

# McDowell Institute Micro-credentials

## *What is a Micro-credential?*

A micro-credential is a short, competency-based recognition that allows an aspiring or currently practicing educator and related human service provider to demonstrate expertise in a particular area or topic. McDowell Institute micro-credentials are virtual and grounded in research and best practice and designed to be:

**Personalized:** You can create your own learning journey based on your interests and career goals.

**Flexible:** You can study, learn and grow when convenient for you in an asynchronous manner.

**Performance-based:** You are awarded the relevant micro-credential based on demonstrated expertise.



### What is the Benefit of Completing Micro-credentials?

There are two primary benefits for completing micro-credentials. First, completion of a micro-credential expands both knowledge and expertise in that topical area. This knowledge and those skills further prepare you to meet the needs of young children and K-12 students. Second, documentation of completed micro-credentials further bolsters your professional portfolio and can further increase professional opportunities.

### What Micro-credentials are Available?

Micro-credentials are being offered in four different aligned topical areas. Each of these micro-credentials has no enrollment or tuition cost. The only exception is for those professionals who wish to receive Act 48 continuing education credits through the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Act 48 credit is projected to be available for each of these micro-credentials in the Fall of 2021. Each micro-credential requires approximately 8 – 10 hours to complete, with each comprised of asynchronous virtual modules housed in a google classroom environment, a post-assessment and an individual project. Those professionals requesting Act 48 credit will also be required to complete a self-reflective report highlighting the application of knowledge and skills learned through the relevant micro-credential on impact with young children and/or K-12 students. The micro-credentials currently available this Fall '21 include:

**Bullying Prevention** (there are five distinct bullying prevention micro-credentials available): Bullying Prevention in PK Programs, Bullying Prevention in K – 4 Programs, Bullying Prevention in Middle School, Bullying Prevention in High Schools, and Comprehensive Bullying Prevention PK- 12. Each of these micro-credentials highlights effective approaches to prevent bullying in schools and, in the event it does occur, methods to mitigate the adverse effects of bullying behavior.

**Youth Suicide Prevention:** This micro-credential highlights the increasing rise of youth mental health challenges, the relationship between risk and protective factors associated with suicide risk, decoding signs and symptoms of mental health challenges and

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responding to youth in emotional distress, and applying multi-tiered logic to youth suicide prevention endeavors. This particular micro-credential provides the added value of earning a certificate from Prevent Suicide PA as a result of the completion of the Suicide Prevention for Educators asynchronous virtual gatekeeper training.

**\*Coming Soon\*** Trauma-informed Practice in Schools: This micro-credential defines important terms and concepts associated with trauma and trauma-informed practices in schools as well as highlights the relationship between risk and protective factors related to trauma and our roles as educators. The terminology and trauma-informed approaches emphasized align with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's document entitled Empowerment Through Common Language in Pennsylvania: A Dictionary of Terms Related to Trauma-informed Approaches in Schools and helps educators and practitioners develop a functional understanding of the neuroscience behind trauma along with trauma-informed universal practices.

How many Micro-credentials can I complete and Where can I Learn More?

There is no limit to the number of micro-credentials that any given aspiring or practicing professional may complete. For more information, contact Danielle Empson (dempson@bloomu.edu).

## Expanding Regional Capacity to Prevent Youth Suicide

Networking and collaboration are a hallmark of the McDowell Institute in its efforts to expand capacity in schools and communities. Collaboration is essential to address the continually growing levels of youth mental health needs across our schools and communities, especially as we experience the recovery process associated with the pandemic.

One of the youth mental health priorities within the immediate five-county region championed by the McDowell Institute and its regional partners is to further enhance school-based social-emotional learning and mental health resources in a sustainable manner. One of many aligned strategies to address this priority being implemented by the Social Emotional Wellness Community of Practice (SEW CoP) has been to gradually build capacity across the 17 local school districts and three vocational technical centers to provide an array of evidence-based youth suicide prevention trainings for educational staffs. As was highlighted in the last edition of this newsletter, the SEW CoP operates as a network that provides easily accessible technical assistance, professional development, and resources for schools and early childhood education programs emphasizing evidence-based, trauma-informed services and supports to address the social-emotional-behavioral needs of young children through school-age youth within the CSIU five-county region.



Building additional capacity to provide youth suicide prevention training accomplishes two main objectives: 1) it positions these school systems to build into their professional development plans this type of training in a sustainable manner and 2) it positions the McDowell Institute in concert with local partners to increasingly invest their time and energy in strategic ways beyond providing these important trainings to staff across schools. The two primary youth suicide prevention programs that serve as the focal point for this capacity building are Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) and Question – Persuade – Refer (QPR).

*"As a teacher, I have always been advised to watch what I say to students who are experiencing signs of mental health or substance abuse issues, so I don't cross over into an area of counseling. As well-intentioned as this advice had been, it left me feeling helpless when it came to supporting students in need. The YMHFA course helped me navigate through those murky waters to support my students. This program has fit into my life in a very practical and natural hands-on way."*

-Anonymous Teacher

*"QPR is the best two-hour professional development experience I have ever had...powerful and helpful to me as I work with youth and young adults experiencing emotional distress or in crisis."*

-Anonymous School-based Behavioral Health Consultant

A strong and continuously growing network of QPR trainers has been initially established within the immediate five-county region through the collaborative endeavors of the SEW CoP over the past 18 months. This network comprises close to 30 professional educators employed by local schools that has been delivering QPR training for over a year. This network continues to be guided and

supported by the McDowell Institute through partnership within the SEW CoP.

Relatedly, and in an aligned manner this Fall '21 a regional network of credentialed YMHFA instructors will be established. Currently, a small collaborative group of YMHFA instructors exists between the McDowell Institute and a local United Way office. While this group has provided initial YMHFA training across several local school systems the past few years, the need for this training exceeds the time availability of this existent team.

Therefore, in a parallel manner, as previously described with QPR, this group will be systematically expanded to include additional credentialed YMHFA instructors employed by local school systems. Through a partnership with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, the McDowell Institute will facilitate the credentialing process through the National Council on Emotional Well-being and provide longitudinal support to this emerging regional network of YMHFA Instructors.

## SUPPORTING A STUDENT EXPERIENCING EXTREME DISTRESS ... UNDERSTANDING THE CRISIS CYCLE

The frequency and intensity of students experiencing extreme distress that can lead to crisis-level situations has been on the rise for some time in alignment with the increasing levels of mental health challenges being experienced by school-age youth. This increasing pattern is likely to continue based on preliminary data associated with the recovery process of the pandemic.

Crisis situations can happen in a variety of situations. Relatedly, how one responds to a crisis is influenced by cultural factors. While there is no exact step-by-step script one should follow or actions that should be applied to every single crisis situation, it is helpful to plan in advance with a knowledge of important considerations and some general strategies that can be adapted to fit most crisis situations that may emerge with K-12 youth.

Just as the old adage of "beauty being in the eye of the beholder" reflects a healthy degree of subjectivity, it is important to acknowledge that what one person views as a crisis may be viewed differently by someone else. Further, our interpretations of situations tend to vary from day to day based on our own internal state of mind ... understand our perspective is based on what we value and our beliefs ... in concert with the events occurring at any given moment in time.

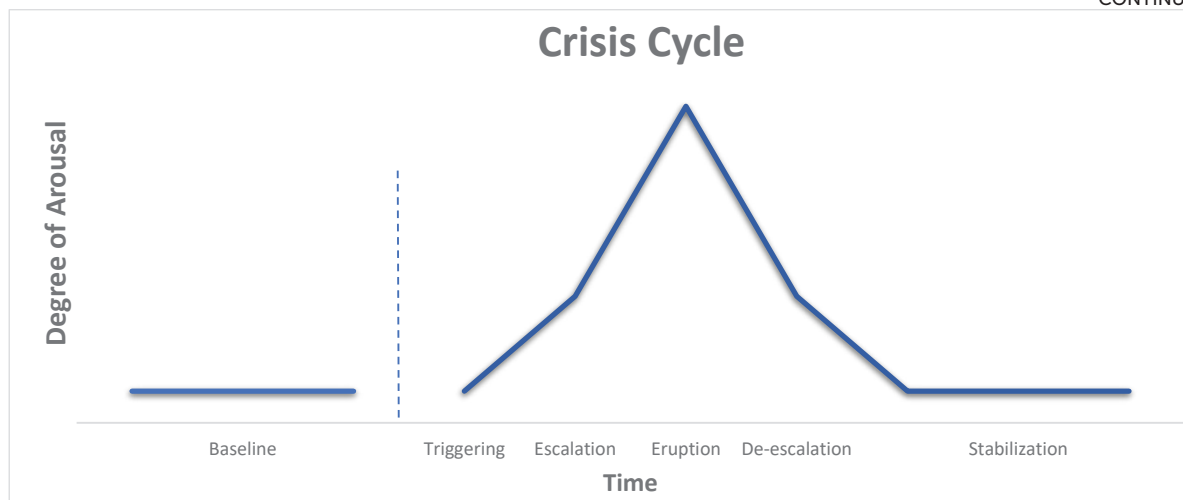
Given these factors, it is helpful to start by providing some parameters as to what constitutes a "crisis," with the understanding that the following still occur along a continuum requiring personal judgement and interpretation. The following three general descriptions of a crisis situation are proposed for consideration:

- The student is at risk of physical or emotional harm or injury
- Other people in the setting are at risk of physical or emotional harm or injury
- There appears to be a high likelihood of significant property damage or extreme disruption to the environment

### The Crisis Cycle and Considerations to Guide Our Actions

It is important to understand the nature of the crisis cycle to inform our decision-making when a situation that reflects any or all of

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the previously proposed types of crises arise with a student. The initial phase of this cycle is typically referred to as “baseline,” which reflects the typical ebb and flow of the student’s behavior under normal conditions.

The entry phase post-baseline that can lead to a crisis-level situation is referred to as the triggering phase. This arousal phase reflects exposure of the student to a triggering event, which can be either internal or external. External triggering events are comprised of things that occur in the physical environment that serve as a catalyst to a response by the student (e.g., physical proximity to non-preferred peer, verbal corrective feedback provided by a teacher, being denied access to desired materials or interactions). Examples of internal triggers can include the student feeling tired, ill, and/or anxious. It is important to understand that what is occurring in the observable physical setting is associated with prior learning history and experiences that reflect core issues germane to that particular student’s social emotional and behavioral wellness. This is particularly relevant when considering the challenges that can arise in school for a student navigating exposure to traumatic events and/or adverse childhood experiences such as abuse or neglect. The more insight we have about the life experiences of the young children and students we teach, the better we become positioned to minimize exposure to potentially triggering events and thus reduce the risk of re-traumatization and crisis situations.

As a result of exposure to the triggering event(s) the student experiences the escalation phase where their stress-response system impacts thought patterns and subsequent behavior. Sometimes the student may increasingly engage in overt behaviors that are easily noticeable (e.g., yelling, physically touching others, crying). Other times the behaviors may be more subtle as a result of the thought processing of the student (e.g., appearing totally unresponsive, dramatically withdrawing from interactions, seeming to freeze in time and space). The manner of how any particular student responds throughout the escalation phase is the direct result of that student’s window of tolerance which relates to how their stress-response system is operating at that time. The more observant we are in advance, during baseline conditions, the greater our insight which can help us to provide effective support to the student to de-escalate crisis situations should they arise. One essential de-escalation strategy to employ during this phase is to remove exposure to the triggering event(s). During both the triggering and escalation phases prior to a full-blown crisis situation, we continue operating within what can be referred to as teachable moments or instructional mode.

While still engaging in de-escalation strategies, we increasingly focus our attention on safety and protection from harm if our de-escalation efforts do not thwart an eruption into a crisis-level situation. Specifically, while continuing to compassionately de-escalate, we need to assess the immediate situation for risk of harm to the student experiencing the crisis and others (including ourselves) and relatedly the risk of significant property damage and extreme disruption to the environment. In this sense, we are less in an instructional mode as previously noted during the triggering and escalation phases and more in actual crisis intervention mode at this point in time.

Depending on the nature of the crisis, we are employing strategies in an assertive (not aggressive) manner to protect all parties from physical or emotional harm (e.g., guiding the student to a quiet, safe space, guiding others in proximity to the student experiencing the crisis to an alternative safe space away from the immediate setting, implementing safe crisis intervention procedures for which we are qualified to implement to protect the well-being of all involved in the crisis). When de-escalating and supporting a student experiencing a crisis, pay close attention to what you have the most immediate influence over— your behavior. Try to use minimal words where feasible when interacting with the student at this time. In particular, tune in carefully to your non-verbal behavior as

### Considerations During the Peak of a Crisis Situation

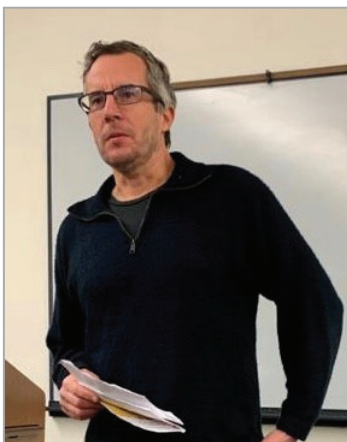
Non-verbal Behavior	Food for Thought
Personal Space (also known as Proxemics)	Be thoughtful about both the distance that you keep and where you position yourself in proximity to the student. Standing too close ... or invading the student’s space can be counter-productive when trying to de-escalate the crisis situation as encroaching on personal space tends to increase anxiety. Additionally, try to employ a supportive stance by positioning yourself off to the student’s side... and physically lower in space if feasible. Straight forward eye-to-eye approaches can trigger defensive reactions by the student. Additionally, in terms of space, try to maintain an arm or leg distance where feasible.
Physical Touch	Appropriate physical contact, such as a gentle hand on the shoulder or arm, can have a calming affect IF there is already a strong level of rapport and trust established. Even in the event where solid rapport is established, always ask permission of the student to use touch when providing support. As helpful as touch may prove in one situation, it can have the opposite affect in another situation where a high level of rapport is not already present. In addition, physical contact in the form of constraining movement of the student should ONLY be used to protect that student or others from imminent harm.
Listen Quietly... and Non-judgmentally	Allow the student to express what they are thinking or feeling and refrain to the greatest extent feasible from engaging in efforts to suppress or correct what is being said verbally when in the midst of the crisis situation. Remember, you are not in an instructional mode at this moment. Just be present in the moment and listen, connect, and validate the feelings being expressed by the student.

Non-verbal Behavior	Food for Thought
Body Language (also known as Kinesics) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posture</li> <li>• Movement</li> <li>• Gestures</li> <li>• Facial Expressions</li> </ul>	How we appear, in many instances more than what we say, will have the greatest immediate influence at this juncture when supporting a student through the crisis cycle. Self-regulate your own behavior to appear calm, non-judgmental and supportive as opposed to aggressive, timid or uncertain. This is understandably easier said than done as it is normal for our own stress response system to kick-in to high gear when supporting a student during a crisis situation. However, being planned in advance with understanding of the importance of your appearance can help. Try to avoid aggressive movements or gestures... such as shaking your finger or placing hands on your hips and staring or rolling your eyes. Remember, while you are feeling stressed at this time the student of concern, in their own way, is experiencing likely higher degrees of stress.

Typically, the de-escalation phase in the aftermath of a crisis is a gradual process. In this phase you are transitioning back toward instructional mode. Emphasis during this phase of the crisis cycle is on helping the student to self-regulate, or calm themselves. This may involve simply prompting the student to use self-calming strategies that they have successfully used over time (e.g., deep breathing, visual imagery, bio-feedback procedures such as a self-hug). However, in the event that the student as not yet developed self-calming skills as of yet, you may need to more explicitly guide the student to employ such procedures including use of additional promoting and cueing strategies (e.g., verbal guidance while you model the self-calming action to occur for the child or student to observe). There is no set time frame for this phase of the crisis cycle. Acknowledging this reality, be thoughtful not to inadvertently rush the student through this phase toward the stabilization phase. One additional, yet important consideration to keep in mind, is that processing with the student what just recently occurred can be counter-productive at this time. Rather, deferring such a debriefing session until the student returns to their baseline level for a period of time may prove helpful.

Experiencing the crisis cycle is exhausting for everyone, most certainly for the student. As such, it is typical for the student, as well as yourself, to feel emotionally drained. The stabilization phase of the crisis cycle is highly dependent on your own self-regulatory skills due to your own level of exhaustion and the high likelihood of the student experiencing feelings of embarrassment, frustration and self-doubt or confusion. It is critical that you provide reassurance to the child or student of your concern as well as your continued respect for them as an individual... drawing distinction between your unconditional support for them without condoning the behaviors that required crisis intervention. This, of course, is greatly aided when there is already a healthy degree of rapport present. However, even if such a level of connection is not yet present, your actions in this regard can go a long way in establishing greater trust with the student, which is the essential building block of rapport.

## McDowell Fellowships



Dr. David Fazzino is an associate professor and chairperson in the Department of Anthropology and the Director of the Institute for Culture and Society. Dr. Fazzino was awarded a McDowell Institute Faculty Fellowship in 2021 entitled Trauma-informed Online Yoga Interventions moving through the Pandemic and Beyond to Support the Wellness of the Campus Community. During his fellowship in 2021 Dr. Fazzino has completed

advanced coursework in yoga and purchased associated materials through the BodyWise Institute. This fellowship was aligned with and enhanced Dr. Fazzino's application through the College of Liberal Arts Faculty Enhancement to position him to complete a more in-depth 300-hour yoga training

through the Trauma Center. This program leads to a certification in Trauma-Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY). Additional information on this particular program can be accessed via this link: <https://www.traumasensitiveyoga.com/trainings/certification>. As a result of these experiences, Dr. Fazzino is in the process of coordinating with a variety of groups across campus to plan for rollout of trauma-sensitive yoga classes in the upcoming semesters.

The McDowell Institute is preparing for the next cycle of faculty and staff fellowships in 2022. Applications for the faculty fellowship applications can be found on the McDowell Institute website. The application deadline for this upcoming competition is Friday, March 4, 2022 at 4 p.m. As in previous years, the award of fellowships is competitive with awarded fellowships supporting faculty and staff research in Trauma-informed approaches or to develop projects/initiatives that emphasize approaches to enhance social, emotional, and behavioral wellness. All permanent campus faculty and staff members are eligible to apply for these fellowships.

# MCDOWELL UPDATES

## Support for BU Student Teachers Fall 2021

The McDowell Institute will again provide professional development in concert with ongoing access to virtual office hours throughout the Fall 2021 semester to support student teachers. The fall cohort started this semester with a brief refresher on trauma-informed preventive classroom management on Monday, August 23. Prospectively, these student teachers have access to ongoing private virtual guidance and technical assistance associated with addressing the social-emotional-behavioral support needs of their students in their respective PK-12 student teaching placements. Additionally, student teachers may also access guidance in navigating their own needs as they address stressors associated with their student teaching experience.

## Unique PDE Endorsement in Social-Emotional-Behavioral Wellness PK-12 Students

The McDowell Institute continues to support the College of Education in operating the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Endorsement in Social Emotional Behavioral Wellness with PK-12 students. The number of BU undergraduate and graduate students formally matriculating through this unique endorsement that enhances trauma-informed skills and employability for those just entering the field continues to grow. Undergraduate students enrolled in an educator preparatory program that are interested in exploring this endorsement program should contact Dr. Stephanie Gardner (sgardner@bloomu.edu) and graduate students with a similar interest are encouraged to contact Dr. Robin Drogan (rdrogan@bloomu.edu).

## Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Trainings for COE Students in Fall 21

YMHFA training will occur this this Fall '21 for education majors enrolled in targeted advance sequence COE courses prior to student teaching. Students enrolled in these targeted courses will receive an e-mail correspondence from Charlotte Heckman outlining the pre-registration process. YMHFA training must be completed by these students as outlined in that correspondence. Questions concerning YMHFA training should be directed to Charlotte Heckman (checkman@bloomu.edu).

## Question – Persuade – Refer (QPR) Trainings for Fall 21

The McDowell Institute will provide QPR trainings this Fall '21 in two aligned ways. The first method will be



a series of closed trainings for staff from targeted groups, including residence life. These targeted sessions will be invitation only. The second aligned approach will be through two

open sessions on Thursday, September 16 from 9 – 11 a.m. and Tuesday, November 9 from 3 – 5 p.m.. Both of these open sessions require pre-registration and will have limited seating. The two trainings will occur in the Schweiker Room in Andruss Library. Please use the following link to pre-register: <https://forms.gle/qQmvawD5vLjzsoKY7>

## Embedding Trauma-informed Approaches in Educator Preparation Across the Commonwealth

The McDowell Institute is entering the final semester of implementing its externally funded initiative to further advance educator preparation across the commonwealth. For the last four years, 30 institutions of higher education that offer educator preparatory programs, including Bloomsburg University, have been engaged in the initiative to embed trauma-informed approaches within their educator preparatory programs in alignment with required competencies delineated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. It is projected that this initiative will have directly impacted more than 5000 aspiring educators across these institutions of higher education by the end December, 2021. These numbers will continue to grow over time beyond the shelf-life of the external funding given the infrastructure and capacity built these past few years.

# MCDOWELL UPDATES

## Research on Educator Preparedness to Recognize and Address Trauma across Pennsylvania's Schools

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in 2021 awarded a priority research initiative on school climate to the McDowell Institute in the College of Education in partnership with the Department of Educational Psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The research team conducted a Qualtrics-based survey for educators across the commonwealth to ascertain the extent that they felt prepared to recognize and respond to students impacted by trauma or experiencing emotional distress. The final report will be available to the general public in early 2022.

## JED Campus Initiative Update

Bloomsburg University continues to make progress in efforts associated with becoming a JED Campus. BU is entering its third of the four-year process to build capacity related to the social emotional well being of students to reduce risk factors associated with suicide. These current efforts align with Act 110, Suicide Prevention in Institutions of Higher Education, that was passed in the commonwealth in 2018, and in many ways parallels ACT 71 legislation relevant to PK-12 education. One of the numerous outreach endeavors of the JED process is encouraging BU faculty to include the following in their course outlines and/or resource materials:

*Bloomsburg University cares about your personal health and wellbeing. Experiencing difficulties associated with your health and well-being can promote an unhealthy level of stress which can adversely affect many facets of your life, such as your relationships, self-care, learning and academic success. Throughout your time at BU you or someone you know may experience a range of stressful situations...some of which may even create impediments to your success. Stressful circumstances such as illness, strained relationships, trauma, anxiety, alcohol or drug problems, and feeling down or depressed should not be ignored. The Student Counseling Center, as well as the Student Health Center, are available to help you navigate these difficult situations in order to help mitigate their impact.*

To learn about or access the free, confidential mental health services available on campus simply call 570-389-4255 or visit the website <https://intranet.bloomu.edu/counseling>. To learn about or access the services of the BU Health Center call 570-389-4451 or visit the website <https://intranet.bloomu.edu/health>. Help is available...please reach out as needed.

## Suicide Prevention Month

The Jana Marie Foundation, Aavidum, Prevent Suicide PA, Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS), and Garrett Lee Smith (GLS) Youth Suicide Prevention Grant are pleased to share a resource guide for use by communities for National Suicide Prevention Month. This includes ideas for events, training, social media posts, virtual backgrounds, a sample proclamation, and more.

<https://janamariefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Suicide-Prevention-Guide-2021-final.pdf>

