Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

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INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) today awarded 58 schools across 40 counties with $10 million in Employability Skills Innovation and Implementation Grant funding. The grant will help students develop in-demand employability skills that prepare them to meet the ever-changing needs of today's workforce.

A complete list of grant recipients is available here.

"For years, as a state and a country, we have relied almost wholly on a single test score to best determine student and school progress," said Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education. "While we know that academic mastery is essential to providing a strong foundation for a student's future success, there are a number of other characteristics that also matter. This includes making sure students are equipped with skills like the ability to respectfully communicate and collaborate with others. The schools receiving this grant will be on the cutting edge of determining how best to measure these important skills, not just through an assessment, but through experiences. Congratulations to all of the awardees who are helping to lead this educational progress in understanding how skill development can be measured across Indiana."

As part of their grant proposals, schools detailed how they will leverage these funds to help students showcase proficiency in Indiana Employability Skills and how they will work with partners to help blur the lines between pre-K-12, higher education and the workforce through career exploration, engagement and experiences. Successful grant proposals included a strategic plan to evaluate program implementation and report data on student outcomes.

Originally slated for $7 million, an overwhelming number of high-scoring applicants expanded the total award amount to $10 million. Grant funding is allocated as part of the state's federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II plan.

In conjunction with this grant, IDOE also announced a partnership with All4Ed and BloomBoard to pilot a set of micro-credentials, which could also be known as skill development badges, that signal student mastery of career-readiness skills needed for

success after high school. The pilot will launch this fall at Mitchell High School in Lawrence County, Purdue Polytechnic High School-South Bend in St. Joseph County and Irvington Community High School in Marion County.

By earning micro-credentials, students will gain credentials that they can take with them across industries. Specifically, the pilot will standardize micro-credentials for the Indiana Employability Skills of communication, collaboration and work ethic. These skills are aligned with approved characteristics of the Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed performance dashboard, which will also launch this fall, and are one example of how Indiana is re-envisioning how educational progress is measured and tailored to individual students.

"With so many young people – particularly our underserved students – becoming disconnected from school during the pandemic, it is more important than ever to build career-connected pathways from high school to and through higher education," said Deborah S. Delisle, president and CEO of All4Ed. "However, it is also critical to measure if students completing these pathways have attained employability skills needed to build successful careers. The micro-credentials tested during this pilot will help recognize high school students who have acquired essential career skills and provide valuable information about recent graduates to employers and higher education institutions."

IDOE will work with state and community partners to evaluate the success of micro-credential completion and will work to determine whether to scale the program to students statewide upon conclusion of the pilot.