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Stackable Credentials for Career Advancement

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Abstract

The Center for Inclusive Excellence (CIE) at Coppin State University aims to simultaneously improve the quality and value of education while increasing access and success through credential innovation. This presentation spotlights CIE's Stackable Credentials, uniquely engineered as model career ladders to improve teacher effectiveness, increase teacher retention, and accelerate teacher leadership development. These innovative pathways provide educators with both the short-term advantage of earning one or more post-baccalaureate certificates and the longer-term option of earning an advanced degree with salary incentives and national prestige (Huang, 2022). The stackable credentials include four post-baccalaureate certificates and a Master of Education in Teacher Leadership.

Supported by strategic partnerships and federal funding, the stackable credentials were launched in Fall 2023 at no cost to participating educators. The initiative is implemented through a rural-urban network that includes two institutions of higher education and four school systems. The CIE Executive Director and Principal Investigator will share strategies, progress, and challenges related to academic policy alignment, curriculum engineering, partnership development, innovative instructional delivery, competency-based assessment, funding structures, scalability, and sustainability. The presentation will first examine five strategic principles that guide credential innovation and will share implementation processes and outcomes from the first two years. Evidence will include competency evaluation results, course completion data, participant and faculty surveys, and findings from external evaluation. Early results highlight strong rates of competency mastery and emerging evidence of improved retention. Finally, the presentation will discuss lessons learned, promising practices, and scalability within the rapidly evolving educational and employment ecosystems.

Keywords: Credential Innovations; Competencybased-Based Pathways; Career Advancement; Teacher Education; Stackable Credentials