

Kindergarten Microcredential Work Group

September 30, 2026

Agenda

- Introductory Framing
- Recap from August 10, 2026 meeting:
 - Current ISBE non-negotiables for each pillar.
 - Questions that cross Pillars
 - Recommendations that Cross Pillars
- Breakout Groups to complete workbook (Pillar VI)
- Whole Group
- Next Steps

Introductory Framing

- Before ISBE moved to a system of licensure from a system of certification, early childhood certification covered birth–grade 3 and elementary certification covered K–grade 9.
- Within a Professional Educator License (PEL): Early Childhood covers birth–grade 2; Elementary covers grades 1–6.
- The narrower bands create an assignability gap.
- District and hiring leaders have flagged this gap to ISBE since 2014.
- Since 2015, short-term approvals (STA) have covered all content areas and grade bands as a first corrective.
- The STA is valid for three years and is non-renewable.
- ISBE added a K-only STA on July 1, 2025.
- The K-only STA is a bridge, not a permanent fix.

Introductory Framing

- In fall 2024, district and building leaders raised the assignability issue with ISBE.
- Their request: restore the previous grade bands to Birth – Grade 3 (ECE) and Kindergarten through Grade 6 (ELEM).
- Note: Changes from the system of certification to the system of licensure led to the identification of specific middle school licenses valid for grades 5 through 8. Thus, the elementary education endorsement needs to only be for kindergarten through grade 6.
- Meetings With stakeholders beginning in the late spring of 2025 led to the identification of two work streams to construct a durable response.
 - Grade Band Modification Work Group
 - K-Only Microcredential Work Group

Introductory Framing

- A microcredential is a focused, job-embedded, evidence-based credential — it demonstrates a specific skill through classroom evidence, not a course grade or seat time.
- Like the grade band workgroup, this workgroup is identifying recommendations for inclusion in administrative code.
- A microcredential is not a new license type.
- Only educators holding a 1–6 elementary PEL endorsement are eligible for the K-Only Microcredential.
- Based on the guiding principles, ISBE sets the fixed requirements — a skeleton framework.
- A microcredential is not a new license type.
- EPPs that wish to offer the K-only microcredential submit their program for ISBE approval, addressing the non-negotiables, evaluation criteria, and program capacity.

Recap from August 10, 2026 Meetings

Pillar I - The WHAT

Current non-negotiables

- One competency statement.
- Content is literacy or mathematics, named before evidence collection begins.
- Pedagogy is inquiry based and aligns with per 105 ILCS 5/10-22.18(a), as amended by PA 104-0555.
- Serves in-service teachers holding an Illinois 1–6 PEL, asynchronous, and job-embedded.

Pillar II - The HOW

Current Non-negotiables

- Inquiry-based approach supported by ongoing observation and authentic assessment.
- All evidence drawn from the candidate's own recent practice as teacher of record.
- Assessment matches pedagogy — a candidate teaching through play assesses within play.
- The credential is evidence of demonstrated practice, not a research essay.

Pillar III - The DETAILS

Current non-negotiables

- Current ideas for required components, each producing evidence:
 1. Developmentally appropriate practice
 2. Inclusive practice in the general-education role (e.g., Special Education and Multilingual students)
 3. Intentional inquiry--based learning
 4. Observation informing instruction and assessment
 5. Reciprocal family partnership
 6. Reflection

Pillar IV - The WHY

Current non-negotiables

- Show that the competency supports children's learning and that the stated method builds it.
- Research, key method and submission requirements align.
- Design-side only. Research/Resources for framing the microcredential are not a candidate deliverable.

Pillar V - The SUPPORTS

Current non-negotiables

- Anchor to one or more of: NAEYC DAP position statement and Professional Standards and Competencies · DEC Recommended Practices and EI/ECSE Standards · IELDS and Illinois Learning Standards for Kindergarten · Gateways ECE Competencies and Competency Toolbox · 105 ILCS 5/10-22.18 as amended · ISBE KIDS User's Guide, Observation Guide and collection strategies...PTA National Standards for Family School Partnerships
- Select at least one: WIDA · Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards · IPES · Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan and/or Numeracy Plan.
- Which readings, how many, in what form — institution's choice. A model family consent letter in families' languages is recommended, not required.

Pillar VI - The EVIDENCE

Current non-negotiables

- Three-part structure:
 1. Questions for context to provide description for evaluators
 2. Work examples and artifacts
 3. Reflection.
- Student-generated evidence required at the classroom and individual level
- Teacher-produced evidence alone is not sufficient.
- Federal, state and district student-data policy supersede any institutional requirement; where district policy is more restrictive, it prevails.
- Written consent before collection, for credentialing review specifically — not a general media release.
- Minimum necessary: transcript over audio, audio over video. Deidentification of student data/PPI from all evidence
- An alternative completion pathway always exists, so no candidate is disadvantaged by a declined consent.
- Secured approved systems • stated retention period • deletion at its end • signed candidate attestation • assessors keep no copies.

Pillar VI - The EVALUATION

Current non-negotiables

- Rubric(s) published in advance. Candidates read the same rubric evaluators use.
- Evaluation of the microcredential ties to ECE competencies.
- Minimum criteria - content· pedagogical· assessment· student-generated evidence · instructional decision-making · depth of reflection. Institutions may require additional criteria
- Every descriptor observable in the evidence, not inferred from it. Assessors calibrated against exemplars before live scoring.
- Two final determinations only — Demonstrated or Developing. No partial award, no letter grade. Criteria do not compensate for one another.
- Multiple evaluators for each submission (i.e., no less than 2).
- A Professional Learning Plan on every criterion below threshold; at least one resubmission, on a stated cadence; feedback within a stated window.
- Evaluators must possess experience in ECE/ELEM preparation, early childhood teaching- experience.
- Submission of evidence for capacity to offer and evaluate a K microcredential.

Questions That Cross the Pillars

- If a currently endorsed elementary teacher is only assignable in grade 1 – grade 6 classrooms, how might candidate collect evidence for the K-only microcredential? [Pillars I and II]
- What, if anything, must an administrator approve or submit as part of the K-only microcredential? [Pillar I] / What is the role, if any, for the administrator in the K-only microcredential? [Pillar II]
- How might the K-only microcredential be evaluated and what does this mean considering ISBE non-negotiables and IHE flexibility...? [Pillars III and V]
- Need clarity on balance between ISBE skeleton in consideration of necessary IHE latitude based upon differences in IHE vision, mission, goals, capacity, and the like. [Pillar III OTHER and Pillar V QUESTIONS]
- What, if any, training ISBE provide to ensure IHE ‘common understandings’ for the K-only microcredential in terms of both scope and fidelity and replication of the non-negotiables...? [Pillar III] / How will ISBE evaluate the degree to which the proposed IHE K-only microcredential supports its non-negotiables...? [Pillar V]

Recommendations that cross the Pillars

- Require that the IHE identify possible ‘logistical considerations’ upfront (e.g., release time, substitute coverage, time demand, district assessment practices, workload, and cost, among others). [Pillars I and II]
- Clarity on evaluation criteria and trainings to ensure fidelity/replication across IHEs... [Pillar III] / Provide a list of outcomes in order that expectations for ‘demonstration of competency’ are clear and able to be applied with fidelity across institutions. [Pillar V]
- Within the ISBE skeleton and IHE submission for approval, what/how to express requirements on data collection, obtaining permission for it), and data security... [Pillar IV, and the QUESTION under Pillar VI – The EVIDENCE]
- Provide clarity on the role of the building/district administration for K-only microcredential... [Pillar II] / Provide information and professional development for principals and administrators. [Pillar V]

Breakout Groups to complete workbook (Pillar VI)

Whole Group

Next Steps

- Prior to 10.6.2026 meeting
 - Summarize and share information from completed workbooks
- At the 10.6.2026 meeting:
 - Share draft rules to memorialize the allowable use of a microcredential for a subsequent endorsement.
 - Consider 'current state of affairs' (e.g., current non-negotiables as informed by questions, recommendations, and other ideas).
 - Discuss cadence of subsequent meetings to finalize ISBE skeleton and collection of feedback on it outside the workgroup.