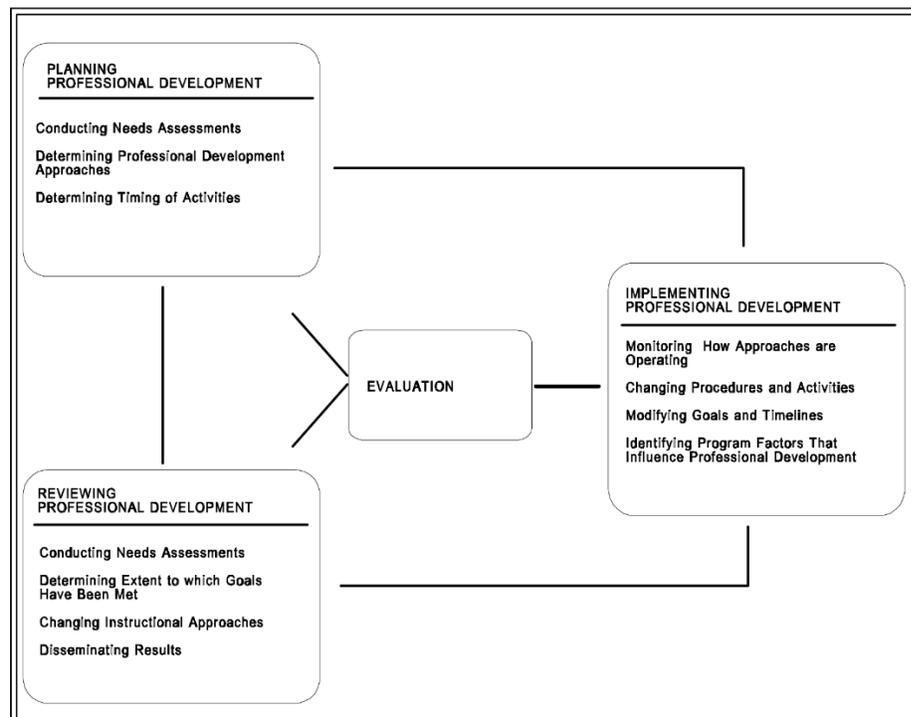
Finally, Grove's building principals, as instructional leaders in their building, will need to monitor how effective all professional development, including micro-credentialing, has been in furthering their school improvement goals. They will work with their school committees to set goals and make sure that the district professional learning plan is a part of those conversations. As participants in professional learning themselves and having gone through micro-credential study themselves, they can serve as an example and resource for teachers, and also provide a context for any data they collect.

The early implementation years for this program change will be critical to its success since the pilot years will be smaller in scale and participants. Data that the district collects during this phase can help to identify challenges before they grow, and also identify efficiencies that will help teachers in their participation. For any impactful

program to be successful in a school district, channels by which leadership can collect data and feedback to monitor progress and make changes are essential.

SECTION SIX: POLICY ASSESSMENT PLAN

Grove's leadership must carefully assess two components of my proposed policy change. First, as Grove's staff development committee crafts the professional learning program every year and attempts to align professional development to the district and school goals, they will need to carefully determine the effectiveness of the plan and the professional development activities that occur as a result. As Sherman and Kuttner (1998) articulate in the figure below, professional development is an ongoing cycle of planning and evaluation. Throughout the cycle, relevant data needs to inform the adjustments and decisions that the committee makes.



Source: Sherman and Kuttner, 1998.

Figure 3. An Ongoing Professional Development Process

During the annual presentation of the learning program to the board of education, the staff development committee and administration can utilize this cycle, to describe the information that has gone into the planning, disseminate results and discuss any changes that the committee made. This presentation and the ensuing conversation with the board can serve as another evaluation of the policy, as committee members and district leaders can ask questions and share observations that they made during the year.

While the work of the staff development committee is important, the most necessary evaluations and evidence of the policy's success will be the demonstrated effectiveness of the actual staff development for teachers. Currently, Grove's evaluation for professional development consists of post-event surveys, which teachers fill out during the last few minutes of the workshop. The questions on the survey asked teachers to rate the event, in terms of how relevant and informative it was to them. As the district strives to create a new vision for professional development, a broader framework should be employed, to guide the committee in gaining a more comprehensive view of professional growth. Thomas Guskey (2002) developed the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation, as a useful tool for gaining a multi-dimensional snapshot of professional development. Figure 3 describes each level, the data that will be collected and what is measured in each level. The initial levels of the framework look at participants' reactions to and learning from professional development. Then, the framework examines how well the organization supports, advocates for and implements professional development. Finally, stages 4 and 5 of the framework looks at how well teachers transferred their knowledge to classroom practice, as well as what the impact was on student learning outcomes. It is important to note that Guskey (2002) comments

that many factors affect student learning outcomes and that this evaluation tool is not looking for "proof," as much as "evidence" of student learning.

As I mentioned, Grove's current evaluation process for professional development is concentrated chiefly on Level 1 of Guskey's framework. Use of the full framework will allow the staff development committee to restructure its current instrument to collect data around Level's 1-3, and also expand the instruments that they currently utilize for evaluating professional development. The district currently limits its evaluation data to survey instruments but could begin to look at focus groups, interviews, and artifacts collected during micro-credential work to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development.

Finally, the effectiveness of the micro-credentialing program is only partially evidenced by Guskey's framework (2002). In addition to the data that will be collected and applied to this framework, the technology-based platform for micro-credentials will allow administration to identify the amount of time that teachers have spent on the activities, reliability of the platform for teachers to access their work at any time, as well as additional artifacts that teachers will submit to evidence their micro-credential completion. All of this information will provide leadership with a more in-depth view of the learning activities that Grove teachers undertake, and the depth to which they have mastered the area of study.

Evaluation Level	How will information be gathered?	What is being measured?
1. Participants Reactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did they like the training? • Will it be useful? • Did the material make sense? • Was there knowledgeable and helpful guidance through the experience? • Were the refreshments good (if applicable)? • Was the room comfortable (if applicable)? • Was the technology easy to manage and understand (if applicable)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires administered at the end of the PD experience • Within reflection of the micro-credential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial satisfaction with the experience – either physical or virtual.
2. Participant's Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper and pencil tests. • Simulations and Demonstrations. • Participant reflections (oral or written) • Participant portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New knowledge and skills of participants.
3. Organization Support and Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was implementation supported and facilitated well? • Was the support apparent to the whole organization? • Were any problems addressed quickly? • Were sufficient resources made available? • What was the impact on the organization? • Did it effect the organization's climate and procedures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and school records. • Minutes from meetings. • Questionnaires • Interviews and focus groups. • Participant portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization's advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation and recognition.
4. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires • Structured interviews with participants and supervisors. • Reflections (oral and written) • Participant portfolios • Observations • Video or audio tapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of quality of implementation.
5. Student Learning Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the impact on students? • Did it affect student performance or achievement? • Did it influence student well-being? • Are students more confident as learners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student records • School records • Questionnaires • Structured interviews. • Participant portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning outcomes • Cognitive (Performance and Achievement) • Affective (Attitudes and Dispositions) • Psychomotor (Skills and Behaviors)

Source: Thomas Guskey, 2002.

Figure 4. Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation

A useful framework for assessing the technology platform for micro-credentialing is the Triple-E framework, which the district can apply to the student as well as staff learning platforms. Developed by Liz Kolb (2017), the framework evaluates the learning platform against the following questions:

- Does technology create opportunities for learning outside of the typical day?
- Does technology create a bridge between academic and life experiences?
- Does technology allow learners to build useful skills?
- Does the technology aid learners in developing or demonstrating a more sophisticated understanding of content?
- Does technology create scaffolds for understanding concepts?
- Does technology create paths for learners to demonstrate their understanding?
- Does the technology allow the learner to focus with less distraction?
- Does technology motivate learners?
- Does the technology cause a shift in the learning behaviors of the participant?

While the review of technology tools does not always employ such a wide lens, Kolb's (2017) framework attempts to understand the effectiveness of the tool in a much broader way. The framework views technology as a gateway to understanding and engagement. It also seeks to determine to what degree the learner leaves the experience ready and willing to apply their understandings to the classroom.

All of the data provided by these frameworks will add to a more profound knowledge of professional development in Grove and will provide a roadmap for continuous updating and refining of the staff development and micro-credentialing programs. While student achievement data is the most crucial data point in assessing

professional development, all of these data points will combine to create a clearer picture of the staff development experience in Grove, and where it can improve and grow.

SECTION SEVEN: SUMMARY IMPACT STATEMENT

In this work, I am advocating for a change in local school board policy, which empowers the district staff development committee to plan, implement and evaluate a comprehensive professional growth program, for the district. The committee will also work alongside district leadership to create a program which "includes options for learning experiences which are self-directed, job-embedded, competency-based and research-based." The district program will be presented to and approved by the board annually. As a way of operationalizing the second portion of the policy change, the district will implement a system of micro-credentialing, which allows teachers to participate in self-directed or facilitated tracks of courses of study, on topics chosen to align with professional development goals. Teachers will collect and submit artifacts and reflections to evidence their completion of the micro-credential course. In return for their participation, teachers will be awarded digital "badges" to signify that they have acquired a new skill and new knowledge.

I believe that this policy will meet the needs of the Grove School District instructional staff and ultimately benefit the Grove students. The policy change has grown out of my initial program evaluation of Grove's one-to-one technology program (Kohl, 2018). Surveys and focus groups with staff revealed a desire for more input in staff development decisions, more options for staff development, including self-directed learning, and also more opportunities for staff to collaborate on professional learning goals. The work on my change plan (Kohl, 2019a) further revealed a desire for more variety in professional development as well a stronger alignment to the district and school goals. My research underscored the potential power that job-embedded staff

development can have on teacher instructional change and ultimately student learning. I believe that a micro-credentialing program can create a structure that will encourage job-embedded professional development, teacher collaboration, but also ensure that the work aligns with the district and school goals. I also believe that Grove School District has already created a representative group of teachers, administrators, and specialists in its Staff Development Committee, who would be well-suited and willing to take a leadership role in the creation and stewardship of a district program.

This policy document includes a process for creating a district professional learning program, as well as a plan for introducing and developing a micro-credentialing system. Included in this document is a template for creating a micro-credential and a sample micro-credential for reference (Crow, 2017). I have also included research-based frameworks for assessing the professional development program (Guskey, 2002) and also evaluating the technology platform on which micro-credentialing is delivered and managed (Kolb, 2017). Guided by Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (Killion & Crow, 2011) as well as Digital Promise and Learning Forward's research on micro-credentialing (Crow, 2017), the Grove staff development committee will be well-prepared to collaborate on a viable program for professional development and micro-credentialing.

Finally, it is important to note and celebrate the quality of teaching and learning at the Grove School District. The District has a rigorous and relevant curriculum, and teachers have worked diligently to continue to refine their practice through challenging periods of curriculum review, increased student assessment and numerous changes. It is a testament to their professionalism and quality that they crave more responsibility for

their learning and more variety of opportunities to grow together. Research informs us of the power that job-embedded professional development can have for teachers, as well as collaborative learning. If Grove School District can evolve how they plan professional development, and institute creative new ways for teachers to collaborate and learn together, they could not only impact teaching and learning within their district but also serve as a beacon for staff development for other districts across the state of Illinois.

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APPENDIX A: CURRENT BOARD POLICY

Board Policy Manual

Section 5 – Personnel

Title: PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL – Staff Development

Code: 520.03

Status: Active

Adopted: March, 2010

Last Revised: February, 2010

The School Board recognizes the fact that its professional staff should continue to improve their competencies throughout their years of service. To that end, the Board directs the Superintendent to organize a Staff Development Committee whose purpose shall be to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive in-service program which includes professional development activities related to Board and District goals.

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED BOARD POLICY

Board Policy Manual

Section 5 – Personnel

Title: PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL – Staff Development

Code: 520.03b

Status: Draft

Last Revised: February, 2010

The School Board recognizes the fact that its professional staff should continue to improve their competencies throughout their years of service. To that end, the Board directs the Superintendent to organize a Staff Development Committee whose purpose shall be to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive professional growth program.

This program should be aligned with district strategic goals as well as school goals.

The Staff Development Committee shall develop and present annually, a district learning program that:

- Is rigorous, data-driven and tied to board and school goals.
- Uses a variety of approaches and professional development models.
- Is collaborative, learner-centered and involves teachers and administrators in its design.
- Is job-embedded, competency-based and research-based.

The District shall work with the committee and administration to create a credentialing program to provide educators with evidence of the completion of their professional learning experiences.

APPENDIX C: MICRO-CREDENTIAL DESIGN TEMPLATE

(Adapted from Digital Promise Micro-Credential Implementation Plan, 2017)

Goal Area:	
Method: Who is involved in this credential and how will they be working together?	
Method Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and skills that teachers will engage with as they work through this micro-credential. • Who can collaborate with the teacher in pursuing this micro-credential • Suggestions for implementation and focus • Standards and Goal Alignment 	
Supporting Research: Links, downloads and reference materials for teacher to read, watch and review.	
Scoring Description	
What must the teachers successfully achieve in order to achieve this micro-credential?	
Part One: Overview	
What actions must the teacher evidence (participation in committee, PLC, workshop or coaching session)?	Rubric
Part Two: Samples and Artifacts	
What pieces must be submitted as evidence?	Rubric
Part Three: Reflection	
A written reflection on the experience and learning	Rubric

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE MICROCREDENTIAL: TECHNOLOGY COACHING

The following micro-credential sample is taken from the Digital Promise Visionary Leadership for Technology document (Digital Promise, 2018).

Key Method

The digital learning coach works collaboratively with other leaders to envision, plan, implement, and prepare to assess school change initiatives for technology that focus on educator and student results.

Method Components

What Is Visionary Leadership?

A visionary education leader has clear beliefs about what is best for students' academic, social, and emotional learning in their school. These beliefs are developed collaboratively with other stakeholders. A visionary leader embodies his or her school's vision, and all of their actions and decisions align to the vision and advance its implementation. In addition, all initiatives undertaken by the leader align to the vision (Aguilar, 2014).

What Is Powerful Use of Technology?

Using technology powerfully in a school setting means that teachers have fully integrated technology into their classrooms and have created authentic learning experiences with the technology. These learning experiences emphasize collaboration, creativity, and innovation, and they prepare students to be productive digital-age citizens. Technology can also support educators in affirming and advancing their relationships with students,

shrinking equity and accessibility gaps, and adapting learning experiences to meet the diverse needs of all students (Ehsanipour, 2017).

The Roles of an Instructional Coach

The primary purpose of instructional coaching is to improve student learning by providing teacher support. Instructional coaches serve multifaceted roles; defining a coach's role is key to a coaching program's success. Regardless of the design of any one specific coaching program, there are visible similarities in the knowledge and skills coaches need to use and the attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors they must exhibit. The micro-credentials in the Technology Coaching stack align to the 10 roles of school-based coaches that, depending on the need and situation, all coaches take on (Killion and Harrison, 2017):

- Resource provider
- Data coach
- Instructional specialist
- Curriculum specialist
- Classroom supporter
- Learning facilitator
- Mentor
- School leader
- Catalyst for change
- Learner

This micro-credential requires the technology coach to embody the **school leader** role.

Digital Learning Coach as School Leader

The coach:

- Should assume a leadership role in the school to influence changes in practice, keeping in mind that the coach's relationship with the principal is key to their success as a school leader
- Works collaboratively to build and assess the implementation of a school vision

- Should be committed to the school vision and ensure that that commitment is displayed through his or her attitudes and beliefs
- Understands the needs of all educators and students
- Plans, designs, and implements initiatives for school improvement
- Demonstrates school leadership by serving on the school’s improvement team, meeting with other coaches or resource personnel within the school to align services to teachers, and leading or serving on school or district committees
- Represents the perspective of many classrooms and studies patterns of implementation throughout the school
- Serves as a champion for quality teaching and learning
- Maintains a focus for all initiatives on results for educators and students
- Ensures coherence and alignment across all initiatives in the school
- Assesses implementation of initiatives to ensure practices are in place in all classrooms and support teachers as they try to implement initiatives

Components of Crafting a Vision

Developing a strong vision statement for technology will help stakeholders in your school reach a common understanding of what technology use will look like for educators and students. A technology vision is your school’s goal—the state of technology use you hope to see in the future. Use the following steps to create a technology vision (Gabriel, 2009):

- Eliminate obstacles
 - Involve as many stakeholders as possible and ask for open dialogue.
 - Listen to and validate the thoughts and feelings of all who will be affected by a new vision.
 - Create a timeline that allows for deep, not perfunctory, work.
 - Identify the values (behaviors, beliefs, and actions) that the school finds important.
- Discuss examples of vision statements
 - Help everyone understand what a vision statement is.
 - Reach a common understanding of the components of a strong vision statement.
- Review relevant data
 - Help everyone understand where the school is currently.
 - Suggested forms of data for technology use include number of devices, device to student and/or teacher ratios, internet speeds and capabilities, technology usage rates, home technology use surveys, and assessment results.

- You may use a needs assessment, as described below, to gather this data.
 - Discuss where the school would like to go next.
- Develop the vision
 - Collaboratively brainstorm and generate ideas.
 - Wordsmith into a one- or two-sentence vision statement.

Who Can the Digital Learning Coach Collaborate With on the Vision and Plan for Technology?

- School and/or district administration
- Teacher leaders
- Other instructional coaches
- Resource teachers
- School and/or district IT specialists
- Parents and/or community members
- Students
- Professional learning organization members
- Other stakeholders

Suggestions for Implementation

To ensure collaboration, alignment, and focus in development and implementation of the vision, the digital learning coach should participate in the following:

- Serve as the technology coaching expert on the district or school improvement team, representing the perspective and needs of teachers, students, and parents in the realm of technology
- Help develop the school technology vision and mission statement for how the school will use technology effectively
- Serve as the leader on the technology committee when conducting the school needs assessment
- Help develop the school improvement plan, with a specific focus on technology
- Lead or serve on a technology-focused committee at the school or district level that develops guidelines, policies, and/or procedures for effective technology integration
- Take the lead on communicating the technology vision, mission, and plan to teachers so that teachers understand why the district or school has made these decisions

The ISTE Standards for Coaches

The micro-credentials in the Technology Coaching stack align to the 6 ISTE Standards for Coaches. This micro-credential supports standards 1, 1a, and 1b. (See the Research section for more information on the ISTE Standards.)

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1 and 3 and a “Yes” for each component in Part 2.

Submission & Evaluation

Part 1: Overview

Prompt

- What type of committee or school/district improvement team are you currently serving on that will allow you to participate in the development of a technology-integrated vision and plan? Describe the makeup of the technology team and how you ensured that it has diverse representation.
- If such a committee or improvement team does not currently exist, how are you participating in a similar action/activity or creating such a committee or team?
- What is the current technology coaching environment in your school? (For example, is there already a system of expectations for you to be a leader for technology, or is this a new endeavor?)
- What role are you serving in the development of the vision and plan for your school?
- Is there an existing vision and plan the team is updating/refining, or are you crafting these from scratch? If a vision and plan exist, what are they?

Part 2: Work Examples / Artifacts

Prompt

To earn this micro-credential, submit the following pieces of evidence as either a Word document or PDF. If you submit a link, please check the permissions.

- The results of the technology needs assessment you and your team conducted prior to the development of the vision and plan
- The technology-integrated vision for your school
- The technology-integrated plan for your school **Note:** Refer to the Method Components to understand more about each of the criteria listed below in the rubric.

Part 3: Coach Reflection

Prompt

Provide a reflection on your experience, using the following questions as guidance:

- How are you embodying visionary leadership for powerful use of technology?
- How did you contribute to the process of developing a technology-integrated vision and plan? How do you feel about the role you served?
- How have you communicated and supported the implementation of the vision and plan with educators and students, focusing on equity and access for all?
- Moving forward, how do you plan on assessing the impact and implementation of the vision and plan?