



COURSE COMPLETION AND CREDIT RECOVERY OPTIONS

DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RE-ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

WHAT ARE COURSE COMPLETION AND CREDIT RECOVERY OPTIONS?

The goal of course completion is to prevent course failure and the subsequent need for credit recovery. Course completion encompasses a wide variety of educational strategies, programs and interventions to help students find their path to graduation. It is recommended that early interventions occur at the first sign of academic difficulty and include monitoring attendance, behavior and performance, tutoring and mentoring, family and community outreach and utilizing multiple methods and tactics for earning credits to help students stay on track to pass a course the first time.

Credit recovery programs are implemented at the school and/or district level and enable struggling high school students who have fallen behind on graduation requirements, or middle school students who have fallen behind in grade promotion and/or transition into high school to continue earning course credits and make progress toward graduation or grade promotion. This includes programs or activities that facilitate accrual of credits or course remediation especially in core courses like math, science, reading and social studies. Types of credit recovery options include blended learning programs, self-paced digital content programs, online courses, work/study programs that award credits, course remediation programs, alternative education programs and summer school programs.

WHY FOCUS ON COURSE COMPLETION AND CREDIT RECOVERY OPTIONS?

Focusing on course completion encourages schools to identify and intervene with struggling students early to help them stay on track and prevent the need for credit recovery programs down the line. Course completion strategies include enabling students to work at their own pace, allowing students to skip content if they can demonstrate mastery, side-step repetitious material, letting students focus on areas of difficulty and find their own path to graduation. Simply offering a pathway to a diploma is not enough; the research recommends that course completion approaches prepare students for life beyond high school if they are to be a true intervention for already vulnerable students.

Successfully guiding students toward course completion includes:

1. Monitoring Early Warning Systems (EWS);
2. Family and community involvement;
3. Ongoing staff professional development;

Colorado Facts & Figures for Course Completion and Credit Recovery

- Colorado requires each middle and high school's school performance report to identify if course completion or credit recovery programs are available.
- 87% of Colorado secondary schools offer course completion or credit recovery programs.
- The Colorado Student Re-engagement Grant Program funds course completion and credit recovery programs.
- In 2013-2014, 16,215 students in Colorado were enrolled in online blended learning programs.



4. Effective evaluation strategies with a strong technological infrastructure;
5. Post-secondary preparation and planning;
6. Positive youth development;
7. Utilizing graduation or academic coaches; and
8. Mentoring and tutoring services.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Accountability

Educators, parents, and students need to be aware of what alternative schools and programs actually offer—some schools that claim to be course completion, credit recovery and dropout recovery programs can skirt education accountability laws and are not reputable. Because course completion is largely a localized school-based effort, there is little data available on the rigor or effectiveness of the interventions.

Recent research in Colorado found that students enrolled in online schools lagged behind their non-online peers in every subject area and among every student socioeconomic subgroup. The performance gap between online and non-online schools ranged anywhere between 5%--23% depending on the subgroup and subject area. Additionally, the highest performing online schools did not perform as well as the highest performing non-online schools in every content area. The research did find that students at online schools made sufficient growth to reach or maintain proficiency in reading. However, in writing and math, students did not make the growth necessary to reach or maintain proficiency.

Promising Interventions

Students can fail to earn credit for a course because they have not performed all of the required tasks, have not consistently attended class or have had conflicts with the teacher. Early intervention focusing on EWS and course completion is a means of preventing the poor choices that can lead students to course failure and/or the need for credit recovery.

Credit deficiency is clearly documented in the literature as both a leading cause for dropping out and an obstacle to graduation for students who have left school and want to return to school. Early interventions, EWS, and focusing on course completion are positive methods and tactics for reducing dropout and course failure.

Studies suggest that school counselors serve as an integral part of school course completion programs. They can regularly meet with faculty teaching freshman level classes to support pedagogies that foster optimal learning and to closely monitor students who are struggling in specific classes, with particular attention to first semester freshmen.

Community Engagement References and Materials:

[Dropout Prevention Best Practice Guide References](#)

[Dropout Prevention Resources](#)

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/communityengagement>