

Issue Brief: Credit Recovery

March 2018

Introduction

In 2015–16, the high school graduation rate reached a record high of 84 percent (U.S. Department of Education 2017). Despite the gains, over half a million students still drop out of high school each year (U.S. Department of Education 2015a). High schools have adopted various strategies designed to keep students who are at risk of not graduating in school and on track for earning the credits required to graduate. “At-risk” students are defined as those failing to achieve basic proficiency in key subjects or exhibiting behaviors that can lead to failure and/or dropping out of school. Dropout prevention strategies are diverse; they vary in type of program, services used, frequency, intensity, and duration of contact with target students.

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) sponsored the **National Survey on High School Strategies Designed to Help At-Risk Students Graduate (HSS)**, which aimed to provide descriptive information on the prevalence and characteristics of dropout prevention strategies for at-risk students. The survey collected data in the 2014–15 school year from a nationally representative sample of 2,142 public high schools and focused on 13 specific high school improvement strategies¹ identified by a panel of external experts and senior Department officials. All findings are based on self-reported data from school principals. This brief on **credit recovery** is the thirteenth in a series of briefs being released with key findings about these high school improvement strategies.

Definition of Credit Recovery

The HSS defined **credit recovery** as a strategy that encourages at-risk students to re-take a previously failed course required for high school graduation and earn credit if the student successfully completes the course requirements. The strategy was designed to provide a pathway for high school students who have a history of course failure and help them avoid falling further behind in school (U.S. Department of Education 2015b). Credit recovery courses may be available online or in alternative settings and can be scheduled at different times to suit the needs of the student.

Research on Credit Recovery

A recent Institute of Education Sciences (IES)-sponsored study on the efficacy of online credit recovery programs for ninth graders who failed Algebra I found that the majority of students in both the online course and traditional in-person course successfully recovered credits in Algebra I (Heppen et al. 2016).

¹ The survey examined 13 strategies that are designed to improve high school outcomes for at-risk students. These strategies are: (1) academic support classes, (2) academic tutoring, (3) career-themed curriculum, (4) case management services, (5) college-level coursework, (6) competency-based advancement, (7) credit recovery, (8) early warning systems, (9) high school transition activities, (10) mentoring, (11) personalized learning plans, (12) social services, and (13) student support teams. See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opecd/ppss/reports-high-school.html> for the series of briefs. Researchers may request access to a restricted-use data file by completing an application with the Institute of Education Science’s National Center for Education Statistics. Information about the process is also available at this website above.

At the same time, students in the online Algebra I course scored lower on an end-of-course assessment and received lower grades in Algebra I than students assigned to an in-person course. There were no significant differences between students taking an online credit recovery course compared to students taking an in-person credit recovery course in their likelihood of on-time graduation (47 percent of students taking a credit recovery course online versus 47 percent of students taking a credit recovery course in-person graduated from high school on time (Rickles et al. 2017).²

More generally, however, few rigorous studies have focused specifically on the effectiveness of credit recovery on high school graduation. The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) completed a systematic review of research studies on credit recovery programs (U.S. Department of Education 2015b) and was unable to draw conclusions based on existing research about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of credit recovery programs. More research would be needed to establish the causal effects of credit recovery programs, particularly the effects on academic outcomes.

Survey Findings on Credit Recovery

This survey does not examine the effectiveness of credit recovery but instead describes the kinds of schools that offer credit recovery and their approaches to implementing the strategy. This analysis included an examination of four school characteristics: (1) size, (2) poverty, (3) locale, and (4) graduation rate. Only statistically significant differences within a school characteristic (at $p < .05$) are discussed; non-statistically significant differences are not reported. School characteristics were defined in the following ways.

School size. School size categories consisted of small schools (fewer than 500 students), medium schools (500–1,199 students), and large schools (1,200 or more students) based on 2013–14 Common Core of Data (CCD) student enrollment data.

School poverty. Poverty levels were based on 2013–14 free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) and total CCD school enrollment data. The poverty categories were low-poverty schools (below 35 percent students with FRPL), medium-poverty schools (35–49 percent students with FRPL), and high-poverty schools (50 percent or more students with FRPL).

School locale. School locale included three mutually exclusive locales from the CCD: rural schools, suburban/town schools, and city schools.

Graduation rate. School classification by graduation rate was based on three categories: low-graduation rate (67 percent or lower graduation rate), medium-graduation rate (68 to 89 percent graduation rate), and high-graduation rate (90 percent or higher graduation rate).

Summary of Key Findings

- In 2014–15, 89 percent of high schools nationwide offered at least one credit recovery course to students who needed them; 15 percent of high school students³ participated in some type of credit recovery, according to school principals.

² Online credit recovery offerings, ranging from virtual labs that have almost no teacher input to models that blend virtual lessons with one-on-one tutoring, have grown increasingly popular; they are among the fastest growing areas of K–12 online education. The online credit recovery course in the IES-sponsored study included both an online teacher and a site-based mentor.

³ HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 34).

- High-graduation-rate schools were more likely than low-graduation-rate schools to offer at least one credit recovery course; large schools were more likely than small schools to offer at least one credit recovery course; and high-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to offer at least one credit recovery course.
- Among high schools offering credit recovery, schools most commonly targeted students on the basis of their academic performance (87 percent), followed by attendance problems⁴ (73 percent), staff referrals (60 percent), and discipline or behavioral issues (48 percent) among others.
- High schools used different approaches to providing credit recovery opportunities for their students. Most commonly, credit recovery courses were provided to students online (71 percent), followed by a blended model with an in-person facilitator and online tools (46 percent), and then in-person within a traditional classroom (42 percent).
- High schools most frequently provided credit recovery courses to students in small groups of 10 students or fewer (49 percent), followed by groups of 11 to 20 students (27 percent), and 21 students or more (14 percent). The remaining 10 percent of high schools reported that class size was not applicable as the credit recovery course was taught entirely online.
- High schools provided credit recovery courses to students at various times of the day; most commonly, credit recovery was provided to students during the regular school day (84 percent), followed by the summer (73 percent), before and/or after school (57 percent), and on weekends (20 percent).

What was the prevalence of credit recovery?

In 2014–15, 89 percent of high schools nationwide offered at least one credit recovery course to students who needed them; 15 percent of high school students⁵ participated in some type of credit recovery, according to school principals. The prevalence of credit recovery courses differed by school size, school poverty level, and graduation rate (Exhibit 1). There were no significant differences by school locale.

Differences by school size. Large schools were more likely than small schools to offer at least one credit recovery course to students (94 percent versus 86 percent).

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to offer at least one credit recovery course to students (91 percent versus 86 percent).

Differences by graduation rate. Low-graduation-rate schools were less likely than high-graduation-rate schools to offer at least one credit recovery course to students (84 percent versus 91 percent).

⁴ In the HSS, schools reported on students with attendance issues using their own definition of poor attendance. This may include measures of truancy and/or chronic absenteeism.

⁵ Ibid. 3.

Exhibit 1. Percentage of high schools that offered credit recovery courses by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

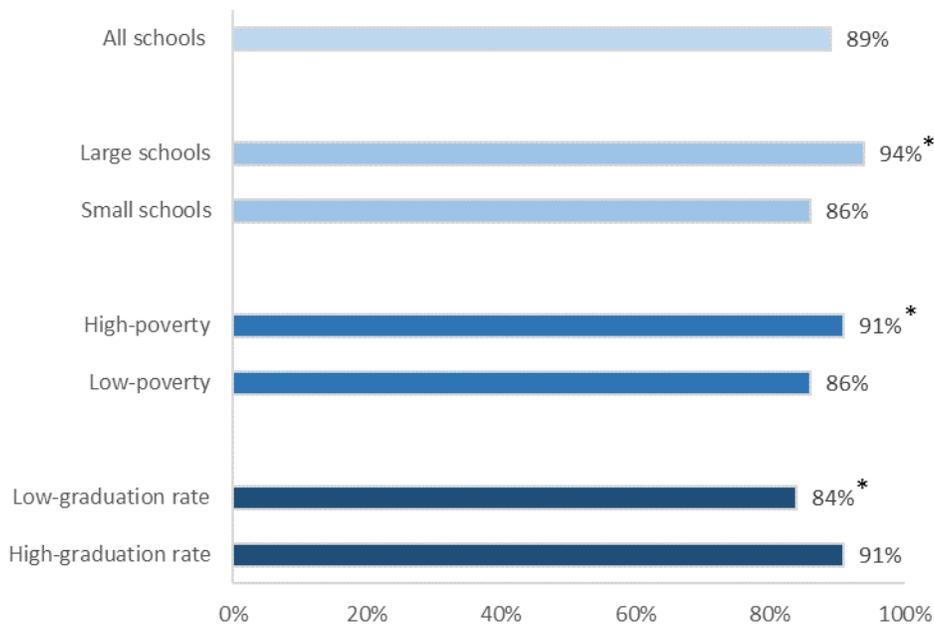


Exhibit reads: In 2014–15, 89 percent of all high schools nationwide provided credit recovery courses to students.

* $p < .05$

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups: large schools compared with small schools, high-poverty compared with low-poverty high schools, and low-graduation compared with high-graduation rate schools.

Unweighted $n = 1,691$ high schools.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 33).

How did high schools target students for participation in a credit recovery courses?

High schools most frequently offered credit recovery to specific students on the basis of their academic performance (87 percent), followed by attendance issues (73 percent) and staff referrals (60 percent) among others. There were significant differences by school size, school poverty levels, school locale, and graduation rates in the subgroups of students that were targeted for participation in a credit recovery course (Exhibit 3).

Differences by school size. Large schools were more likely than small schools to rely on staff referrals to target students for participation in a credit recovery course (71 percent versus 56 percent) and were more likely to target EL students (24 percent versus 17 percent). However, small schools were more likely than large schools to target students with discipline or behavioral issues for participation in a credit recovery course (51 percent versus 39 percent).

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to target students with discipline or behavioral issues (52 percent versus 45 percent), students

in a particular grade level⁶ (23 percent versus 14 percent), reentry students⁷ (41 percent versus 33 percent), and EL students (23 percent versus 15 percent) for participation in a credit recovery course.

Differences by school locale. More city schools relied on staff referrals than suburban or rural schools to target students for participation in a credit recovery course (67 percent of city schools versus 65 percent of suburban schools and 49 percent of rural schools); also, more city schools targeted reentry students than suburban or rural schools (42 percent of city schools versus 40 percent of suburban schools and 33 percent of rural schools); students in a particular grade level (28 percent of city schools versus 20 percent of suburban schools and 12 percent of rural schools); and EL students (26 percent of city schools versus 23 percent of suburban schools and 10 percent of rural schools) for participation in a credit recovery course. More suburban schools targeted students with attendance issues than city or rural schools (79 percent of suburban schools versus 71 percent of city schools and 70 percent of rural schools) for participation in a credit recovery course.

Differences by school graduation rate. Low-graduation-rate schools were more likely than high-graduation-rate schools to target students with attendance issues (84 percent versus 68 percent); students through staff referrals (66 percent versus 56 percent); students with discipline or behavioral issues (64 percent versus 40 percent); reentry students (52 percent versus 30 percent); students in a particular grade level (32 percent versus 11 percent); and EL students (29 percent versus 15 percent) for participation in a credit recovery course.

Exhibit 3. Percentage of high schools that targeted specific student subgroups or issues for participation in a credit recovery course by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

Student subgroups targeted	All schools offering credit recovery	Size		Poverty Level		Locale			Graduation Rate	
		Large	Small	High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	Low	High
Students performing <u>below</u> standards or grade level	87%	85%	86%	87%	86%	85%	88%	88%	86%	89%
Students with attendance issues	73%	71%	75%	76%	71%	71%*	78%	70%	84%*	68%
Recommended by school staff	60%	71%*	56%	63%	58%	67%*	65%	49%	66%*	56%
Students with discipline or behavioral issues	48%	39%*	51%	52%*	45%	46%	51%	45%	64%*	40%

⁶ Some high schools may target students by grade level. For example, if high schools plan to intervene early, staff will target 9th graders for participation in credit recovery to ensure students stay on track with their credit accumulation. Other schools may target 11th or 12th graders who have previously failed courses and have them pass as many required courses as possible.

⁷ Reentry students are those who dropped out of high school and then re-enrolled, as defined by the HSS.

Reentry students	38%	42%	38%	41%*	33%	42%*	40%	33%	52%*	30%
Students in a grade level, regardless of performance	19%	20%	20%	23%*	14%	28%*	20%	12%	32%*	11%
English learners	19%	24%*	17%	23%*	15%	26%*	23%	10%	29%*	15%

Exhibit reads: In 2014–15, 87 percent of all schools that provided credit recovery courses to students targeted students performing below standards or grade level for these courses.

* $p < .05$

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,719$ high schools.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 35).

How did high schools deliver credit recovery courses to students?

High schools delivered credit recovery courses to students using different methods. For example, high schools might offer all of its credit recovery courses in mathematics through an online provider but may teach science courses that have a lab requirement in person. In some instances, schools might use a blended approach, combining online support with an in-person facilitator, in delivering a credit recovery course. Most commonly, a credit recovery course was provided to students online only (71 percent), followed by a hybrid model blending online support with an in-person facilitator (46 percent), and then in-person within a traditional classroom (42 percent). There were significant differences in how schools delivered credit recovery courses by school poverty level, school locale, and graduation rate (Exhibit 4). There were no significant differences by school size.

Exhibit 4. Percentage of high schools that offered credit recovery courses and method of delivery by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

Method of delivery	All schools offering credit recovery	Poverty level			Locale			Graduation Rate	
		High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	High	Low	
Online	71%	68%	73%	64%*	73%	74%	73%*	61%	
In person	42%	46%*	36%	54%*	42%	33%	39%*	46%	
Blended	46%	48%	44%	54%*	48%	38%	41%*	54%	

Exhibit reads: In 2014–15, 71 percent of all schools that offered credit recovery courses reported that they provided these courses online. Sixty-one percent of low-graduation-rate schools and 73 percent of high-graduation-rate schools offered these classes online.

* $p < .05$.

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,719$ high schools.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 37)

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to offer credit recovery courses in person (46 percent versus 36 percent).

Differences by school locale. More city schools offered credit recovery courses in person than suburban or rural schools (54 percent of city schools versus 42 percent of suburban schools and 33 percent of rural schools) or as a hybrid model of online support blended with an in-person facilitator (54 percent of city schools versus 48 percent of suburban schools and 38 percent of rural schools), while more rural schools offered credit recovery courses online than suburban or city schools (74 percent of rural schools versus 73 percent of suburban schools and 64 percent of city schools).

Differences by graduation rate. Low-graduation-rate schools were more likely than high-graduation-rate schools to offer credit recovery courses in person (46 percent versus 39 percent) or as a hybrid model of online support blended with an in-person facilitator (54 percent versus 41 percent) and less likely to offer credit recovery courses online (61 percent versus 73 percent).

Who provided instruction in credit recovery courses?

The most common instructors of credit recovery courses were regular classroom teachers (70 percent), followed by teachers from an online course provider (51 percent), other school staff such as administrators or paraprofessionals (26 percent), and resource lab teachers (25 percent). There were significant differences in who delivered instruction in credit recovery courses by school size, school poverty level, school locale, and graduation rate (Exhibit 5).

Differences by school size. Small schools were more likely than large schools to report that other school staff such as administrators or paraprofessionals provided instruction in credit recovery courses (29 percent versus 18 percent).

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to report that regular classroom teachers (75 percent versus 62 percent) and resource lab teachers (27 percent versus 20 percent) provided instruction in credit recovery courses and less likely to report that teachers from an online course provider (49 percent versus 58 percent) delivered instruction in credit recovery courses.

Differences by school locale. More city schools reported that regular classroom teachers provided instruction in credit recovery courses than suburban or rural schools (84 percent of city schools versus 71 percent of suburban schools and 61 percent of rural schools). More rural schools reported that teachers from an online course provider delivered instruction in credit recovery courses than suburban or city schools (55 percent of rural schools versus 51 percent of suburban schools and 43 percent of city schools) and other school staff such as administrators or paraprofessionals (30 percent of rural schools versus 22 percent of suburban schools and 24 percent of city schools).

Differences by graduation rate. High-graduation-rate schools were more likely than low-graduation-rate schools to report that regular classroom teachers provided instruction in credit recovery courses (84 percent versus 63 percent).

Exhibit 5. Percentage of high schools that reported the type of instructor providing credit recovery courses by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

Type of instructor	All schools offering credit recovery	Size		Poverty		Locale			Graduation rate	
		Large	Small	High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	Low	High
Classroom teacher	70%	75%	70%	75%*	62%	84%*	71%	61%	84%*	63%
Teacher provided by online course provider	51%	50%	51%	49%*	58%	43%*	51%	55%	44%	51%
Other school staff	26%	18%*	29%	26%	22%	24%*	22%	30%	30%	24%
Resource lab teachers	25%	28%	23%	27%*	20%	25%	26%	25%	23%	25%
Paid tutors hired by the school	12%	9%	11%	11%	12%	12%	14%	10%	12%	11%
Adult mentors	3%	3%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Unpaid tutors hired by the school	2%	1%	2%	2%*	1%	3%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Tutors hired by outside organization	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%

Exhibit reads: Among high schools that provided credit recovery courses in 2014–15, 70 percent used classroom teachers to deliver instruction in credit recovery classes.

* $p < .05$.

NOTE: The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,726$.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 40).

Were credit recovery courses typically provided to students in small or large groups?

High schools most frequently provided credit recovery courses to students in small groups of 10 students or fewer (49 percent), followed by groups of 11 to 20 students (27 percent), and 21 students or more (14 percent). The remaining 10 percent of high schools reported that class size was not applicable as the credit recovery course was taught entirely online. Among schools that reported small class size (e.g., 10 students or fewer), there were significant differences by school size, school poverty level, school locale, and graduation rate (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Percentage of high schools that provided credit recovery courses and typical class size by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

Students per teacher in credit recovery courses	All schools offering credit recovery	Size		Poverty		Locale			Graduation rate	
		Large	Small	High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	Low	High
1 to 5 students	28%	10%*	38%	25%*	31%	16%*	22%	42%	21%*	35%
6 to 10 students	21%	14%*	22%	20%	21%	20%	20%	24%	27%	22%
11 to 15 students	15%	16%	13%	16%	16%	17%*	20%	9%	19%	15%
16 to 20 students	12%	19%*	9%	13%	10%	19%*	14%	5%	14%*	8%
21 to 25 students	7%	16%*	4%	9%*	4%	13%*	8%	3%	9%*	4%
26 to 30 students	4%	12%*	1%	6%*	2%	8%*	4%	1%	3%	3%
More than 30 students	3%	9%*	1%	3%	2%	4%*	4%	1%	4%	2%

Exhibit reads: Among high schools that offered credit recovery courses in 2014–15, 28 percent had classes with one to five students.

* $p < .05$.

NOTE: Total does not add to 100% because 10 percent of principals responded that no classroom teacher provided instruction (e.g., an option if instruction is delivered online).

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,712$.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 41).

Differences by school size. Small schools were more likely than large schools to report that their credit recovery courses had between one and five students (38 percent versus 10 percent) and between six and 10 students (22 percent versus 14 percent).

Differences by school poverty. Low-poverty schools were more likely than high-poverty schools to report that their credit recovery courses had between one and five students (31 percent versus 25 percent).

Differences by school locale. More rural schools reported that their credit recovery courses had between six and 10 students than suburban or city schools (42 percent of rural schools versus 22 percent of suburban schools and 16 percent of city schools).

Differences by graduation rate. High-graduation-rate schools were more likely than low-graduation-rate schools to report that their credit recovery courses had between one and five students (35 percent versus 21 percent).

Where did high schools provide credit recovery courses?

High schools provided credit recovery courses in different settings, possibly to accommodate student transportation needs. Most commonly, credit recovery courses were provided at the student’s school (96 percent), followed by at the student’s home for online learning (45 percent), at another school (17

percent), and at another location (9 percent), such as a reengagement center. The setting for credit recovery courses differed by school size, school poverty level, school locale, and graduation rate (Exhibit 7).

Differences by school size. Large schools were more likely than small schools to offer credit-recovery courses at another school (26 percent versus 13 percent) or at another location such as a reengagement center (12 percent versus 7 percent).

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to offer credit recovery courses at the student’s school (98 percent versus 93 percent).

Differences by school locale. More suburban schools offered credit recovery courses at the student’s home for online learning than city or rural schools (48 percent of suburban schools versus 45 percent of city schools and 41 percent of rural schools). More city schools offered credit recovery courses at another school than suburban or rural schools (23 percent of city schools versus 17 percent of suburban schools and 13 percent of rural schools).

Differences by graduation rate. High-graduation-rate schools were more likely than low-graduation-rate schools to offer credit recovery courses at another school (17 percent versus 11 percent) or at another location (10 percent versus 6 percent) and less likely to offer credit recovery courses at the student’s home for online learning (42 percent versus 51 percent).

Exhibit 7. Percentage of high schools that provided credit recovery courses and course location by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

Location of credit recovery courses	All schools with credit recovery	Size		Poverty		Locale			Graduation Rate	
		Large	Small	High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	High	Low
At your school	96%	96%	96%	98%*	93%	97%	96%	95%	95%	96%
In the students’ homes	45%	48%	43%	43%	47%	45%*	48%	41%	42%*	51%
At another school	17%	26%*	13%	17%	16%	23%*	17%	13%	17%*	11%
At another location	9%	12%*	7%	8%	12%	73%	10%	8%	10%*	6%

Exhibit reads: In 2014–15, 87 percent of all schools that provided credit recovery courses to students targeted students performing below standards or grade level for these courses.

* $p < .05$

NOTE: The option, "In the students' homes", was only asked if the respondent selected "Online" or "Blended learning" as the delivery method on Question 37.

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,720$ high schools.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 38).

When were credit recovery courses offered?

High schools offered credit recovery courses to students at various times of the day. Most commonly, high schools provided credit recovery courses to students during regular school day (84 percent), followed by during the summer (73 percent), before and/or after school (57 percent), and on weekends during the school year (20 percent). There were significant differences in when credit recovery courses were offered by school size, school poverty, school locale, and graduation rate (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Percentage of high schools that provided credit recovery courses and when the courses were offered by selected school characteristics, 2014–15

When credit recovery courses were offered	All schools with credit recovery	Size		Poverty		Locale			Graduation Rate	
		Large	Small	High	Low	City	Suburban	Rural	High	Low
During the summer	73%	86%*	66%	73%	73%	76%*	75%	68%	74%*	66%
During the regular school day	84%	82%	86%	84%	79%	79%*	82%	88%	82%*	87%
Before and/or after school	57%	78%*	48%	60%	55%	68%*	62%	44%	52%	58%
On weekends during the school year	20%	25%*	18%	24%*	16%	25%*	21%	17%	18%	23%

Exhibit reads: In 2014–15, 87 percent of all schools that provided credit recovery courses to students targeted students performing below standards or grade level for these courses.

* $p < .05$

NOTE: An asterisk indicates statistical significance. The asterisk is placed on one case per comparison. Differences across school characteristics with two categories were based on comparisons between the two groups. Differences across school characteristics with three categories were based on goodness-of-fit across all three categories.

Unweighted $n = 1,726$ high schools.

SOURCE: HSS survey of high school administrators, 2015 (Question 39).

Differences by school size. Large schools were more likely than small schools to offer credit-recovery courses during the summer (86 percent versus 66 percent), before and/or after school, (78 percent versus 48 percent), and on weekends during the school year (25 percent versus 18 percent).

Differences by school poverty. High-poverty schools were more likely than low-poverty schools to offer credit recovery courses on weekends during the school year (24 percent versus 16 percent).

Differences by school locale. More city schools offered credit recovery courses during the summer than suburban or rural schools (76 percent of city schools versus 75 percent of suburban schools and 68 percent of rural schools), before and/or after school (68 percent of city schools versus 62 percent of suburban schools and 44 percent of rural schools), and on weekends during the school year (25 percent of city schools versus 21 percent of suburban schools and 17 percent of rural schools). More rural schools offered credit recovery courses

during the regular school day than suburban or city schools (88 percent of rural schools versus 82 percent of suburban schools and 79 percent of city schools).

Differences by graduation rate. Low-graduation-rate schools (87 percent) were more likely than high-graduation-rate schools (82 percent) to offer credit recovery courses during the regular school day (87 percent versus 82 percent) and less likely to offer credit recovery courses during the summer (66 percent versus 74 percent).

Methodology

The **National Survey on High School Strategies Designed to Help At-Risk Students Graduate** was a survey of 13 high school strategies designed to improve graduation rates among students at risk of dropping out and was administered in the 2014–15 school year. The 13 strategies are: (1) academic support classes, (2) academic tutoring, (3) career-themed curriculum, (4) case management, (5) college-level coursework, (6) competency-based advancement, (7) credit recovery, (8) early warning systems, (9) high school transition activities, (10) mentoring, (11) personalized learning plans, (12) social services, and (13) student support teams.

The researchers selected a nationally representative sample of high schools⁸ using a random sampling approach, stratifying high schools based on graduation rate (from [EDFacts](#))⁹ and locale code (from [NCES 2013–14 Common Core of Data](#)). The survey collected data from high school principals (or designees knowledgeable about programs and strategies) at sampled schools. The survey response rate was 90 percent. The survey responses, after cleaning and processing, were analyzed in SAS and Stata using descriptive techniques that apply the appropriate statistical population weights to account for stratification by graduation rate and locale.

Results reported in this brief reflect the full survey sample unless otherwise noted and are representative of U.S. public high schools nationwide. References in the text to differences between subgroups based on sample data refer only to differences that are statistically significant using a significance level of 0.05.

⁸ All U.S. public high schools providing instruction to 12th grade students in the fall of 2010 were included in the sampling frame unless (1) the lowest offered grade was 11th grade or higher, (2) there were fewer than five students in grades 9 through 12, (3) the percentage of students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 was under 20 percent of the total school enrollment and the total number of students in grades 9 through 12 was fewer than 20, or (4) the school name contained one of nine keywords indicating juvenile detention center or hospital. Of the 103,813 total schools listed in the 2010–11 CCD, 22,447 high schools met the criteria to be included in the sampling frame.

⁹ There were 3,302 schools without graduation rate information in the 2010–11 *EDFacts* public use data set. The researchers used an imputation approach to assign these schools to either the high- or low-graduation-rate stratum. The imputation process began by examining the distribution of the high/low graduation rate classification for 19,145 schools by sampling locale. The percentage of schools classified as high graduation rate was calculated separately for each locale sampling stratum; 68.4 percent of rural schools were classified as high graduation rate, 63.0 percent of suburban schools were classified as high graduation rate, and 41.0 percent of city schools were classified as high graduation rate. The research team randomly assigned each of the 3,302 schools with unknown graduation rates to the high graduation rate stratum with probability 68.4 if the school was classified as rural, with probability 63.0 if the school was classified as suburban, and with probability 41.0 if the school was classified as urban. The sample size was adjusted upwards to account for potential misclassification due to this method. In analysis, the researchers used the restricted-use 2013–14 *EDFacts* data and graduation rates published on school and district websites to fill in this missing data.

References

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Appendix: Credit Recovery (Survey Excerpt)

National Survey on High School Strategies Designed to Help At-Risk Students Graduate

This section asks about **Credit Recovery**. For the purposes of this survey, credit recovery is credit-bearing courses to help students make up failed classes and keep them on track for graduation.

33. In the 2014–15 school year, does your school have credit-recovery courses or programs?

(Please select only one)

{Only allow one selection}

Yes

No

If user responds “Yes” to Q33, ask Q35 through Q41. Otherwise, skip to Q42.

34. On average, approximately what percentage of high school students in your school is offered credit-recovery courses or programs in the 2014–15 school year?

{Slide bar for 0% to 100%}

35. Are any of the following subsets of students targeted for taking credit-recovery courses or programs?

(Check all that apply)

Students with attendance issues (e.g., truancy)

Students with discipline or behavioral issues

Students performing below standards or grade level

Students in a particular grade level, regardless of performance

Students recommended by high school staff (e.g., counselor or teacher)

Re-entry students

English Language Learners

Other (Please Specify _____)

36. On average, approximately what percentage of high school students in your school is participating in credit recovery at any location in the 2014–15 school year?

{Slide bar for 0% to 100%}

37. How are credit-recovery courses typically offered?

(Check all that apply)

Online

In person

Blended learning (e.g., online with an in-person facilitator)

38. Where are credit-recovery courses offered?

(Check all that apply)

- At your school (including computer or resource lab)
- In the students' homes
- {Load only if "Online" Or "Blended Learning" was selected in Q37}
- At another school
- At another location (e.g., reengagement center)
- (Please specify: _____)

39. When are credit-recovery courses offered to your students?

(Check all that apply)

- During the summer
- During the regular school day
- Before and/or after school during the week
- On weekends during the school year (e.g., Saturday school)

40. Who provides instruction in credit-recovery courses in your school?

(Check all that apply)

- Teacher provided by the online course provider
- {Load only if the user selects "Online" or "blended learning" in Q37}
- Classroom teachers
- Resource lab teachers
- Paid tutors hired by the school
- Unpaid tutors hired by the school
- Tutors hired by an outside organization
- Adult mentors
- Other school staff (e.g., administrators, paraprofessionals)
- Other (Please specify _____)

41. On average, approximately how many students per teacher are there in each credit-recovery class in your school?

(Please select only one)

{Only allow one selection}

- Does not apply, no teacher
- 1 to 5 students
- 6 to 10 students
- 11 to 15 students
- 16 to 20 students
- 21 to 25 students
- 26 to 30 students
- More than 30 students

The full survey is available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports-high-school.html>