



A Solution-Finding Report

Title: *Online Credit Recovery School Program*

Date: January 22, 2015

This Solution-finding Report provides information, requested by the Northeast Comprehensive Center on behalf of the Massachusetts Office of Digital Learning, for a summary of the research or case studies of credit recovery school programs, K–12, detailing the conditions that need to be in place to ensure a rigorous and successful student experience. They requested that the research and case studies be aligned to the four domains of the Virtual Learning Program (VLP) Rubric: Policy, Program Design, Curriculum and Instruction, and Capacity. We have done our best to place the documents into the appropriate domains (with a few placed into a category labeled Overview), but most of the documents would fit into more than one domain.

To date there has been little completed research on online credit recovery school programs, though there is a major study underway, entitled *The Struggle to Pass Algebra I in Urban High Schools: Online vs. Face-to-Face Credit Recovery for At-Risk Students* (see Heppen et al., under Capacity). But there are a number of suggested best practices and success stories throughout (e.g., see Georgia Department of Education, under Policy; Watson & Gemin, under Curriculum and Instruction; Schachter, under Capacity; and National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, under Capacity).

Solution-finding Reports are intended to provide a quick response to the request for information; they are not intended to be a definitive literature survey or synthesis of the topic.

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Overview

Carr, S. (2014). Credit Recovery Hits the Mainstream. *Education Next*, 14(3), 30–36.

<http://educationnext.org/credit-recovery-hits-mainstream/>

This *Education Next* article says, “The growth in online learning generally, including blended learning, has fueled the proliferation of computer-based credit-recovery programs. The pressure on schools and educators to boost retention and graduation rates is a significant factor as well.”

Johnston, H. (2012). *Research into Practice: Credit Recovery*. Fairfield, CT: Education Partnerships, Inc.

<http://gearup.ous.edu/sites/default/files/Research-Briefs/ResearchBriefCreditRecovery.pdf>

This paper asks, “Why is credit recovery so important – and why now?” It defines the term credit recovery, examines why kids drop out, and offers references and resources.

McCabe, J., & St. Andrie, R. (2012). *Credit recovery programs: At a Glance*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Public Education.

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Credit-recovery-programs/>

This report from the Center for Public Education answers questions about credit recovery, and has a section on What To Do While We Don’t Know Enough About Credit Recovery.

McCabe, J., & St. Andrie, R. (2012). *Credit Recovery Programs: Full report*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Public Education.

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Credit-recovery-programs/Credit-recovery-programs-full-report.html>

This report from the Center for Public Education defines credit recovery, gives a breakdown of the different programs (fully online, blended, in person), discusses how credits are earned, presents the pros and cons, discusses why we don’t know enough about credit recovery, and offers further questions to consider.

Policy

Blackboard. (2009). *Credit Recovery: Exploring Answers to a National Priority*. Washington, DC: Author.

<http://www.blackboard.com/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=6709ad83-3a41-4a1f-bd6f-9842bc04cec3>

According to this report, “Credit recovery programs have become far more innovative than the traditional ‘summer school’ of years past....[O]nline instruction is delivering important benefits to students and schools alike, because of its efficiencies, flexibility, and cost effectiveness.”

Cramer, P. (2012). *City Alters Regents Grading, Credit Recovery Policies After Audit*. New York, NY: Chalkbeat.

<http://ny.chalkbeat.org/2012/02/23/city-alters-regents-grading-credit-recovery-policies-after-audit/#.VMEHe0oo5oI>

According to this article, “The Department of Education is cracking down on graduation rate inflation, following an internal audit that uncovered errors and possible evidence of cheating at 60 high schools. The audits, conducted by the department’s internal auditor, scrutinized data at 60 high schools that had posted unusual or striking results. Of the 9,582 students who graduated from the schools in 2010, the audit found that 292 did not have the exam grades or course credits required under state regulations. At one school, Landmark High School, 35 students had graduated without earning all of the academic credits required for graduation. At another, Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies, 19 students had gotten credits through ‘credit recovery’ that the school could not prove complied with state requirements.”

Cromidas, R. (2012). *With Stricter Credit Recovery Policy Comes a Push to Do More*. New York, NY: Chalkbeat.

http://ny.chalkbeat.org/2012/03/19/with-stricter-credit-recovery-policy-comes-a-push-to-do-more/#.VL_3LEoo5oI

This article about credit recovery in New York City states, “Last month, following an audit that found errors and possible evidence of cheating at 60 high schools, the city announced that it would begin restricting credit recovery access to students, in part by capping the number of credits students may receive through credit recovery, limiting enrollment to students who attended at least two thirds of class they’re making up, and allowing students to make up credits only in the months immediately after they fail a course.”

D'Agostino, J. (2011). *Redefining Student Success: A Mixed-Methods Study of Stakeholder Perceptions of the Use of Credit Recovery Software and Its Impact on Student Achievement*. Fullerton, CA: California State University.

<http://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/912194237.html?FMT=AI>

Three research questions framed this study: (a) what do student achievement and credit recovery data suggest about the effectiveness of the Newport Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD) credit recovery program, (b) What do the perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators suggest about the relationship between student intelligences and the effectiveness of credit recovery programs in the NMUSD, and (c) what are student, teacher, and administrator perceptions about the effectiveness of NMUSD credit recovery in promoting student self-worth, potentially leading to greater levels of self-actualization?

Education Commission of the States. (2011). *Credit Recovery and Proficiency-Based Credit: Maintaining High Expectations while Providing Flexibility*. Denver, CO: Author.

http://inpathways.net/credit_recovery_2011.pdf

From the Education Commission of the States, this is a helpful resource for policymakers and district officials. Among the issues it addresses are: What is credit recovery? What is proficiency-based credit? Why does providing for these options matter for high school completion? How widespread are these options across the state? And what do state policies look like? What are the challenges in implementing credit recovery and proficiency-based credit? What does the research say on the effectiveness of credit recovery and proficiency-based credit? What are the essential policy components?

Georgia Department of Education. (2015). *Georgia Virtual Learning – Georgia Credit Recovery: Best Practices*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

<http://www.gacreditrecovery.org/Guidelines/BestPractices.aspx>

This webpage begins, “The Georgia Department of Education and Georgia Credit Recovery want to make sure students participating in the credit recovery program have all of the tools needed to be successful. Georgia Credit Recovery has developed best practice ideas to help school systems implement effective credit recovery programs.”

Gootman, E. & Coutts, S. (April 11, 2008). Lacking Credits, Some Students Learn a Shortcut. New York, NY: *The New York Times*.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/11/education/11graduation.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&

According to this article on credit recovery in New York City, “Mónica Ortiz-Ureña, the principal of Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, a large school scheduled to close in June after years of poor performance, said its credit recovery programs were developed after the city cut its centrally run summer and evening schools. She said many teachers did not like the practice, which at her school includes online programs in which students complete some work at home and some at school, because ‘they feel that you’re taking away their jobs. I think credit recovery, as long as it’s done properly and is done according to state law, I think it’s a wonderful opportunity for students who have experienced failure before to experience success,’ she said.”

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2013). *Advisory on Academic Support Services Grant and Credit Recovery Programs*. Boston, MA: Author.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/as/grants/advisory.html>

The purpose of this advisory from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is to provide school districts with further guidance and clarification about the department’s policy regarding state-funded Academic Support grants and credit recovery program.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2013). *MassGrad Implementation Awards*. Boston, MA: Author.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/massgrad/ImplementationAward.pdf>

This report lists the schools receiving MassGrad Implementation Awards, including those using PLATO and E2020, two online credit recovery systems.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2013). *MassGrad Seven Strategy Areas for the Implementation Awards*. Boston, MA: Author.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/massgrad/7StrategyAreas.pdf>

This report says in part, “Grant funds can be used to accelerate learning and credit accumulation by making meaningful instructional hours outside of the traditional classroom or beyond the typical school day count toward graduation. These opportunities could include distance learning opportunities such as those courses that are being developed through our state’s Title II-D Technology Competitive Grant Program: Online Courses and Modules Grant for At-Risk High School Students. Through this effort, local educators are in the process of creating dozens of thoughtfully-designed courses and course modules in high-need content areas that can be utilized to help students recover and accelerate high school credit.”

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2014). *Massachusetts Alternative Education and Other Academic Options Overview*. Boston, MA: Author.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/dropout/2014-05AlternativeOptions.pdf>

According to this overview from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, “Credit recovery can take place through a traditional classroom format, in an online or blended format, or through a project experience (e.g., work-based or service-learning). Credit recovery requirements are the discretion of individual school districts.

Montgomery Public Schools. (2013). *Grade Recovery/Credit Recovery/New Credit Procedures Manual*. Montgomery, AL: Author.

<http://images.pcmac.org/Uploads/MontgomeryPublic/MontgomeryPublic/Departments/DocumentsCategories/Documents/MPS%20School%20Based%20Credit%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf>

This grade recovery/credit recovery/new credit (CR/GR/NC) procedures manual delineates specific roles and responsibilities for the credit/grade recovery district coordinator, the district administrator, the principal, the school counselor, the school-based program director, the CR/GR/NC teacher, the core teacher, and the student. For example, the principal oversees the design and implementation of the CR/GR/NC school-based program; provides opportunities for school staff to obtain professional development; plans trainings and encourages and provides opportunities for teachers to attend regional and/or national conferences regarding alternative education and credit recovery; communicates effectively with staff using a variety of formats (newsletter, scheduled lab manager meetings, e-mails, etc.); approves all CR/GR/NC forms and grade changes; and has effective knowledge and skills to provide an annual program evaluation, based upon district and program goals, indicating strengths, as well as areas of need, with recommendations for improvement.

Murin, A. (2014). *Policy in Practice: Credit Recovery in Connecticut*. Durango, CO: Keeping Pace with K-12 Digital Learning.

<http://www.kpk12.com/blog/2014/05/policy-in-practice-credit-recovery-in-connecticut/>

According to this report, when Connecticut passed its *Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut* – which requires districts with dropout rates of 8% or higher to establish online credit recovery programs – “it appeared likely to create significant new opportunities for students needing to recover credit. However, a closer look at a few key statistics shows that in fact few students are helped.”

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2014). *North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manual*. Raleigh, NC: Author.

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/testing/eoc/creditrecovfaq.pdf>

This policy manual defines credit recovery and details its parameters, beginning with, “Each local board of education shall ensure that all required and elective courses have sufficient rigor, breadth, and depth to be awarded high school credit, in accordance with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.”

North Carolina Virtual Public School. (2011). *Five Questions to Consider When Choosing a Credit Recovery Program for Your Students*. Raleigh, NC: Author.

<http://www.ncvps.org/docs/courses/credit/5questions.pdf>

Among the questions this paper asks are: Is the credit recovery program aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, and how much will the school need to modify the material for the students? Does the credit recovery program meet the individual learning needs of the students? Does the credit recovery program prepare students for the next level of instruction?

Patrick, S., & Sturgis, C. (2011). *Cracking the Code: Synchronizing Policy and Practice for Performance-Based Learning*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/iNACOL_CrackingCode_full_report.pdf

According to this report, “Increasingly, states are creating policies that enable credit flexibility. This has primarily been in response to the expansion of online learning and the demand for credit recovery. These policies provide districts with the ability to use competency-based learning instead of seat-time. There are two drawbacks to promoting innovation in this policy approach. First, it relies on districts taking advantage of the enabling policy. Experience in other states suggests that there is rarely much uptake unless the state provides supportive mechanisms such as training, technical assistance, peer networks, or pilots. Second, there is a risk of districts implementing credit flexibility with inconsistent attention to quality and the level of academic standards. States may need to establish quality-control mechanisms.”

Pettyjohn, T. J. (2012). *Stakeholders’ Perceptions of Supplemental Online Learning for Credit Recovery*. Statesboro, GA: Georgia Southern University.

<http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1402&context=etd>

The purpose of this dissertation was to understand stakeholders’ perceptions of the benefits and challenges of high school supplemental online learning for credit recovery.

State of Connecticut. (2010). *An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut*. Hartford, CT: Author.

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/ACT/Pa/pdf/2010PA-00111-R00SB-00438-PA.pdf>

This Connecticut State Senate bill includes a section stating, “A local or regional board of education for a school district with a dropout rate of eight per cent or greater in the previous school year, shall establish an online credit recovery program. Such program shall allow those students who are identified by certified personnel as in danger of failing to graduate to complete on-line coursework approved by the local or regional board of education for credit toward meeting the high school graduation requirement... Each school in the school district shall designate, from among existing staff, an online learning coordinator who shall administer and coordinate the online credit recovery program pursuant to this section.”

Sturgis, C., & Patrick, S. (2010). *When Success Is the Only Option: Designing Competency-Based Pathways for Next Generation Learning*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/iNACOL_SuccessOnlyOptn.pdf

This exploration into competency-based innovation at the school, district, and state levels suggests that competency-based pathways are a re-engineering of the U.S. education system around learning. A section on credit recovery states, “Increasingly, states are creating policies that enable credit flexibility. This has primarily been in response to the expansion of online learning and credit recovery. These policies tend to provide districts with the capacity to use competency-based assessments instead of seat-time with little guidance for ensuring quality or consistency across the state. It is up to the districts to take advantage of this enabling policy to move beyond limited credit recovery to competency-based systems that are focused on learning.” It then describes policies in Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, and Oregon.

UMass Donahue Institute. *MassGrad Evaluation Briefs – Implementation Awards – Focus: Credit Recovery*. Hadley, MA: Author.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/2012/08MGEB-credit.pdf>

This brief shares key findings from evaluation site visits, interviews, surveys, and reports on the subject of credit recovery. In part it says, “It would be easy to underestimate the complexity of creating and sustaining an online credit recovery program, but interviews and observations made it clear that there are many interrelated stages and dimensions of this process that can be carried out in different ways and with different levels of success. This evaluation brief highlights some of the relevant issues identified so far.”

Program Design

Bakia, M., Anderson, K., Heying, E., Keating, K., & Mislavy, J. (2011). *Implementing Online Learning Labs in Schools and Districts: Lessons from Miami-Dade's First Year*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

http://www.flvs.net/areas/aboutus/Documents/Research/SRI%20International%20Miami%20Dade%20Implementing_Online_Learning_Labs.pdf

According to this report, “Research suggests that blended learning programs for credit recovery and at-risk students show promise when they combine flexible pacing and individualized instruction with face-to-face instruction and in-person supports.”

Center for Schools & Communities. (2013). *Best Practices for Credit Recovery in Out of School Time (OST) Programs*. Camp Hill, PA: Author.

<http://vimeo.com/80104088>

This hour-long online learning session provides a wide variety of information on credit recovery starting with the “why”, followed by strategies to determine the “who” and “what”, and then implementation processes to help with the “how” and “when”. All of this information will be based on actual and successfully run program models used by OST providers in California using 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding.

CompassLearning, Inc. (2014). *Success Library*. Austin, TX: Author.

<https://compasslearning.com/success-library/stories/>

This webpage of success stories has a button for Credit Recovery, leading to another webpage where 11 credit recovery success stories can be accessed.

Connections Learning. (2012). *Beyond Credit Recovery: Re-Engaging the Whole Scholar – Online and Blended Best Practices*. Columbia, MD: Author.

<http://vimeo.com/38523588>

This hour-long webinar posted on Vimeo discusses, among other things, Doing What Works for Kids Falling through the Cracks.

Connections Learning. (2012). *Credit Recovery Best Practices for Online and Blended Programs*. Columbia, MD: Author.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uADPQAEwQcM>

This hour-long webinar posted on YouTube addresses such questions as: Why do students become ‘disengaged’ in high school? What are some of the latest tools for helping to determine where these students are, what they need and what options can deliver the greatest impact? How does today’s administrator bring together the right resources to re-engage and recover the whole student?

eSchool News. (2011). *Successful Credit Recovery Programs from Four Districts*. Bethesda, MD: Author.

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2011/02/22/successful-credit-recovery-programs-from-four-districts/3/>

This article profiles successful credit recovery programs in the Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston, Texas; the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona; and two programs (one with the Squaxin Indian nation) in the East Valley School District in Spokane, Washington.

Hirsch, J. (2001). Sorting through Vendors: Before Committing Your Dollars, Consider Quality of Offerings, Graduation Credits, Staff Support and Likely Burdens. *The School Administrator*, 9(58), 20–22.

<http://aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=10702&terms=credit+recovery>

If you are shopping for an online credit recovery program, start with this helpful article from School Superintendents Association about the questions you need to ask.

Humphrey, B. (2006). *E-Learning and Credit Recovery: Strategies for Success*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University.

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/arc/vol5no2/PDF/AREarticlesVol5no2/HumphreyB-AREarticle-vol5no2.pdf>

This paper begins, “The purpose of this study was to describe the effects of an orientation tutorial and teacher facilitation of e-learning strategies on learners’ practices and attitudes while engaged in e-learning credit recovery courses.

Plummer, L. (2012). Credit Recovery Programs Combine the Best of Online and In-Class Instruction. Chatsworth, CA: *T.H.E. Journal*.

<http://thejournal.com/articles/2012/03/08/online-credit-recovery.aspx>

From *T.H.E. Journal*, this article shows how to combine online and face-to-face learning for maximum effectiveness. It quotes Matt Wicks, vice president of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL), who says that, although most online credit recovery programs can be used independently and without adult supervision, the most successful programs are those that follow the hybrid or blended classroom model that combines face-to-face learning with online curriculum. In-person teachers help hold students accountable while providing support, answering questions, and assisting with coursework when necessary.

Sapers, A. (2014). *Credit Recovery: Summer School Has Gone Digital, and Viral – Which Means Carefully Choosing a Quality Vendor to Provide Courses to Students Anxious to Graduate*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

<http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3758364>

To understand how various districts are experiencing credit-recovery programs, the author interviewed Jessica Heppen, the principal investigator in an American Institutes for Research study being funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (see under Capacity), as well as officials in districts in Texas and Massachusetts with successful programs. According to Heppen, discussing her preliminary data, “What we saw was that kids found the online course to be harder than kids who took the face-to-face class found their credit recovery. We also found that credit-recovery rates were higher in the face-to-face class and, in the second summer, posttest scores were higher also.”

Sioux Central Community School District. (2012). *Credit Recovery Program Mission Statement*. Sioux Rapids, IA: Author.

http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fschoolsites.schoolworld.com%2Fschools%2FSiouxCentral%2Fwebpages%2Fjscham%2Ffiles%2FCredit%2520Recovery%2520Program-1.doc&ei=PArBVPnwFYXggwSXkYPwBA&usg=AFQjCNFBmn7f8_vCcF-6FDE4TJnqCzBQPQ

This Sioux Central Community School District mission statement says students will be given “the opportunity to make up credits that they have failed to pass before by completing an on-line course on campus. These on-line courses will be set up and established by Sioux Central staff to match the existing curriculum of Sioux Central High School.” Sections in the mission statement include About the Program, Admission Requirements, Work Credit, Volunteer Service Credit, Daily Schedule and Hours of Program, Attendance, Lunch, Physical Education Credit, and Guidelines for Student Conduct.

Swanson, E. (2014). *Six Best Practices in Credit Recovery*. Bloomington, MN: Edmentum Inc.

<http://blog.edmentum.com/six-best-practices-credit-recovery>

This article begins, “Credit recovery is vital to the success of your students. However, it can be difficult to determine the best way to provide a credit recovery program. Here are six best practices to implement a successful online credit recovery program.”

Tyler, J. H., & Lofstrom, M. (2009). Finishing High School: Alternative Pathways and Dropout Recovery. *The Future of Children*, 19(1), 77–103.

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/future_of_children/v019/19.1.tyler.pdf

According to this article, “The high costs associated with dropping out make clear the need for programs to help students stay in school. The Dropout Prevention Center/Network lists hundreds of dropout-prevention programs in its online database of ‘model programs.’ Only relatively few of these programs, however, have been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness. Even fewer have proved effective in achieving this goal.” The authors then group dropout-prevention interventions into two categories: interventions that set dropout prevention as the primary goal and target specific students or groups of students, and interventions that have a broader goal than dropout prevention and a broader target audience than ‘at-risk’ students.

Vermont Department of Education Student Support Division. (2010). *Focused Monitoring Report for Hartford School District – On-site Review: March 8–12, 2010*. Montpelier, VT: Author.

http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Hartford_School_District_Onsite_Review_March_2010.pdf

According to this monitoring report, “QUEST, the district’s dropout prevention and credit recovery program, has great potential and is endorsed by many of its current students as an alternative means towards credit accrual. VTDOE has concerns regarding staff and student needs based upon the increasing student participation in the program this year. There is a limited amount of time for staff preparation and collaboration, a sharing of students’ educational and functional needs, and a supervision of daily student performance. For example, the current PLATO computer program utilized at QUEST, aligned with Vermont Standards, can be manipulated by students (using a search device to seek answers from another website during unit tests) unless they can be closely supervised. PLATO also acts as the only academic tool for credit recovery and some of the classes taught last year through this program should be examined in regards to student learning styles.”

Watson, J., Gemin, B., & Coffey, M. (2010). *Promising Practices in Online Learning: A Parent's Guide to Choosing the Right Online Program*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/NACOL_PP-ParentsGuide-Ir.pdf

In this guide for parents in choosing the right online programs, one of the questions on its checklist of questions for parents to ask is, “Does the school offer the grade levels needed for my child(ren), and does this program offer the range of courses my child needs, such as...credit recovery...?”

Curriculum and Instruction

Afterschool Alliance. (2009). *Afterschool: Providing a Successful Route to Credit Attainment and Recovery*. Washington, DC: Author.

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_briefs/CreditAttainmentandRecovery_Brief_39_FINAL%5B1%5D.pdf

According to this paper, the key to success in credit recovery programs “is the involvement of the teacher and engagement of the youth. Teachers working with at-risk students must help students set goals, identify and modify negative behavior early on, and help empower students to become self-motivated.”

Archambault, L., Diamond, D., Coffey, M., Richardson, J., & Brown, R. (2010). *Research Committee Issues Brief: An Exploration of At-Risk Learners and Online Education*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/iNACOL_AtRiskStudentOnlineResearch-2010.pdf

The purpose of this issue brief is “to obtain a better understanding of how online programs are dealing with students who have been identified as at-risk.” The first section, *Strategies for Working with At-Risk Student Populations in Online Environments*, documents a sampling of K–12 online programs currently working with at-risk student populations by examining the strategies these programs were implementing. The second section, *Trends and Instructional Practices for Teaching At-Risk Students in Virtual Courses*, surveyed online schools to determine the online delivery and design methods employed to assist at-risk students. The brief concludes with specific recommendations for future research into the experience of at-risk learners in virtual school environments.

Butrymowicz, S. (2010). *Students Short on Educational Credits Turn to ‘Recovery’ Programs*. New York, NY: The Hechinger Report.

http://hechingerreport.org/content/students-short-on-educational-credits-turn-to-%E2%80%98recovery%E2%80%99-programs_3883/

This article says, “Terry Grier, superintendent of the Houston Independent School District, has made online credit recovery classes the centerpiece of his aggressive dropout-reduction strategy. He launched similar efforts in San Diego and in Guilford County, N.C. prior to his 2009 arrival in Houston. Grier says the online programs get students back on track quickly, and that students respond positively to the interactivity of the lessons. Grier also has hired graduation coaches, and teachers are expected to closely monitor students’ progress. Other online programs have virtual teachers who work with students via email and ‘web-chat’ software. And some programs take the teacher out of the equation entirely by designing courses that students can click through – they read materials and then take quizzes on what they’ve read so they can earn credits without teacher assistance.”

D'Agustino, S. (2014). *Providing Innovative Opportunities and Options for Credit Recovery Through Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs*. Washington, DC: The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project.

<http://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/providing-innovative-opportunities-and-options-credit-recovery-through>

This report presents practical ideas, tips, and shortcuts for setting up an effective, innovative credit recovery program. It states, “By jettisoning typical barriers to student achievement, online credit recovery learning management systems allow students to interact directly with the instructional content. For example, the content of the course and the pace of the instructor are not controlled by the teacher, but by the student. Students can therefore progress at their own pace, without the teacher as gatekeeper. The student can also repeat sections of content, test out of others, and avoid the issues that often arise in classrooms related to management and discipline.”

Dessoff, A. (2009). Reaching Graduation with Credit Recovery: Districts Provide the Latest Programs to Help Failing Students Succeed. *District Administration*, 45(9), 43–48.

<http://www.districtadministration.com/article/reaching-graduation-credit-recovery>

This article describes the Florida Virtual School, a district in itself, where about a third of annual course enrollments are from students taking courses for credit recovery. Other Florida districts can enroll students in the FLVS, or individual students can sign up themselves with approval of their parents or guardian and a counselor in their regular school. With open enrollment, students can begin courses in any week of the year. Once enrolled, they are, in a sense, on their own to complete their credit recovery program online, whenever and wherever they want, following a curriculum that meets state and district requirements. Courses are taught by full-time, certified and highly qualified teachers.

Lake County Schools. (2012). *Memorandum on Credit Recovery Web-Based Curriculum and Assessment System*. Tavares, FL: Author.

<http://www.lake.k12.fl.us/cms/lib05/FL01000799/Centricity/Domain/42/3422DB%20Credit%20Recovery%20System/3422DB%20Posted%20Agenda%20Recommendation.pdf>

This memorandum contains the Lake County (FL) Schools’ recommendations and ranking on the schools’ proposed credit recovery web-based curriculum and assessment system, including sections on Background and Rationale, Alternatives, Recommendation, Fiscal Impact, and Data Source.

New York City Department of Education. (2014). *Pre-Approved Online Content Vendors for Credit Recovery*. New York, NY: Author.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/344F5301-EE40-43A6-96E4-639215889E02/0/VendorsCreditRecovery.pdf>

This document lists New York City’s pre-approved online content vendors for credit recovery, including content type (High School and Middle School Core, Electives, Algebra I, Geometry, etc.).

Trotter, A. (2008). Online Options for ‘Credit Recovery’ Widen. *Education Week*, 27(38), 1, 12–13.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/05/21/38credit_ep.h27.html

According to this article, “Credit recovery, or credit retrieval, is usually defined as an in-school opportunity for students to earn academic credits that they have lost, or are about to lose, by failing a regular course. Such options are available from an array of online-curriculum companies, such as Apex Learning Inc. and Plato Learning Inc., as well as nonprofit providers such as the Orlando-based Florida Virtual School and the Atlanta-based Georgia Virtual School. Providers say they tailor learning to individual students, by using flexible pacing and schedules, extra practice, frequent assessment, and robust monitoring and reporting on participation and progress, while also allowing openings for personal interaction with teachers. Their learning-management systems tend to have such typical online tools as e-mail, online assessments, and databases. Courses mirror, and are cross-referenced to, states’ academic standards.”

Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2008). *Promising Practices in Online Learning: Using Online Learning for At-Risk Students and Credit Recovery*. Vienna, VA: North American Council for Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/NACOL_CreditRecovery_PromisingPractices.pdf

According to this report, “As more schools use online learning options for credit recovery and at-risk students, there is a growing body of effective online instructional strategies.” It includes examples that demonstrate some of these successful practices. For example, in Aldine Independent Schools in Texas, the online credit recovery program established a policy requiring online students to pass a final exam to gain course credit – a hurdle that even students in the traditional classroom setting did not have to cross – and master teachers from across the district were hired to collaborate on course and curriculum development, providing additional credibility.

Capacity

Apex Learning. (2015). *Credit Recovery*. Seattle, WA: Author.

http://www.apexlearning.com/Solutions/Credit_Recovery.htm

This webpage has links to 13 reports on credit recovery success stories, including East Greenbush Central School District in New York and Boston Public Schools in Massachusetts.

Florida Virtual School. (2014). *Credit Recovery*. Orlando, FL: Author.

<http://www.flvs.net/global2/Pages/ContactFLVSGlobal.aspx>

The *Education Next* article “Credit Recovery Hits the Mainstream” states “With the exception of isolated pockets, like the Florida Virtual School (where funding of some online courses will soon be tied to passing an external exam), the conversation about accountability for online credit recovery has not been nearly as robust and far-reaching, in either a political or a pragmatic sense.” This is the website of the Florida Virtual School, which includes a link (<http://www.flvs.net//areas/faqs/pages/hardwarerequirements.aspx>) for Technology Requirements.

Georgia Department of Education. *Georgia Virtual Learning: Georgia Credit Recovery*. Atlanta, GA: Author.

<http://www.gacreditrecovery.org/>

Georgia Credit Recovery is one of the most comprehensive programs in the U.S., and a great model for other states and districts. According to the site, Georgia Credit Recovery provides a flexible learning experience in a teacherless environment; courses are fully aligned with the state standards; unit post tests must be proctored at the local school, but course assignments are able to be completed outside of school; all courses require either a final exam or end-of-course test (EOCT); final exams are available in the online course; and if a student takes an EOCT course, the EOCT must be taken again at the local high school.

Heppen, J., Walters, K., Allensworth, E., Sorensen, N., Pareja, A., Stachel, S., & Nomi, T. (2012). *The Struggle to Pass Algebra I in Urban High Schools: Online vs. Face-to-Face Credit Recovery for At-Risk Students*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.

http://www.relmidwest.org/sites/default/files/Back%20on%20Track%20Study%20of%20Online%20Credit%20Recovery_APPAM%20Paper_103113_ed.pdf

This paper describes a project being funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, and provides an overview of the project’s background, design, participants, methods, and findings to date regarding the efficacy of online relative to face-to-face algebra credit recovery.

Institute of Education Sciences. (2011). *Assessing the Efficacy of Online Credit Recovery in Algebra I for At-Risk Ninth Graders*. Washington, DC: Author.

<http://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1115>

This is an American Institutes for Research study for which funding has been awarded, but which has not yet been completed. This study will test the efficacy of offering an online Algebra I course in the summer after ninth grade for first time ninth graders who failed the second semester of Algebra I.

Integrated Educational Strategies. (2011). *Steps to Creating a Successful Online/Blended Model Program*. Powder Springs, GA: Author.

http://www.k12hsn.org/files/resources/boe/anu/srva/Six_Rivers_Handbook.pdf

According to this handbook from Integrated Educational Strategies, “If you are targeting students who are in need of a credit recovery program, then select a curriculum that is designed for credit recovery. The selection of a curriculum would be best made by a team comprised of administrators, teachers and curriculum specialists who have the ability to “test drive” the curriculum and evaluate it in light of their needs. You may discover a curriculum that is strong in one subject area and weaker in another. At that point, it may be possible to use two different providers, but you will need to be sure both curriculums can be supported on the LMS you’ve chosen. If that cannot be done it will be important to prioritize your needs in order to make the best decision possible.”

Mathews, J. (2012). Online Credit Recovery May Make Graduation Too Easy. Washington, DC: *The Washington Post*.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/online-credit-recovery-may-make-graduation-too-easy/2012/04/21/gIQAddsgaT_story.html

The author of this *Washington Post* article suggests, “[T]here is generally insufficient evidence and accountability to ensure that the online courses are as rigorous and impart as much learning as traditional courses.”

Mileaf, M., Paul, A., Rukobo, E., & Zyko, A. (2012). *Credit Recovery Informational Brief: A Look at Credit Recovery Programs Across the United States*. Brooklyn, NY: New York Comprehensive Center.

<http://nycomprehensivecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Credit-Recovery-Programs-across-the-United-States.pdf>

The purpose of this brief is to review the current literature on credit recovery programs to facilitate exploration into the variety of novel programs that are used in New York as well as other states.

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (2015). *Model Programs*. Clemson, SC: Author.

<http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms>

This webpage is the home of Model Programs at the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network website. It says, “In order to maintain a listing of current model programs for dropout prevention, the National Dropout Prevention Center has created a database of research-based programs and information. This information is available for schools, organizations and other programs to review for opportunities to implement the model program or enhance their existing program. The rating scale for the programs selected for the database of Model Programs is based on the evaluation literature of specific prevention, intervention, and recovery programs.” There are links to All Programs, Reentry Programs, Programs by Effective Strategy, Programs by Descriptor, and Rating System.

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (2015). *Model Programs Database: Credit Recovery*. Clemson, SC: Author.

http://www.dropoutprevention.org/modelprograms/show_program.php?pid=145

This webpage lists 119 credit recovery programs, rating each for how success it has been, ranging from Limited Evidence to Strong Evidence. Among the programs described are Communities and Schools for Success (CS²), a Massachusetts-based educational initiative that seeks to transform the educational experience for those young people who are most under-served and disconnected from traditional educational and career paths; and Project COFFEE (Co-Operative Federation For Educational Experience), created in 1979 in Massachusetts with the purpose of meeting the academic, occupational, social, emotional, and employability needs of high school students considered at-risk.

New Hampshire Department of Education. (2010). *New Hampshire Prevention and Recovery Oversight Council Annual Report 2010 Executive Summary*. Concord, NH: Author.

http://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/documents/summary.pdf

This executive summary of the New Hampshire Prevention and Recovery Oversight Council’s 2010 annual report mentions, among other things, that PLATO Credit Recovery serves 256 students, with a 91% credit recovery at Central High School.

Patrick, S., & Sturgis, C. (2011). *Cracking the Code: Synchronizing Policy and Practice for Performance-Based Learning*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/iNACOL_CrackingCode_full_report.pdf

According to this report, “Currently, nearly 50 percent of the districts in Alabama are taking advantage of the enabling policy to provide credit recovery and/or credit advancement. Every high school in Alabama offers online credit advancement, Advanced Placement courses, and credit recovery through the Alabama ACCESS program. In just three years, Alabama is starting to see dropout rates decrease and graduation rates increase.”

Perlman, C. L., & Redding, S. (2011). Credit-Recovery Programs. In C. L. Perlman & S. Redding, *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* (pp. 57–58). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

http://www.centerii.org/handbook/resources/4_c_h_credit_recovery_programs_hs.pdf

This paper says, “Credit-recovery programs need to address the challenges that prevented students from previous success. This may include flexible pacing and schedules of instruction, adapting instructional methods and content to students’ level of skills and learning styles, extra practice, and frequent assessments to inform instruction and to provide feedback to students. Data reported by schools suggests that credit-recovery programs may have positive effects on earning credits toward graduation, attendance rates, and passing rates on state standardized tests.”

Schachter, R. (2014). Districts of Distinction: Credit Recovery Boosts Graduation Rate: Baltimore County Public Schools. *District Administration*, 50(11), 39.

<http://www.districtadministration.com/dod/awards/credit-recovery-boosts-graduation-rate>

According to this article on online credit recovery in Baltimore County Public Schools, Baltimore County’s approach to dropout prevention has made an impact, according the state report card for the 2012–2013 school year. The graduation rate rose in 2013 to 86.3%, which was 2.3% higher than the previous year, and one of the highest rates among large school systems nationwide. Twenty-one of its 24 high schools saw gains, and some of the most significant were at schools that had been lagging. The graduation rate for students with limited language proficiency surged 8 points to more than 59%. And the gap in the graduation rate between white and African American students shrank from 5.3% to less than 3%.

Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2009). *Promising Practices in Online Learning: Management and Operations of Online Learning Programs: Ensuring Quality and Accountability*. Vienna, VA: International Association for K–12 Online Learning.

http://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/iNACOL_PP_MgmtOp_042309.pdf

According to this report, “Program evaluations fall into two categories: Internal (conducted by the program staff) or external (conducted by someone outside the organization....Although the specifics of an evaluation vary significantly, an evaluation usually starts with an examination of the program’s mission to determine whether it is meeting its organizational goals. If the goal of an online program is to give students more opportunities to recover course credits in order to graduate, then two evaluation measures could be the number of credit recovery courses being offered, and the graduation rate for students in those courses.”

Zehr, M. A. (2010). Demand Still Growing for Online Credit-Recovery Classes. *Education Week*, 29(36), 10.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/07/14/36credit-2.h29.html>

This *Education Week* article states, “At least three large urban school districts—New York City, Chicago, and Boston—have recently rolled out or soon will roll out programs for online credit recovery.... The surge of interest in online credit-recovery programs has also come despite scant research on the programs’ effectiveness. While studies have been conducted on online learning in general, they haven’t been conducted on the effectiveness of online learning specifically for the use of credit recovery, researchers say.”