

Kindergarten Microcredential Work Group

October 6, 2026

Agenda

- Implementation Timeline
- Introductory Framing
- Pillars
 - Questions that cross Pillars
 - Recommendations that cross Pillars
- Implementation Timeline
- Next Steps

Implementation Timeline

Summer–Fall 2026

Grade Band: Alignment work including higher education faculty and district personnel. Focus on identifying early childhood/elementary preparation overlap, play-based learning, family engagement, health/safety/nutrition, and field experiences

Microcredential: Requirements for MC are identified

July 1, 2027

Grade Band: Anticipated effective date for new grade-band rules

Microcredential: Entities can apply for ISBE approval to offer the K only MC.

1

2

Fall–Winter 2026

Proposed modifications go through the rulemaking process for **Grade Band modifications** and **MC** as a means to obtain a subsequent endorsement. .

3

4

3 Year Post-Rule

Programs must submit evidence of alignment to new grade bands.

Introductory Framing

- In fall 2024, district and building leaders raised the Kindergarten assignability issue with ISBE.
- Their request: restore the previous grade bands to Birth – Grade 3 (ECE) and Kindergarten through Grade 6 (ELEM).
- 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
- Beginning in June 2026, the K-Only Microcredential Work Group, consisting of practicing educators and faculty from institutions of higher education, met to learn about microcredentials.
- Specifically, work group members are developing recommendations for a K-Only microcredential for individuals currently holding a valid elementary education PEL to receive a subsequent endorsement on their PEL for assignability in a Kindergarten Classroom.

Pillar I - The WHAT

Current non-negotiables

- One competency statement.
- Content is literacy or mathematics tied to ISBE literacy and numeracy plans, 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.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- State purpose and what a candidate submits before asking for reaction to the competency statement
- Administrator sign-off should not be required; the conversation is logistical, not authorizing
- Cost and credit: who pays, credit toward a lane change, where it sits in the institution
- Candidate fee is assumed but unstated

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.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- Access and coverage is the binding constraint depending upon district configuration
- School-based mentor teacher; supervision by faculty, kindergarten teachers, or building supervisors
- Mentoring in two forms: during the credential and ongoing support after it
- Remediation: a route to completion, with coaching, for a candidate who must resubmit
- Clarity between current understandings of fieldwork as part of educator preparation and microcredential as a means to show competency through/as a job embedded practice for teachers of record.

Pillar III - The DETAILS

Current non-negotiables

- Current ideas for required components, each producing evidence: developmentally appropriate practice · inclusive practice in the general-education role (e.g., Special Education and Multilingual students) · intentional inquiry-based learning · observation informing instruction and assessment · reciprocal family partnership · reflection

Shared themes from workgroup input

- Name play-based learning explicitly, not implicit inside DAP and inquiry-based learning (strongest agreement)
- A rubric for each component, with the scoring detail institutions need
- How a candidate demonstrates each component; can one experience count toward more than one
- What an acceptable reflection 'looks like.'
- Inclusive practice and evidence demonstrating competency of must account for nonverbal children

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.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- Coursework is not a microcredential; no added assignment or research paper
- Two outcomes only: met, or what the candidate can do to meet it; calibration training for consistency across institutions.

Pillar V - The SUPPORTS

Current non-negotiables

- Anchor to one or more recognized standard sets (NAEYC DAP · DEC Recommended Practices · IELDS and Illinois Learning Standards for Kindergarten · Gateways · 105 ILCS 5/10-22.18 · ISBE KIDS guides · PTA Family-School Partnership Standards).
- Select at least one: WIDA · Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards · IPES · Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan and/or Numeracy Plan.
- Readings are the institution's choice; a model family consent letter is recommended, not required.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- State framework should be specific in minimum standard identification/alignment
- Resource package requested: one-page overview, timeline, checklist, recording guidance, mentor or coach, multiple languages
- IHE timeline for completion and evaluation for clarity within the IHE as well as for the candidate and school district.

Pillar VI - The EVIDENCE

Current non-negotiables

- Three-part structure: context questions · work examples and artifacts · reflection.
- Student-generated evidence required; teacher-produced evidence alone is not sufficient.
- District student-data policy prevails where more restrictive.
- Written consent for credentialing review, not a general media release.
- Minimum necessary: transcript over audio, audio over video; deidentify all evidence.
- An alternative completion pathway always exists if consent is declined.
- Secured approved systems · retention period · deletion · signed attestation · assessors keep no copies.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- Consent to participate/collect evidence language should be drafted by state or IHE for clarity and consistency.
- A menu of evidence options and or requirements should be provided as part of the microcredential 'package' so a teacher understands framing and expectations for/means of showing competency.
- Concrete de-identification methods are needed

Pillar VI - The EVALUATION

Current non-negotiables

- Rubrics published in advance; candidates read the same rubric evaluators use.
- Ties to ECE competencies; minimum criteria, with optional institutional additions.
- Every descriptor observable in the evidence; assessors calibrated on exemplars.
- Two determinations only: Demonstrated or Developing.
- At least two evaluators; Professional Learning Plan and at least one resubmission below threshold.
- Evaluators need ECE/ELEM preparation and early childhood teaching experience; institutions submit evidence of capacity.

Shared themes from workgroup input

- Evaluation rubrics: ISBE minimums with option for IHE to add additional evaluation categories.
- Institutional capacity gates whether it is offered: estimate training and evaluation hours; count as instruction, not service
- How to ensure fidelity based upon different IHE vision, values, and capacity.

Questions That Cross the Pillars

- If a currently endorsed elementary teacher is only assignable in grades 1–6, how might a candidate collect evidence for the K-only microcredential? [Pillars I and II]
- What, if anything, must an administrator approve or submit; what is the administrator's role? [Pillars I and II]
- How might the microcredential be evaluated, given ISBE non-negotiables and IHE flexibility? [Pillars III and V]
- What balance between the ISBE skeleton and necessary IHE latitude? [Pillars III and V]
- What training will ISBE provide for IHE 'common understandings,' and how will ISBE evaluate whether proposals support the non-negotiables? [Pillars III and V]
- Who authors the rubric: ISBE, the institution, or both? [Pillars V, VI Evaluation]
- Whose instruments supply the evidence: the candidate's or the host classroom's? [Pillars III, VI Evidence]
- Who pays, and will institutions offer it at low volume? [Pillars I, VI Evaluation]

Recommendations that cross the Pillars

- Require IHEs to identify logistical considerations upfront (release time, substitute coverage, time demand, district assessment practices, workload, cost). [Pillars I and II]
- Clarify evaluation criteria and training for fidelity across IHEs; provide a list of outcomes so 'demonstration of competency' is clear. [Pillars III and V]
- Within the skeleton and IHE submission, express requirements on data collection, permission, and data security. [Pillar IV and Pillar VI Evidence]
- Clarify the role of building and district administration; provide information and professional development for principals and administrators. [Pillars II and V]
- Provide state templates for parental consent and student assent, in multiple languages. [Pillars V, VI Evidence]
- Give concrete de-identification methods, not only the requirement. [Pillars V, VI Evidence]
- Supply a resource package: one-page overview, timeline, checklist, mentor or coach pairing. [Pillars II, V]
- Estimate training and evaluation hours; define the work as instruction, not service. [Pillars I, VI Evaluation]

Implementation Timeline Revisted

Summer–Fall 2026

Grade Band: Alignment work including higher education faculty and district personnel. Focus on identifying early childhood/elementary preparation overlap, play-based learning, family engagement, health/safety/nutrition, and field experiences

Microcredential: Requirements for MC are identified

July 1, 2027

Grade Band: Anticipated effective date for new grade-band rules

Microcredential: Entities can apply for ISBE approval to offer the K only MC.

1

2

Fall–Winter2026

Proposed modifications go through the rulemaking process for **Grade Band modifications** and **MC** as a means to obtain a subsequent endorsement. .

3

4

3 Year Post-Rule

Programs must submit evidence of alignment to new grade bands.

Next Steps

- Discuss cadence of subsequent meetings to finalize the ISBE skeleton and collection of feedback on it outside the workgroup.
 - November 2026
 - January 2026
 - February 2027
 - April 2027
- Share the model for broader feedback in March 2027.
- Draft rules in place so institutions can begin submitting microcredential for approval beginning July 1, 2027.