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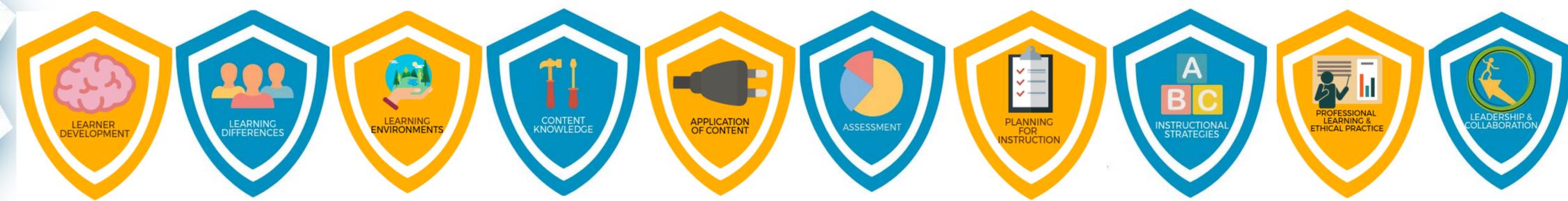
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Student Perceptions of Micro-credentialing through Digital Badges

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10 prospective badges related to the InTASC standards for Model Teaching

Research in social psychology and common marketing practices suggest that our current generations participate more when there is some level of gratification. In some occurrences, a reward is applied instantaneously, while in others, the reward serves as a benchmark for completion in the process of reaching a much loftier goal. Common examples of this practice include frequent flyer miles, points earned at gas stations, level-up rewards on video games, coupons at the local grocer, and the like.

Along this same line of thinking, there exists a platform for learning experiences where learners have the ability to gain acknowledgement for content being mastered along their educational journey, called micro-credentialing. A traditional model for a micro-credential would be a certificate. Digital badges, which are a form of micro-credentialing, serve as a "validated indicator of accomplishment" that can be used to further vest a student into their learning (Carey, 2012). Digital badges are visual in nature and have a number of benefits (Antin & Churchill, 2011).

This project looks at student perceptions of digital badges as a form of micro-credentialing for students in teacher education programs at Western Michigan University. As a means to connect the concepts to already-existing rigorous requirements for teacher education, the project uses the standards from the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Teaching Standards to create badges that students would earn along the way in pursuit of their degrees.

The survey proposes that badges would be connected to the learning within existing curricula which is aligned with InTASC and state standards for the delivery of quality K-12 education. Upon mastery of the learning objectives for each course in their program, the student would earn a badge.

Implementation of a digital badge project could in theory give students the motivation to finish, a sense of gratification while working toward a loftier goal, and give graduates a professional edge when engaging with employers. In turn, the institution could experience higher retention rates of quality future educators within teaching programs and a reputation for engaging in cutting-edge practices in post-secondary education.

METHODOLOGY

Students completed a 20-question survey where they answered questions about their perceptions of digital badges in relation to the InTASC standards, badge evaluation, and dissemination of information.



Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education students responded to the survey.

STUDENT CONCERNS

Note: Students were only asked to provide comment if their response to a question was "maybe" or "no." In all question items, there were more students in favor of the badges than against them.

"It seems like one more thing that we would be trying to get... I want to learn to not have the pressure of getting badges and having that unnecessary competition..."

"I would like to know how much longer it would take me to graduate if I were to try and complete as an undergrad."

CONCLUSIONS

- Most students who participated in the study were unfamiliar with InTASC standards before the discussion on digital badges persisted, and believed digital badges would make them more familiar with model teaching requirements.
- More students than not would be willing to work toward or consider the completion of digital badges as an earned requirement that counted toward completion. Students trust the expertise of their faculty to evaluate badge completion.
- More students than not would be willing to share their badge results with parents/families to communicate their classroom strengths. A fewer amount of students were willing to let future employers gain access to this information.
- Most students would be in favor of a continuation of digital badges at the master's level to further support competencies and provide an edge for employment.

DATA RESULTS



Percentage of students who were unfamiliar with digital badges before this project

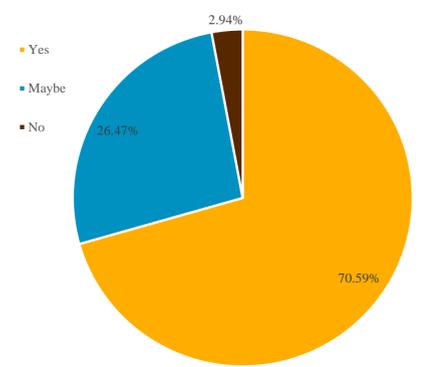


Percentage of students who would be in support of a digital badge effort. 26% of students were neutral.



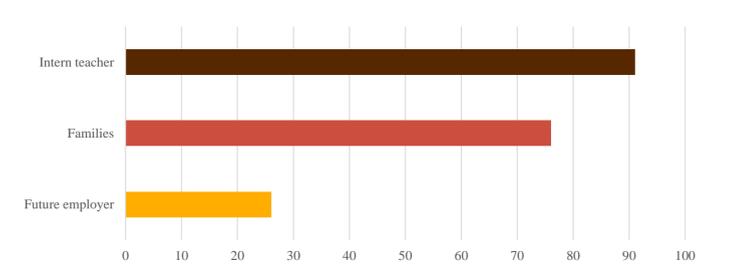
Percentage of students who were unfamiliar with InTASC standards before this project. 56% of students believed digital badges would help them to become more familiar with model standards.

Would you be willing to work toward 10 badges at the undergraduate level?



82% of students would be supportive of a badge effort if they knew the same standards would be used at the master's level.

Level of Comfort with Dissemination of Information



DEMONSTRATED MASTERY OF CURRICULA IN CLASSROOM SETTING + STUDENT PERFORMANCE = EARNED BADGE
(preferred formula for badge earning at 76%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introduce digital badges on the E-learning platform as a means to introduce more students to the concepts and collect more data on student perceptions.
- Link some digital badge requirements to general education courses to serve as an anchor for students who have not yet been admitted to upper level courses
- Discuss continued linkages between the undergraduate and graduate curricula for teacher education.

REFERENCES

Antin, Judd; Churchill, Elizabeth F. (2011). Badges in social media: A social psychological perspective. *CHI*, 2011.
Carey, K. (2012, April 8). A future full of badges. Retrieved June 28, 2017, from www.chronicle.com/article/A-Future-Full-of-Badges/131455/

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Please note: This project is hypothetical in nature with intentions to only collect data on the subject matter. There are no current plans for implementation.

