Harmony Micro-credential Initiative FAQ

1) **What is a micro-credential?**

A micro-credential is a form of micro-certification earned by demonstrating competency in one specific skill at a time, via a portfolio of evidence, created through classroom practice.

Micro-credentials **are**: competency-based, personalized, self-directed, available on-demand, job-embedded, demonstration of new or existing expertise, learning by doing and applying, portfolio-based assessments of a specific competency or skill.

Micro-credentials **are not**: seat-time based, one size fits all, separate from teachers' classroom contexts, available only at set times, traditional online course or class, learning by absorbing.

2) **What is BloomBoard?**

BloomBoard is the online platform where you will engage with micro-credentials, build your online portfolio, access resources, collaborate with your peers, submit your micro-credential for review, and ultimately earn micro-credentials!

3) **What role-specific micro-credentials are currently available?**

Educators who currently hold one of the roles listed below have, or will soon have, access to BloomBoard:

New Teacher / Induction
Curriculum Writers
System Course Leaders
PLC Leaders
Mentor Teachers (accounts pending!)
Campus Leadership (Principals, Deans of Academics, Deans of Students)
Pre-Service Principals
Instructional Coaches
College Counselors
Interventionists
Department Chairs
Non-Tested Teachers
Gifted and Talented Teachers
Gifted and Talented Coordinators
ESL Specialists
Special Education Teachers (accounts pending!)

4) **How do I access my BloomBoard account?**

You can sign in at https://my.bloomboard.com/

If you are not sure if you have a BloomBoard account, try clicking **[Forgot Password]** and entering your Harmony email address. Next, look for an email from do.not.reply@bloomboard.com.

Note: If you click **[Sign up]** this will only enable you to "browse" BloomBoard micro-credentials and you will not be able to submit. See FAQ #7 for details on how to access Harmony-specific programs and micro-credentials.

5) **I've signed in! How do I get started?**

Sign in to your BloomBoard account at https://my.bloomboard.com/

1. Click the blue "program tile" on your Dashboard
2. Review the "program overview" which contains information and resources about the program
3. Review the "milestones" which provide a suggested timeline for completion
4. Click on the "micro-credential tile" and click "Get Started"
5. Click the "micro-credential tile" to begin working and uploading evidence

6) **Why don't I have a BloomBoard account?**

There are a few reasons why you might not have a BloomBoard account including:
● You do not currently hold any of the roles listed in bullet #3
● You hold a role, but your name has not yet been provided to BloomBoard
● Your role and its associated micro-credentials is still in development

If you do not have a BloomBoard account but would like one, please see question FAQ #7.

If you are not sure if you have a BloomBoard account, try clicking **[Forgot Password]** and entering your Harmony email address. Next, look for an email from do.not.reply@bloomboard.com.

7) **I don't have an account and would like to participate, what are my next steps?**

Please review this document for information about accessing Harmony's BloomBoard programs and micro-credentials.

8) **I have an account/access to a program(s), but would like to participate in different or additional program(s), what are my next steps?**

Please review this document for information about accessing Harmony's BloomBoard programs and micro-credentials.

9) **Am I guaranteed a position in a role if I earn micro-credentials in the program aligned to that role?**

There are many factors that determine one's eligibility for a role. You can find many of these qualifications outlined in the "Role Qualifications" section of the role card (here's an [example](#)). Note: All role cards are linked in the Program Overview on BloomBoard.

To this end, earning micro-credentials will not *guarantee* you a specific role within Harmony, but earned micro-credentials may be a factor in determining your eligibility for a role and will most likely increase your chances of being selected for that role. Additionally, by earning micro-credentials on a role card you show your interest, initiative, and competence in skills that are essential to that role. Add earned micro-credentials to your resume, LinkedIn, email signature line, etc.

10) **Where can I learn more about the career pathways initiative at Harmony?**

Watch [this brief Q&A](#) with Burak Yilmaz, Harmony Project Director!

11) **Am I required to earn micro-credentials?**

Check with your supervisor or administrator regarding any requirements for earning micro-credentials during the 2019-20 school year. Increasingly, micro-credentials will play a factor in determining role eligibility. Micro-credential earners will have strong preference when seeking promotions or new positions within Harmony.

See FAQ #12 for the many great incentives for earning micro-credentials!

12) **What incentives are available for earned micro-credentials and participation in the BloomBoard program?**

There are many incentives for earning micro-credentials including:
- Stipends: $200/earned micro-credential stipend (up to 8 per year) for eligible roles (teachers, counselors, campus coordinators and campus instructional coaches). TIF and non-TIF campuses will receive the same stipend in 2019-20.
- 15 CPE hours awarded for earned micro-credentials.
- Be recognized for your professional learning and showcase your expertise.
- Collaborate and learn with educators across the organization.
- Help shape the future of career pathways at Harmony!

13) **What are other educators at Harmony saying about micro-credentials?**

Here's what participating educators had to say about their experience with micro-credentials:
https://vimeo.com/313277823/70b04d127a

Updated 8/26/2019

14) When will I receive my stipend for my earned micro-credentials?

Micro-credential stipends will be paid in three lump sum payments.

- Your December paycheck will include a stipend for all micro-credentials earned from August to mid-December.
- Your May paycheck will include a stipend for all micro-credentials earned from mid-December to mid-May.
- One of your summer paychecks will include another stipend for any micro-credentials earned from mid-May to August.

15) What are the requirements of the micro-credentials I'll be completing?

Micro-credentials are portfolio-based assessments of a specific competency or skill. Each micro-credential is structured according to the "ADDIE": Analyze - Design - Develop - Implement - Evaluate instructional design model. In each micro-credential, you'll analyze your current practice, design and/or develop a new and improved teaching or leadership practice, implement that practice, and evaluate the success of the exercise.

Read and discuss the micro-credential to understand what evidence can be submitted to earn the micro-credential.

Here are a few tips on completing your first micro-credential:

- Read the entire micro-credential before getting started to understand the scope
  - Understand the submission requirements
  - Deconstruct the rubrics
- Backwards plan to determine when you will collect evidence
  - Set goals and mark them on your calendar
- Collaborate with your peers in BloomBoard Discussion or in person, if possible
- Seek formative feedback on your evidence before submitting
  - Find your coach, mentor, dean, PLC leader, department head--it is their job to support your professional learning!
- Do not let perfection or fear keep you from submitting--you can resubmit if you do not earn on your first try!

16) How long does it take to complete a micro-credential?

Since a micro-credential is a micro form of certification indicating that an educator has demonstrated a specific competency, the time dedicated to the completion of a micro-credential varies and often depends on the educator's expertise and familiarity with the competency being assessed. Most micro-credentials, however, take somewhere between 5 - 20 hours to complete and can be completed in a 4-6 week time period.

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Remember, though your facilitator or program may provide suggested milestones, micro-credentials are self-paced!

17) How strict are the word limits?

The word limits you will find provided in the micro-credentials are guidelines intended to show the general expectations around length. As such, it is OK to exceed or fall short of the word count provided. First and foremost, the assessors will be evaluating your submission against the rubric criteria.

18) How do I annotate my work?

If a requirement asks you to "annotate" your evidence, there are many ways to this including, but not limited to, the following methods:
- Create your evidence Word and use the [comment feature](#)
- Upload your evidence in a number of formats (Word, PDF, slides, image, etc.) and annotate directly in the BloomBoard platform using the [annotation button](#)
- Create your evidence Google docs and use the [comment feature](#)
  - Note: if using Google docs, please make sure that your share settings are such that "anyone with the link" can view (otherwise, the assessors will not be able to evaluate your submission).
- Print your evidence and add handwritten annotations in the margins/using post-its. Once annotations are added, scan or submit pictures of your evidence with annotations.
  - Note: be sure that assessors can clearly read your handwriting.

Please use any of the above methods or the approach that works best for you.

19) By which date do I have to submit my micro-credential?

Educators will be removed from any programs in which they have not earned at least one micro-credential by July 1st.

Please factor in time for assessment and resubmission (which may be necessary). Since most micro-credentials require access to students or other educators, please also take into consideration times of year where this access may be limited (testing season, summer, etc.).

Role-based accounts will be updated on a yearly basis as new rosters are established (i.e. if you are a PLC Leader in 2019-20 but are not a PLC Leader in 2020-21 you will likely lose access to the PLC Leader program).

20) Who reviews my micro-credential submissions?

When you make a micro-credential submission, your submission is reviewed--and evaluated against the rubric--by an expert **assessor** and **approver** who have been calibrated by the **issuer**, the organization who authored and designed the micro-credential.

The **approver** oversees the review process, determines whether the submission meets the evaluation criteria, and ultimately awards the micro-credential to the applicant. The submission process is anonymous and assessors and approvers are *not* employed by Harmony.

Read more about micro-credential assessment [here](#).

21) How long will it take for my micro-credential to be assessed?

Once you submit your micro-credential for review by an assessor, you receive an email confirming the receipt of your application. Your submission is reviewed by the assessor using the evaluation criteria in the rubric provided for each requirement. *Note: you must complete all the requirements before you can submit to an assessor.*

Once the assessment is complete, you receive an email notification letting you know the status of your submission.

It takes approximately 7 days review and assess micro-credential submissions. Each assessment includes a rubric rating and feedback from the assessor.

22) What happens if I do not earn on my first submission?

The work of teachers is challenging and complex, so the micro-credentials are correspondingly rigorous. As such, it is possible that not every educator will pass every micro-credential the first time. However, unlike other types of assessment, you will receive feedback on your evidence and artifacts and will have the opportunity to resubmit (there is no limit to the number of times you may resubmit). There are also a variety of online supports built into the BloomBoard platform, including the opportunity to collaborate with facilitators and peers as you put together your portfolio of work prior to submission.

23) I'm not sure where to get started--who can I reach out to for help?

If you need help, please don't hesitate to reach out for support! Here are some people you can contact:
- Request help from a BloomBoard facilitator, and other program participants across Harmony, in Discussion on the BloomBoard platform
- Ask your campus administrator(s), a mentor teacher, and/or an Instructional Coach for help
- If you are a PLC Leader, consider reaching out to your Teach Plus coach for support

- Partner with a colleague or friend (or a group of colleagues or friends!); set goals together and request feedback from one another throughout the submission process
- BloomBoard Support (support@bloomboard.com) is always standing by to help

24) What is the role of a BloomBoard facilitator in Collaborate (Discussions) on BloomBoard?

Educators working on micro-credentials have access to online discussions through the Collaborate feature in the BloomBoard platform. These discussions include peers working on micro-credentials and facilitators who provide guidance, reminders, encouragement, and tips for earning micro-credentials. The facilitators are in the discussion to support educators, but they do not have access to educators' micro-credential evidence, submission, or assessment.

Read more about BloomBoard facilitation here.

25) A colleague and I worked on our micro-credential together, can we submit the same work?

Professional learning is a collaborative experience, and we recognize that educators may choose to work with their peers to develop the competencies required to earn a micro-credential. It is important to remember that while elements of a micro-credential may be completed by a team of educators who worked together, *every micro-credential submission must be unique and reflect the efforts of the individual educator who is submitting it.*

Before you begin, please be sure to review these guidelines for collaboration.

26) Who should I contact for help or more information?

For help with the BloomBoard platform visit the BloomBoard Help Center at support.bloomboard.com or contact our Support Team at support@bloomboard.com.

For questions about the career pathways initiative at Harmony, contact Burak Yilmaz at byilmaz@harmonytx.org.

For support integrating micro-credentials into your campus culture, you can request a personalized support session from the H-STEP team here.