



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 23, 2017

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent 
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports

SUBJECT: Digital Badges - Documenting Student Competencies

Since the passage of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) in 2006, student credit is based on demonstrated proficiency and not seat time. Districts are responsible for determining these proficiency measures. This law complements the Governor's call for Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace learning and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Top 10 in 10 goal of personalized learning for all students. Furthermore, districts have the flexibility to decide how students' knowledge and skills are shared with postsecondary institutions and potential employers (i.e. transcripts). Finally, advances in technology, including Student Information Systems (SIS) and the data hubs support districts that are looking for ways to better share the authentic work that students have mastered. Digital badges allow students to share with a variety of audiences what they know and can do. This [short video](#) provides an introduction to digital badges. The technology is exciting because badge providers can construct a badge to include the academic standards and 21st century skills as well as other competencies gained through the learning experience. Unlike credit based on course completion, a badge is a digital portfolio that includes authentic evidence of student proficiency.

The badge presents an opportunity to thoughtfully personalize learning for each student by allowing educators to see what demonstrated competencies students already bring to the learning environment. It also encourages more defined relationships and communication between the out-of-school time world and the formal system. An example of digital badging and credit issuance is taking place through the Section 99h FIRST Robotics Grants, a grant program managed by the MDE. Grantees agreed to:

- Be willing to offer elective high school credits for students who have successfully logged 60 hours, provided the team attends a minimum of two FIRST in Michigan district competitions.
- Be willing to participate in the digital badging program established by the statewide FIRST Robotics team of coaches.

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The FIRST in Michigan organization has developed a badging system to support districts and coaches issue digital badges. More information can be found at:
<https://www.firstbadges.com/>.

For more information about granting credit or the MMC, please visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document. For more information about the Section 99h FIRST Robotics Program, access the [grant criteria here](#). For questions about how you might consider using digital badges or any of the above information contact:

- Lorraine Thoreson, ThoresonL@michigan.gov, 21st CCLC / After School Programming
- Gregg Dionne, DionneG@michigan.gov, Curriculum and Instruction Unit
- Ann-Marie Mapes, MapesA@michigan.gov, FIRST Robotics and Educational Technology

cc: Michigan Education Alliance