7-2018

An Examination of Teacher Perceptions of Credit Recovery in Three South Georgia School Districts

Brooks Robinson

An Examination of Teacher Perceptions of Credit Recovery in Three South Georgia School Districts

By

Brooks Robinson

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Columbus State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

in Curriculum and Leadership

Columbus State University

Columbus, Georgia

June 2018

DEDICATION

To you, my family members, I dedicate this dissertation to you. Your continuous support provided the reinforcement I needed to complete the doctoral journey. Mom and Dad, sisters and brothers, you were with me physically, emotionally, and spiritually throughout the journey, and I thank each of you for your concern and encouragement. One of my family members began this journey with me *way back when*, in pre-kindergarten and through elementary, middle, and high school. I would be remiss if I did not include my nephew, Calvin Patrick Jones better known as "Pat." Though he met an untimely death, his spirit lingers still. I truly love and miss Pat; and therefore, this dissertation is dedicated in his memory as well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my Lord and Savior for directing my destiny, providing traveling grace, guiding my pen, and keeping me focused on my goal. With Him all things are possible.

Dr. Michael Richardson, Dr. Pamela Lemoine, and Dr. Christopher Garretson, your empowerment strengthened me to move successfully through the dissertation process. Without your knowledge, guidance, and leadership skills, the dissertation process would be overwhelming and burdensome. Thank you for serving as my dissertation committee. My regards to you on your future endeavors.

Dad and Mom, Arthur Robinson and Mamie Robinson, you are my rock! Thank you for molding, nurturing, cultivating, and encouraging me throughout the years of my development. Barbara, thank you sister for reading and rereading my content. Rosemary, Arthur, Anthony, and Chris, thank you for being supportive siblings; you always stepped forward in times of need. Aunties Elizabeth, Alpina, and Sarah, I say thank you for your support. To my Day I Crew, thank you for being with me from the beginning of the research process to the end.

Dr. Dargan, my editor, thank you for your keen insights, sharp eyes, and your willingness to provide critical reviews and honest evaluations of my drafts. I say thank you to infinity and beyond for forcing me to respect conventions of writing, form and style, and editorial injections through the dissertation process. You laughed with me, sighed with me, and ate much junk food with me as I struggled through drafts again and again. Thank you for instilling in me the idea that *good writing is 98% rewriting.*

ABSTRACT

The present study was an exploration of the credit recovery program in three school districts in Georgia. The researcher explored the implementation of the credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. Three research questions were used focusing on the implementation process, the reason why the credit recovery program was implemented, and the outcome of the credit recovery program after implementation. The methodology was a qualitative comparative research design, which included data from three school districts in Georgia. Data were collected via teacher surveys, individual interviews, and document analysis. Findings from the study showed that the credit recovery programs were implemented according to plan, were established to meet specific goals, which included improving graduation rates, decreasing dropout rates, and providing failing students a second chance or opportunity to graduate with their peers. Even though there was evidence of a lack of trainings for teachers, as a whole, and no procedures in place to hold students accountable when they used the available online program after school and at home, goals and objectives as established for the credit recovery program were met. When asked about credit recovery trainings and whether or not students were held accountable, respondents' responses varied. Therefore, recommendations for further study included the establishment of effective professional development programs for teachers and the implementation of accountability and control measures to increase the college and career ready rate of students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iii

Copyright Page iv

Abstract v

Table of Contents vi

List of Tables viii

List of Figures ix

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION 1

- General Introduction 1
- Statement of the Problem 2
- Purpose of Study 4
- Research Questions 4
- Conceptual Framework 5
- Importance of the Study 5
- Procedures 6
- Limitations/Delimitations 7
- Definition of Terms 8
- Summary 10

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATD LITERATURE 11

- Introduction 11
- Background 11
- History 14
- Participating School Districts 21
- Credit Recovery 23
- Blended Learning 24
- At-Risk Students 27
- Credit Recovery, an Ongoing Debate 35
- Additional Research 51
- Studies Related to Credit Recovery 58
- Summary 60

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY 64

- Introduction 64
- Research Questions 64
- Research Design 64
- Population 65
- Participants 66
- Instrumentation 67

Data Collection 67
Data Analysis 69
Member Checking 70
Credibility 71
Reporting the Data 72
Summary 72

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS 73

Introduction 73
Research Questions 73
Research Design 73
Respondents 74
Findings 74
Data Analysis 85
Summary 89

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 92

Summary 92
Analysis of Research 97
Discussion of Research Findings 99
Conclusions 102
Research Framework 104
Implications for Practice 107
Limitations 108
Recommendations 109
Dissemination 110
Concluding Thoughts 111

REFERENCES 113

APPENDIXES 123

Appendix A: Interview Questions 123
Appendix B: Human Research Application Certificate 124
Appendix C: Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers 125
Appendix D: Analysis of Survey 131

LIST OF TABLES

Tables Page

1. Studies Related to Credit Recovery 60
2. Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District A 76
3. Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District B 77
4. Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District C 78
5. Reason for Credit Recovery Program Was Implemented In School District A 79
6. Reason for Credit Recovery Program Was Implemented In School District B 80
7. Reason for Credit Recovery Program Was Implemented In School District C 81
8. Outcome After Implementation of Credit Recovery in School District A 82
9. Outcome After Implementation of Credit Recovery in School District B 83
10. Outcome After Implementation of Credit Recovery in School District C 84
11. Emergent Themes from Interviews In School District A 86
12. Emergent Themes from Interviews In School District B 87
13. Emergent Themes from Interviews In School District C 88
14. Document Review Findings from School Districts A, B, and C 89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures Page

1. Conceptual Framework ……5

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) published new graduation policies on January 6, 2010. The new policies included six sections, from guidelines to reflect seat time in classes to other online credit and credit recovery policies (GaDOE, 2010). High school graduation and dropout rates were considered as useful indicators to determine if education programs were effective in providing best practices to meet the needs of students (Koenig, 2010). With the End-of-Course Test (EOCT) being phased out, the new graduation policy included the Georgia Milestones Assessment System during the 2014–2015 school year. The new graduation policies indicated that standardized testing, as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandated, created considerable pressure among educators at state and national levels (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016; GaDOE, 2016b). For 10 years, NCLB had minor gains relating to student achievement; therefore, state officials began considering new policies to aid all students in reaching standardized proficiency levels (GaDOE, 2016b).

The Obama administration, in 2009, created Race to the Top (RTT), which allowed educational agencies to apply for waivers for NCLB (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2016). State educational agencies were expected to modify policies by forming charter schools and expanding teacher accountability across content areas, using standardized testing. Policy makers in the United States of America based many important education policies and decisions on the outcome of test scores.

With increased pressure to improve test scores placed on local boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and students, failing was not an option. Failing meant possible school closures, job losses for teachers and principals, and academic

failures for students as some of the ending results of the high-stakes testing (Fiels, 2016). Dismantling the NCLB Act, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015; ESSA placed the power, regarding testing and underperforming schools back into the hand of state and local officials (Fiels).

To measure growth in student performance, state and local educators used the Georgia Milestones Assessment System Assessment Systems as an instrument to examine how well students absorbed the information and acquired the proficiencies sketched out in the state-adopted content standards (GaDOE, 2016). Students in Grades 3 through 8 completed the end-of-grade assessment in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics; Grades 5 and 8 completed an assessment in science and social studies in addition to ELA and mathematics, while high school students completed the end-of-course assessment (EOCA) for each of the 10 courses the Georgia Board of Education officials specified. Upon completion of a course, the EOCA measure was administered and served as the final exam for the course, making up 20% of the student's final course grade (GaDOE, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The credit recovery program was an online curriculum available statewide for students who failed courses. In general, the focus of the credit recovery program in Georgia was to help students "to stay in school and graduate on time" (Watson & Gemin, 2008, p. 3). An online credit recovery program was designed to prepare students who failed the end-of-pathway assessment (EOPA). It was unknown if new graduation policies in Georgia were successful in helping students in rural schools to meet graduation requirements. It was also unknown if credit recovery programs were effective in helping school district educators to reduce the dropout rate in schools across the state. Even though increased graduation rates and decreased dropout rates were considered as

positive results of credit recovery programs, how well-prepared students were academically, after completing credit recovery, to meet the graduation policies was uncertain.

To address the required graduation policies, educators in schools across Georgia chose credit recovery as an option for failing students. The credit recovery program was an online option used to teach the academic knowledge, concepts, and skills students needed to pass required courses. Students who failed courses were not on track for graduation and were at risk for dropping out of school. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the implementation process of credit recovery and improvements, if any, the program had on student outcomes in three school districts in Georgia. The researcher examined data obtained from interviews conducted with five teachers from each of the three school districts in the study.

Credit recovery programs were being used to increase graduations rates across the nation. For example, an online credit recovery program in the Baltimore School District, produced positive results in student achievement (Schachter, 2014). A typical course, according to Schachter, was housed in a lab within the school and staffed with math, science, English, and history teachers for students who failed. Online learning courses were available for students to recover credits. Students enrolled in credit recovery courses when they had an open space on their schedule and received the approval from the counselor and the teachers of the subject they failed. It was important for students enrolled in online courses for credit recovery to have support from teachers in the schools. Schachter (2014) explained that school principals, teachers, and staff members met regularly to discuss and develop ways for building closer relationships with at-risk students.

A need existed for educators in school districts to revamp online software-based credit recovery programs to focus attention on content mastery versus seat time (Davis (2015). Many credit recovery programs, Davis inferred, seemed to be designed to help students to hurry and finish courses to prepare students to graduate from school with their peers. Having students hurry through their online courses decreased rigor and caused online programs to be ineffective in preparing students for continuing learning or higher education. Online software-based credit recovery programs decreased the dropout rate, students were allowed to work at their own pace without teacher involvement, and completion students to earn required graduation credits faster (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011; Watson & Gemin, 2008). Whether students gained, mastered, and retained the knowledge, concepts, and skills presented by way of online software-based, credit recovery programs instead of simply memorized required knowledge, concepts, and skills geared to the required tests, was uncertain.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher explored the implementation of a credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. Literature reporting the effectiveness of credit recovery, as a method of increasing graduation rates and increasing the college and career readiness of students, was limited. Hence, investigation of the effectiveness of the online credit recovery program was justified.

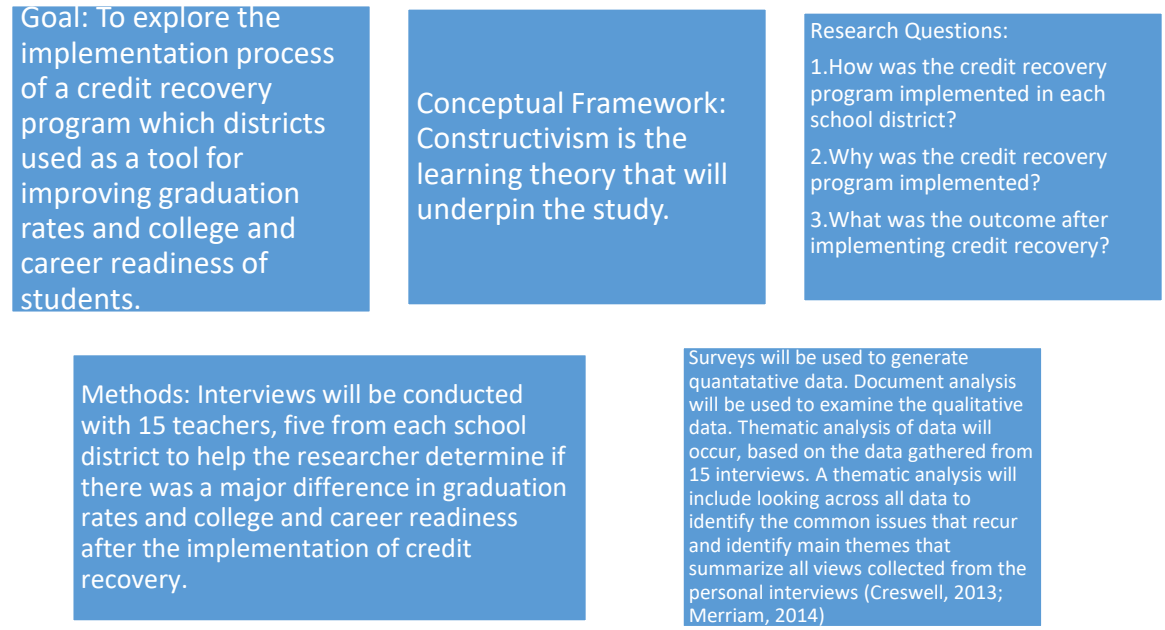
Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district?
2. Why was the credit recovery program implemented?
3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework*



The researcher explored the implementation of a credit recovery program which districts used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. Literature reporting the effectiveness of credit recovery, as a method of increasing graduation rates, as required by state policies was limited. Hence, investigation of the effectiveness of the online credit recovery program was justified. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 logically linked the components of the research design.

Importance of the Study

This study was important for school districts because it has the potential to help increase awareness about credit recovery and its effect on graduation rates in schools in

comparison to students' college and career readiness levels as provided on the CCRPI report for schools. Instructional planners and leadership professionals could make use of the results of this study because computer-based online instruction became a popular option for improving graduation rates. As it related to improvement of educational organizations, this study added to the body of literature available to study increasingly popular interventions such as online credit recovery programs. Equally, this study could be important as a benefit to society because students leaving high school were prepared better to assume their roles and responsibilities in a technology driven society.

The online credit recovery programs could be a benefit to society by helping students to leave high school prepared to be productive, rather than dropping out of school with no preparation for career or higher education. This study was compelling enough to justify sufficiently the time, effort, finance, and human resources committed because the business of schools was the education of students, the consumers of all educational efforts. Therefore, the study was unique in that it generated information relative to the results of online learning programs such as a credit recovery program from school districts in Georgia. Understanding the effect of the implementation of online credit recovery programs on the graduation rates and college and career readiness of Georgia empowered the researcher to make recommendations for future research and recommendations for practice, relative to how these online programs needed to be revised, expanded, or eliminated as a tool for increasing the graduation rates of students.

Procedures

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the following: District of Study and Columbus State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). An email was typed and sent to the superintendent of schools asking for permission to conduct the study. Upon approval, an email with interview questions and details explaining the nature

and extent of the study, were provided to the superintendents. Once permission was granted, the researcher submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application to Columbus State University IRB for certification. After securing approval, interviews were scheduled with teacher.

Limitations/Delimitations

Several limitations are identified that could influence the results of this research. Therefore, specific precautions were made to protect the integrity of the study so that it could be useful to school administrators who were striving to meet the requirements of the Georgia high school graduation policy. A limitation was that credit recovery programs were perceived in some instances as a non-productive program to prepare students for successful futures. A limitation was that credit recovery programs were perceived to have limited academic rigor in comparison to face-to-face academic programs, which were necessary for graduation. Generalization from the study was a limitation to a population which included three school districts in which a credit recovery program was used to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates. Limitation of school districts meant that the only districts selected included Kindergarten through Grade 12 facilities in which credit recovery was used. The study was conducted only in Georgia. Purposefully selected school districts and schools were used; these participants were able to provide the most useful data and information to conduct this study. A limitation in the data analysis was that document analysis included a review of only one document which was the college and career readiness performance index (CCRPI) from the Georgia Department of Education.

Delimitations included the choices the researcher made to conduct the study. This study included only the graduation rates from three purposefully selected school districts in rural areas of Georgia. Purposefully selected sites included school districts in which

educators could help the researcher most effectively "to understand the research problem and the research question" (Creswell, 2009, p. 231). The researcher examined the effects of the implementation of credit recovery on the graduation rate of students and their college readiness levels, reported in the CCRPI. The purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, choices of definitions, methodology, and research strategy selected were also delimitations because the writer had many choices from which to select that equally were useful.

Definition of Terms

A number of terms relating to online credit recovery programs were included throughout the study. This section of the study provided a definition of those terms as used in the study.

At-risk student. An at-risk student was "a learner who probably would leave school before earning a high school diploma" (Watson & Gemin, 2008, p. 3).

Average Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is no longer used and has been replaced by the college and career readiness performance index (CCRPI). The CCRPI is the rating that school received on a formula which includes student achievement, attendance, programs designed for special groups, and other indicators of educational performance within the school district.

Best practices. Best practices included establishing a minimum score to enter the online credit recovery (CR) program, providing academic support at the local school, and holding students accountable for program completion. (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016).

Blended learning. Blended learning was "a program of study whereby education occurred in part through online learning." The student had some control over "time, place, path, and/or pace" in a supervised school building away from home; and

instructional goals and objectives were based on state performance standards to ensure a valid and integrated learning experience (Powell, Roberts, & Patrick, 2008, p. 5).

College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). CCRPI is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders that will promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students (GaDOE, 2017).

Constructivism. Constructivism, was a learning theory used, which purported that learning was an active, constructive process in which the learner was an information constructor (Learning Theories, 2015).

Credit recovery. "Credit recovery referred to a student passing, and receiving credit for, a course that the student previously attempted but was unsuccessful in earning academic credit toward graduation. Credit recovery programs, in general, had a primary focus on helping students to stay in school and graduate on time" (Watson & Gemin, 2008, p. 3).

Face-to-face learning. Face-to-face learning referred to courses students completed in person under the supervision of a teacher in a traditional classroom (Hughes, Zhou, & Petscher, 2015).

Georgia high school graduation policy. The Georgia high school graduation policy had six guidelines, including credit recovery, to help students meet graduation requirement (GaDOE, 2010).

High performing schools. A High-Performing School was a Title I school among the 5% of Title I schools in the State that had the highest performance over three years for the "all students" group on the statewide assessments. Students in a High-Performing School made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the *all students* group and all of its subgroups in 2011. A school might not be classified as a Highest-Performing School if

there were significant achievement gaps across subgroups that were not closing in the school (GaDOE, 2012).

Low-income status. Low income status means that a student was eligible for free or reduced lunch in school (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

Low performing schools. A "Low-Performing School" was a school targeted for state takeover because of low performance over three years on statewide assessments. Students in a Low-Performing School did not make AYP for the *all students* group and all of its subgroups in 2011 (GaDOE, 2012).

Online learning. Online learning referred to an academic education program designed for credit recovery, including learning materials, assessments, and instructors. Online learning occurred primarily over the internet in the absence of "print-based correspondence, broadcast television or radio, videocassettes, and stand-alone software programs" (Powell, Roberts, & Patrick, 2008, p. 5).

Summary

High school graduation and dropout rates were useful indicators to determine if education programs were effective in providing best practices to meet the needs of students. One of these educational initiatives was an online credit recovery program. The program was an online curriculum available statewide for students who failed courses during the regular school day. In general, the focus of the credit recovery program in Georgia was to help students to stay in school and graduate on time. Therefore, the researcher in this study interviewed five participants from each of the three schools selected to generate answers to the research questions. Archival data from CCRPI for each school district in the study, on GaDOE website, were used to determine if there were a significant difference among the graduation rates in three selected school districts after students used the program to recover lost credits from courses they failed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Educational leaders were making a concerted effort to address student failures in courses in order to decrease dropout rates and increase graduation rates in schools. Though school board policies tended to promote grade retention or social promotion, researchers warned that neither of these options addressed students' needs, in that grade retention nor social promotion, was effective for helping students to master course competencies (Foran, 2015; Franco, 2011; Frazelle, 2016; Powell, Roberts, & Patrick. 2015). As an alternative to retention and social promotion, state policy makers throughout the nation began requiring students to make a passing score on state-mandated and standardized tests before they could move on to the next grade, regardless of final grades, which showed they passed a course in school (Oliver & Kellogg, 2015). For students to meet state requirements, online credit recovery programs were initiated.

Online credit recovery, which occurred in varied formats and focuses, was an option, in general, that was designed to give students an opportunity to earn credit for a course failed (Edgenuity, My Path, 2015; Franco, 2011; Hawthorne & Mulligan, 2015; Wolf, 2014). Credit recovery was an option used in schools to give students an alternative to failure of courses.

Background

Boards of education policies established guidelines for promotion and retention at all grade levels. For the most part, these policies, for years, provided guidance for retention in grade or social promotion. An agreement among researchers, however, was that neither retention in grade nor social promotion was the most useful alternative for assuring that students achieve the goals and objectives of the subject matter required in

schools (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014; Davis, 2015; Foran, 2015). Failure to achieve goals and objectives then placed students in jeopardy of failing state mandated tests or failing to progress to the next grade. As an alternative to this dilemma, credit recovery programs gained popularity throughout schools in the United States as methods to reduce social promotion and to increase graduation rates in schools (Bush, 2012; Franco & Patel, 2011).

Dropout prevention and graduation enhancement rates were on the forefront of the national political agenda for years due to the financial and social costs resulting from high school failures and dropouts. Increasing dropout rates in the nation propelled educators to establish policies to increase graduation rates and reduce dropout rates as one of the priorities on school reform agendas. School dropout programs varied and included interventions such as face-to-face counseling services, curriculum redesigns, and support educational programs for students and their family in the community (D'Agustino, 2014; Franco & Patel, 2011). Constructivism, the conceptual framework, relied on advances in internet-accessed, server-based technology, individualized adaptive instruction, and differentiation, all of which evolved, for the most part, from constructivist theories of learning (D'Agustino, 2014; Mileaf, Paul, Rukobo, & Zyko, 2012).

Constructivism, as a learning theory that underpinned online credit recovery programs, meant that learning in these programs, was an active, constructive process, and the student controlled most of the learning processes and procedures. Important constructivists such as Vygotsky (1980) and Piaget (2013) maintained that when learners constructed their own information as they interacted with a wide range of knowledge bases, their level of achievement increased. Constructivist theory, structured online credit

recovery programs, through appropriate technology, combined to meet the needs of each individual student (Chapman et al., 2011; D'Agustino, 2014; Mileaf et al., 2012).

The Georgia Department of Education (Ga DOE, 2016) Credit-Recovery Program (2016) followed specific guidelines. The program was available free for students as first-time enrollees. Instruction included flash/video presentations to review computer-based assignments, web-based learning activities, and unit assessments. Posttests and the final exam or EOPA, as applicable, were proctored at the school by the credit recovery site coordinator. All other coursework was completed at home or at school. Students had 26 weeks from the beginning of enrollment to complete the course. The credit recovery site coordinator retrieved grades from courses and submitted them for inclusion on students' transcripts. The grade was in addition to the previous grade, rather than in place of the previous grade. All courses included a final exam or an EOPA. Assessments for required courses were administered by the school district coordinator for all public school students. Students created a credit recovery account, and the credit recovery site coordinator then enrolled students in the necessary courses (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Credit recovery was established, in some schools, as an after-school program, an intersession program, or a summer school program. The coordinators of the Georgia Department of Education/Georgia Credit Recovery (2016) wanted to ensure that all students who participated in the credit recovery program had all tools necessary to be successful. The developers of the Georgia Credit recovery online program developed best practice ideas to help online coordinators of school districts implement effective credit recovery programs. Best practices included:

1. Establishing a minimum score to enter the online credit recovery (CR) program. Students attempting credit recovery courses were more successful when they had a

foundation of information in the subject area, meaning that they had 60 or above as a score in the course failed.

2. Providing academic support at the local school. Academic support included highly qualified teachers to help students to succeed.
3. Holding students accountable for program completion. School districts' administrators who required students to report to after-school sessions or attend regular classroom sessions reported increased success rates.
4. Setting participation guidelines. The coordinator of the credit recovery program directed students to log in within 10 days of enrollment and to complete a course within 26 weeks after being enrolled (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016).

The advancement and availability of technology, however, included numerous changes in how educators in schools addressed the issues of improving graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates. Online learning programs were available as an option for students to earn credits they needed to remain in school, to graduate with their peers, and to refrain from dropping out of school. Even though there was no national standard for online learning program, educators in state agencies across the nation established online learning programs and made them available for students in K-12 schools. The number of online credit recovery programs which provided an opportunity for students to earn credits for courses they had previously failed, increased in number and availability across the nation (Ouyang & Stanley, 2014).

History

In the United States, from the beginning of the educational system, students failed to complete all requirements or failed to pass all courses attempted (Frazelle, 2016). Historically, failure to pass courses existed alongside passing courses and high

achievement in schools (Pemberton, 2011). In fact, Pemberton indicated that in schools across the nation, a certain number of students were expected to fail and he considered failure to be a "part of doing business in education" (p. 1). Pemberton added,

> The education system and society as a whole expected to see tiers of success regarding students participating in our compulsory system. Expectations were that the top students would graduate and go to college and professional careers, the middle tier would graduate and move on to technical schools or work and the bottom tier would drop out and take labor positions in manufacturing or other non-skilled jobs. Today's economy requires intellectual skills rather than skilled hands to earn more than minimum wage. (p. 1)

However, as implemented, credit recovery became a major initiative in schools as a secondary mandate of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), which included in its guidelines, policies directing school districts and school districts to reduce dropout rates and improve graduation rates in all high schools (Scholastic Administrator, 2014).

The NCLB was an Act passed by the U. S. Congress. NCLB included Title I provisions applying to disadvantaged students. However, on December 10, 2015, President Barack Obama signed legislation, replacing NCLB with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Even though no definition of credit recovery was included either NCLB or ESSA, federal mandates, reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates were two of the top priorities. Therefore, school districts administrators had federal funds to support credit recovery initiatives at the local school level to ensure that students perceived a second chance to earn missed credit to graduate (Scholastic Administrator, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The ESSA reauthorized the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal

opportunity for all students. The ESSA continued to advance key areas of progress in schools. Educators, communities, parents, students, and other educational stakeholders across the country were responsible for making progress in schooling possible for all students, including students within disfranchised populations. As a result of credit-recovery programs, high school graduation rates were at all-time high, and dropout rates were at historic lows, and higher numbers of students began enrolling in college than ever before (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

These achievements provided a firm foundation for further work to expand educational opportunity and improve student outcomes under ESSA. The NCLB Act was a major step forward for children and youth in the nation in many respects because it highlighted areas of progress and areas of weakness for students, regardless of race, income, zip code, disability, home language, or background (U.S. Office of Education, 2016). The law was scheduled for revision in 2007, and over time, NCLB's prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators. In 2010, the Obama administration accepted the call from educators and families to assess NCLB, analyze its positive and negative aspects, and to establish a law focused on the clear goal of preparing all students fully for success in college and careers. With the passing of the ESSA, Congress responded to that call (U.S. Office of Education, 2016).

In Georgia, credit recovery was an initiative to help students to meet the requirements of the state performance standards. The Georgia Milestones Assessment System Assessment System was a comprehensive summative assessment program, which measured how well students in Grades 3 through 12 had acquired the knowledge, concepts, and skills outlined in the state-adopted content standards in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students in Grades 3 through 8 completed an end-of-grade assessment in English language arts and mathematics (Georgia Virtual

Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016). Students in Grades 5 and 8 were assessed in science and social studies, while high school students completed an end-of-course assessment for each of the 10 courses.

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System included open-ended (constructed-response) items in language arts and mathematics (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016). Writing components were included (in response to passages read by students) at every grade level and course within the language arts assessment. Norm-referenced items in all content areas and courses were available to complement the criterion-referenced information and to provide a national comparison. Transitions to online administration of state tests were made over time, with online administration considered the primary mode of administration and paper-pencil as back-up until the on-line transition was complete (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016).

Researchers agreed that the demands of a new economy and the skills needed in the work place were reasons to keep students in school, to help them to recover units, and to encourage them to maintain learning experiences required to graduate with a high school diploma instead of dropping out of school (Lee & Choi, 2010; Lewis, Whiteside, & Garrett, 2014). Technology, however, made a difference in how employees completed tasks, how individuals communicated, how consumers made purchases, how people and business on a daily basis, and how students learned in schools (Borup, Graham, & Davies, 2013; Davis, 2015; Plummer, 2012).

Through different schedules in schools, correspondence courses, and online learning programs, opportunities to earn and recover credit were established to keep struggling students in school. Historically, students completed correspondence courses, using the U.S. mail system to communicate with teachers and course providers (McCabe & St. Andrie, 2012). Even though counselors, parents, or other resources facilitated

students' completion of courses by graduation date, many students still failed to complete courses or had more courses to complete than they could complete. In addition, school schedules and the absence of summer school also influenced the lack of credit options for students (Ingram, 2015).

Technology and World Wide Web options expanded and facilitated access to opportunities to earn and increase course options for credit. Technology-based courses offered flexibility in terms of pace and place for completion of the curriculum. Students were drawn to these courses as a way to complete needed credits for graduation; yet, the factors that interfered with completing courses earlier on, often interfered with progression through online coursework (Bush, 2012; Steinberg & Allen, 2011). Students needing to make up credit toward graduation, often called credit recovery, had one or more of the characteristics of students considered to be at risk for failing to graduate eventually from high school. Opportunities for students who struggled to catch up on credit could make a difference between graduation and dropping out of school (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014; Pemberton, 2011; Zvoch & Stevens, 2011).

In Georgia, educational planners began structuring different strategies to provide improvement programs for school districts and school districts, with barriers to educational attainment such as minimal course offerings, challenging conflicts in scheduling classes, or problems in employing and maintaining highly qualified teachers in classrooms in rural schools and low-socioeconomic area schools (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). Through the Office of Technology Services, the Georgia Board of Education was able to increase the number of school districts that began offered online education to students, which prompted the Georgia Department of Education to increase its online programs through additional contracts with other venders (Georgia Department of Education, 2016).

On May 4, 2005, Governor Sonny Perdue signed the Georgia Virtual School Bill, O.C.G.A. 20-2-31, into law. The online program was accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement. The mission of the school was "to serve as a stimulus for dynamic change by providing quality digital programs to strengthen teaching and learning" (Ingram, 2015, p. 35). The vision was "to provide quality learning, innovative opportunities, and elevated performance for all students taking online courses in the state" (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016; Ingram, 2015, p. 35).

According to Ingram (2015), during the 2013-2014 school year, Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) served 33,041 students, several district programs, and three statewide fully online schools that enrolled 18,035 students. GAVS offered students the option of attending a fully online school. Enrollment in GAVS increased by 34% during the 2013-2014 school year over the previous year. The State Board of Education approved a blended learning program for students in K-12 education in 2010.

The blended learning program combined the regular educational program options with online learning features to personalized, differentiated instruction. Online Credit Recovery Programs provided a self-guided, self-paced learning environment that empowered students to achieve success through demonstrated mastery of required knowledge, concepts, and skills through course content aligned with the Georgia Public School Curriculum (Ingram, 2015). Online credit recovery programs in Georgia schools addressed high course failure rates in schools across the state, and provided students with an option to get back on track by repeating classes they failed.

Theoretically it seemed appropriate to require students who failed algebra to enroll in the online credit recovery program early in the summer after finishing Grade 9 (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014). These researchers recommended that students

complete Algebra before moving to enrollment in geometry or Algebra II. In addition, Allensworth and Michelman indicated that Algebra I and Algebra II should precede enrollment in chemistry or physics, which required mastery of algebra content matter. Credit recovery courses in Georgia were offered at no cost to students, and teachers as well as students retrieved free practice tests and other review materials to work toward passing high-stakes tests tied to promotion in schools (Ingram, 2015).

In addition to online credit recovery programs, recovering credits early during summer school could also enable students to move successfully to the next level and graduate from high school along with their peers. Educational leaders, however, tended to be reluctant about offering credit recovery because of the requirements of additional resources such as staff, time, money, and other resources. Allensworth and Michelman (2014) explained that school administrators tended to use their credit recovery effort for Grades 11 and 12 students who were near graduation, instead of concentrating effort and resources on Grade 9 students. Little evidence was found in the reviewed literature about how early credit recovery influenced the successful recovery of credits among students for them to progress successfully to graduation and later outcomes (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014; Ingram, 2015; Pemberton, 2011; Zvoch & Stevens, 2011).

While credit recovery seemed like a good option, the pay-off might not be as effective of an option for a number of reasons. Allensworth and Michelman (2014) contended that some failing students refused to attend summer school and other failing students enrolled in the online credit recovery options, but did not complete the course activities or pass the end-of-course tests. Therefore, Allensworth and Michelman explained, “The gains of attending summer school for learning and for credit accumulation could be very small compared to students’ initial deficits or the number of credits they needed to recover” (p. 15). Thus, administrators in schools allocated and

spent considerable amounts of funds in their effort to employ staff and instructional resources for credit recovery and discovered that there was little return on their investment relative to improved graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, or the number of credits recovered, in general (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014). A short description of the school district occurs in the next section.

Participating School Districts

Three school districts, with similar demographics, were included in the study. Before gathering data on schools, the researcher received permission from each to collect archival data available from the Georgia Department of Education and to interview ten teachers. The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) from each of the school districts provided the most useful information to generate data to answer the research questions. The CCRPI was a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all educational stakeholders. The purpose of the CCRPI platform was to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students (Woods, 2017). CCRPI data from three school districts, with similar demographics, provided information needed to complete this research study.

School District A has one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district includes 1,338. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment includes 72% Black, 17% Hispanic, 9% White, 2% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district is 13.2%; students with disabilities, 9%; English language learners (Ell) are 10% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals include 68%.

The overall CCRPI score for School District A is 58.1 out of 100. The overall performance of this school district is higher than 4% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students is higher than 47% of the other school

districts in the state, and its 4-yeaar graduation rate is 75.4%, which is higher than 6% of the other districts in the state.

School District B has one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district includes 946. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment includes 95% Black, 1% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district is 10.8%; students with disabilities, 14%; English language learners (ELL) are 2% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals include 100%.

The overall CCRPI score for School District B is 54.3 out of 100. The overall performance of this school district is higher than 2% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students is higher than 27% of the other school districts in the state, and its 4-year graduation rate is 95.2%, which is higher than 93% of the other districts in the state.

School District C has one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district includes 510. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment includes 94% Black, 5% White, 1% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district is 11.6%; students with disabilities, 13%; English language learners (ELL) are 0% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals include 68%.

The overall CCRPI score for School District C is 72.4 out of 100. The overall performance of this school district is higher than 46% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students is higher than 88% of the other school districts in the state, and its 4-year graduation rate is 96.7%, which is higher than 98% of the other districts in the state.

Credit Recovery

Credit recovery terms used included blended learning, credit recovery, dual enrollment, dropout rate, graduation rate, online learning, and technology in schools (Luyt, 2014). Credit recovery encompassed a wide range of strategies educators used to accommodate the needs of students at risk of failure to graduate from high school in their age cohort groups. For the most part, credit recovery offered students who failed one or more courses, an opportunity to redo courses in a different setting, using technology or a specific technological program that designed to provide the curricular choice needed to meet state standards for the specific content area (Luyt, 2014).

Used as a strategy to increase the graduation rate in schools, or to decrease the dropout rate in schools, credit recovery policies related closely to federal and state effort to link students' failure to succeed in school to a broad array of social issues such as unemployment, the drop-out rate, and an increase in crime. For example, in reaction to federal and state requirements to reduce failure rates and dropouts, increase graduation numbers, and reengage students, school officials across Iowa "fine-tuned summer school credit-recovery program to reach lagging students" (Wolf, 2014, p. 55).

As an educational intervention in schools, credit recovery was a high school intervention and occurred in the form of after-school programs, summer school, or course offerings at various community organizations, such as community colleges and other collegiate sites. Initial offerings of credit recovery gave students many options to recover credits lost after failing courses. They had the option to attend classes during the school day, after school and evenings, or weekends, summer, and other vacation breaks (Wolf, 2014).

Since the early 2000s, however, and since the integration of technology in educational programs, students also had one option to participate in online credit

recovery programs. Online credit-recovery represented one of the fastest growing interventions in education, and many districts purchased the credit recovery software needed to match the curricular offerings provided in schools (Borup, 2016; Frazelle, 2016). Online credit-recovery programs, compared to older models of summer and after-school programs for credit, represented new innovations; online credit recovery provided a wide range of designs and structures for schools and students (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014).

Some of these designs and structures related to time, place, and location; content and amount; and whether whole courses, specialized areas, or specific topics, units, and concepts were based on selected standards of learning (Ingram, 2015). In addition, relative to design and quality, online credit-recovery programs were designed as independent study, making provisions for students to work at their own pace or guided learning experiences in which students had the guidance and support of an instructor, a student tutor, or an adult who supervised the students' work and provided monitoring, formative assessment, and feedback as necessary (Hughes, Zhou, & Petsch, 2015). Some credit recovery programs provided video interactions or chats with teachers or other individuals working in a supportive roll for students. One such program, as Levy (2011) described, provided laptops to migrant students to extend the academic day. Children of migrant farmworkers were able to use the laptops for online credit recovery activities to maintain grade placement with their peers and graduate from high school instead of dropping out after failing courses.

Blended Learning

School district leaders selected blended online programs as an intervention for students to attain a high school diploma. Using blended learning programs, educational leaders focused attention on students in Grades 11 and 12. These students were at risk of

failing courses or were students in need of credits to meet graduation requirements. In a report to the Alliance for Excellent Education, Plummer (2012) explained that credit recovery online courses offered flexible activities that gave students many options to succeed in earning course credits. For example, students had the option "to make their own schedules, work at their own paces, complete courses in shorter periods of time, benefit from a more customized educational experience, and learn independent study skills" (p. 1).

Even though credit-recovery dated back many decades; historically, efforts such as out-of-time (OFT) programs after school, on weekends, and summer programs, for years were outgrowths of planned programs to keep students moving toward graduation from high school. The Alliance for Excellent Education authors Stevens and Frazelle (2016) estimated that 1.3 million American students failed to graduate from high school each year. For this reason, school district educators continued to offer OFT programs and were advancing the trend in credit recovery through online courses.

Even though credit-recovery programs represented an on-going part of educational enhancement initiatives in Georgia for years, Hawthorne and Mulligan (2015) reported a trend throughout the state to make a transition to blended learning in schools. Edgenuity, My Path (2015), the blended learning online program adopted for use in Georgia schools, provided highly structured online and blended learning services, products, and solutions that encouraged successful results for students at risk of failure. In addition to academically focused activities, the Edgenuity, My Path program included "advanced placement, electives, career, technical education, dual credit, as well as credit recovery" (p. 50).

As defined, blended learning meant that students learned part of the time in school buildings and part-time in an online environment. Horn and Staker (2011) explained that

blended learning occurred at any time that a student learned at least in part at a "supervised brick-and-mortar location, away from home, and at least in part through online delivery, with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace" (p. 3). Students enrolled in blended learning programs had the option of scheduling "time, path, pace, and place" to serve their best interest. Hawthorne and Mulligan (2015) were satisfied with how well educators in school districts across the state understood the conceptual framework that undergirded blended learning, but they were concerned about the implementation process, reporting "implementing those models was where schools and districts were struggling" (p. 50).

Thus, Hawthorne and Mulligan (2015) reaffirmed that blended learning required having an ample supply of technologies for use in each classroom, including iPads, Chrome-books, and other types of devices to create technology-rich education in which teachers utilized the technology generated data to inform and differentiate instruction. Rather than a technology, Hawthorne and Mulligan further explained that blended learning is a strategy that empowered teachers to increase the effectiveness of their instructional plans in reaching students in a personal manner as they differentiated instruction in the classroom. For administrators, Hawthorne and Mulligan (2015) offered some advice for what to look for in teachers to implement blended learning:

> Look for teachers who have mindsets and qualities that are seen in good blended classrooms: a new vision for teaching and learning, and an orientation for change and improvement. The qualities that we found to be important are grit, transparency, and collaboration. (p. 51)

Teachers in blended education, on the other hand, identified some needs to advance the use of blended learning as an instructional tool for school improvement. Hawthorne and Mulligan (2015) indicated that, as a whole, teachers who expressed

concerns about implementing blended learning, identified a need for additional time for planning with their instructional coaches and additional time for collaborating with colleagues because "strategies for successfully making the transition to blended learning are often ignored" (p. 1). Processes used to implement blended learning needed to include meetings between coaches and teachers via webinars, online synchronous events, and other opportunities that incorporated time to collaborate with others involved in blended learning initiatives. Converting to blended-learning was a process of change that required the use of programs such as Edgenuity, which was created initially to promote positive and successful educational transitions for teachers and students. Horn and Staker (2011) predicted that as online learning continued its active growth and development and as school managers and instructional planners continued to introduce mainstream blended-learning options, the blended learning in educational institutions would remain fluid and advancements in technology continued to fuel advances in student learning procedures and processes.

At-Risk Students

In their research on promising practices in online learning, Watson and Gemin (2008) focused attention on at-risk students as the most prevalent users of online learning. They explained that online learning in schools was designed to insure equity in educational opportunities by making available high quality courses and teachers to students who are at-risk of failing to graduate with their age-appropriate peers. Therefore, most online learning programs provided additional options for course credits to enable at-risk students to meet the requirements for a high school diploma. Watson and Gemin explained that one of the advantages of online learning was personalization, which offered at-risk students the option of getting individualized attention and support at a time when they needed the extra push toward having a successful learning experience.

In using online learning for credit recovery among at-risk students, school district planners expanded high-quality educational opportunities for students who, otherwise, missed such opportunities as a result of having to attend low performing schools in isolated areas such as rural and inner-city locations in which funding was inadequate to provide high quality teachers and support. Watson and Gemin (2008) explained:

> Many educators are finding that online and blended learning are effective ways to reach students who fail one or more courses, become disengaged, or who seek an alternative to traditional education. Some of the early online programs that initially focused on high-achieving students have expanded offerings, and are finding success with a much broader range of students. As online learning moves past the early adopter phase, the growth of online programs focused on at-risk student or credit recovery has redefined how educational technology can be used to address the needs of all students, from advanced students in search of Advanced Placement or dual credit courses, to at risk students trying to find the right instructional mix to fit their learning style. (p. 3)

Researchers, defined credit recovery in a similar manner, referencing a student who failed a course, passing and receiving credit after completing an online course that served as a substitute for a course the student attempted but failed to earn required credit toward fulfilling graduation (Davis, 2015; Powell, Roberts, & Patrick, 2015). Credit recovery often differed from first time credit in that the students who sought online learning for credit recovery had satisfied seat time requirements for the course in which they were unsuccessful and could focus on earning credit based on competency of the content standards for the particular course. Credit recovery programs, in general, represented a primary focus of helping students to stay in school and graduate on time

(Davis, 2015; Foran, 2015; Ingram, 2015; Powell, Roberts, & Patrick, 2015; Watson & Gemin, 2008).

In their definition of at-risk students, Watson and Gemin (2008) warned that the term at-risk had no single definition as applied to students in K-12 education programs because no universal agreement of a definition was available to describe the nature and extent of any risk, which impeded the progress of students in schools as many factors could cause students to be categorized as at risk. These included failing to meet necessary requirements for moving to the next grade in school; failing to accrue the required number of units in each content area to graduate from high school; performing below the level of other age-level peers in educational attainment; failing two or more core courses in any one grading period; or demonstrating a low reading level. Other factors Watson and Gemin (2008) identified as at-risk indicators included:

- Low socio-economic status
- From a single parent family
- An older sibling dropped out of school
- Changed schools two or more times
- Had average grades of *C* or lower from six to eighth grade
- Repeated a grade. (p. 4)

Students who had multiple risk factors were considered at risk for dropping out of school and not receiving a high school diploma. These indicators were subdivided into varied categories, including individual, family, school, and community. For most students, dropping out of school was associated to multiple factors, such as after prolonged disengagement early in the child's educational years or during the transition from middle school to high school. Researchers found that academic failure during the

transition to high school was linked to the probability of dropping out of school (Heppen, Allensworth, Walters, Pareja, Kurki, Nomi, & Sorensen, 2011). Watson and Gemin (2008) reported that "over 60% of students who dropped out of high school failed at least 25% of their credits in the ninth grade, while only 8% of their peers who graduated had similar difficulties" (p. 4).

In the *Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts,* Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morrison (2006) investigated the issue of school dropouts from the perspectives of the students themselves, which was not considered in previous research reports. These researchers found that even though some students dropped out of high school because of major learning deficiencies and academic challenges, a large number of students dropped out for other reasons. Reasons included issues such as some students who were unable to achieve at a higher level and others who failed to perform even though they were capable of succeeding in school. Therefore, Bridgeland et al. (2006) explored the issue of dropping out of school from the perspectives of dropouts, relative to how they viewed schooling, relative to their perspectives of their ability to succeed, and school structures that affected their success or lack of success.

Bridgeland et al. (2006) discovered that a wide range of circumstances and issues in the lives of students and "an inadequate response to those circumstances from the schools led to dropping out" (p. 3). The general categories of why students drop out remained the same across cultures, nationalities, regions, and races. Therefore, based upon data collected from focus group interviews with 467 diverse students in Philadelphia and Baltimore in September and October of 2005, no single reason was evident as to why students dropped out of high school.

Varied reasons why students dropped out included absence of connection to the environments of the school, feeling that school was boring; experiencing unmotivated

feelings; being academically challenged; and carrying the weight of daily living and real world events (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Examples of specific reasons were: (a) classes not interesting, 47%; (b) not motivated or inspired to work, 69%; (c) personal reason (to get a job, became a parent), 32%; (d) failed in school, 35%; (e) started high school poorly prepared from elementary school, 45%, and (f) retained in grade and a doubted that they could make up requirements for graduation, 32% (Bridgeland et al.). As wide and varied these reasons were, Bridgeland et al. called attention to the fact that dropping out of high school was a gradual process including disengagement and patterns of poor attendance. In addition, throughout the study, a general pattern was that invariably, students hated the fact that they dropped out and wished that they had taken advantage of opportunities available to recover units for graduating from high school.

Throughout this research study, students accepted personal blame for dropping out of school, but in the meantime, they thought that school officials could have made provisions to help students graduate from school, such as improving teaching and curricula to make schools relevant, engaging, and connected to the world of work (Bridgeland et al., 2006). It was important to improve instruction and access to supports for struggling students. There was a need to build a school climate that fostered academics and ensure that students had a strong relationship with at least one adult in the school. Most important, it was necessary to improve the communication between parents and schools.

Putting these provisions in perspectives, online information had not come with a measure of high growth in students' ability to learn from that information (Green, Mason Bolick, Caprino, Deekens, McVea, Seung, & Jackson, 2015). Students who were effective online communicators, at the same time lacked knowledge and skills needed to integrate online information into core knowledge concepts and skills areas as required by

state standards of measures. Students who were proficient in navigating online systems necessary to plan their learning, enacted effective strategies and monitored and controlled their own learning. They were likely to succeed and to manage the wealth of information online. However, little information was found in the reviewed literature that explained how high school teachers could foster students' online self-regulated knowledge and skills across academic domains.

Schools across the nation utilized online learning to provide opportunities for students to recover or to retrieve credits that reduced dropout rates and increased graduation rates in high schools. The researcher synthesized the literature on self-regulated learning literature to determine key aspects of classroom-based innovations teachers applied to improve the success rate of students using online options within and across core courses and academic domains (Green et al., 2015).

Credit recovery, or credit retrieval, was a program designed to give students an opportunity to receive academic credits for courses they failed or were about to fail, which were necessary for graduation from high school (Allensworth & Michelman, 2014; Trotter, 2008). Courses designed for credit recovery were available from varied commercial and noncommercial companies through online sources such as Apex Learning, Inc., and Plato Learning Inc. Two of the widely used providers included the Orlando-based Florida Virtual School and the Atlanta-based Georgia Virtual School.

Providers made concerted efforts to match the learning materials and activities to learners' needs according to their levels of learning. Matching learning materials to learners' needs occurred by embedding targeted instructional activities. Varied options included pacing and timelines, additional reviews and practice, multiple assessment activities, and continuous monitoring and reporting on student engagement and success in completing outlined activities. In the meantime, learning materials provided students

many options for creating personal conferences and conversations with teachers and peers.

In the credit recovery programs used in Florida and Georgia, the learning management systems included the necessary resources for completing required activities such as "e-mail, online assessments, and databases" (Trotter, 2008, p. 12). Courses used in credit recovery program addressed the same knowledge, concepts, and skills as the academic standards of the state. Courses represented complete coverage of required concepts in a particular subject area, but the courses were sometimes organized into smaller or more limited activities. At times, students used courses as a means of earning credit for failed courses, to master skills, or to improve and build competencies (Trotter, 2008).

A major gap in the research literature was the absence of empirical findings or statistics on credit recovery programs and participation. Trotter (2008) indicated that the reason for this gap was that the major recovery providers tended to refrain from asking students to give a reason for their enrollment, whether credit recovery, test preparation, or other reason approved in the local school district. Data from Florida Virtual School revealed that 17% of its enrolled students were completing courses for credit recovery or credit forgiveness in order to graduate with their peers. However, researchers indicated that student self-reported data were not always reliable (Globokar, 2010; Lee &Choi, 2011). While national statistics were elusive, analysts indicated several forces encouraged school districts educators to move toward credit recovery. Though administrators across the nation observed steady growth, many students continued to fail to achieve required standards of excellence at the local and state levels, which established a need for school districts to provide opportunities for failing students to make up failed courses (Foran, 2015).

An example of such opportunities to meet the needs of failing students included afterschool credit attainment and recovery programs. Donohue (2009) explained that afterschool programs provided a rich atmosphere for the improvement of worthwhile, inventive academic experiences. Donohue explained that additional learning opportunities were necessary to prepare students to meet the challenges of the workplace in the future. He said, "Now more than ever, the nation's economic well-being depends on the availability of educated, skilled, employable young people to meet the needs of the 21st century labor market" (Donohue, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, keeping students on track was critical to students' success in graduating from high school.

Whether students failed courses or dropped out of school, both factors affected school districts in a negative manner because the school district was under state and federal mandates to increase graduation rates (Dessoff, 2009). Nationally, approximately one–third of high school students did not graduate and among those students who did not graduate were approximately 7,000 who dropped out of school daily. The problem was more severe among African American and Hispanic students than among other racial groups. Almost half of these populations dropped out of school without earning a high school diploma. These were the kind of data that propelled school districts to seek alternatives to reduce the dropout rate and thereby to increase the graduation rates in schools.

One of the most popular alternatives used to reach graduation was credit recovery. Credit recovery included face-to-face interactions with teachers, online classes, and a combination of both. According to Dessoff (2009) not even the most intensive credit recovery programs kept all students from dropping out, but along with pressure on districts to help students stay in school and graduate on time, there was also more transparency in data so that parents and district personnel could see from school-to-

school where the major dropout problems were occurring and plan the most appropriate type of credit recovery program for the students as well as for the school district.

Credit Recovery, an Ongoing Debate

Even though credit recovery programs were increasing in popularity among school administrators, the debate continued, relative to the actual value of such learning options. Proponents called attention to the fact that credit recovery was a useful way to keep students on track for graduation and a way to keep the educational district above the critical statistics, including high dropout rates and low graduation rates. Opponents of credit recovery programs on the other hand argued:

> These programs are not as challenging or educationally valuable as traditional classroom experiences in which students are in direct contact and personal relationship with teachers. They question the extent to which schools have established adequate oversight and quality control for online credit recovery programs, especially prepackaged, third party software applications developed by for profit companies or outside organizations. (Hidden Curriculum, 2014, p. 1)

Researchers reported one major issue educators and other stakeholders raised about credit recovery programs was that low performing students, for example, were moving rapidly through an educational system, which should be preparing them to become productive citizens with knowledge, competencies, and skills needed to engage in productive activities as citizens in a technological society. Instead, low performing students moved through the grades and earned academic credit for completing minimal or limited exposure to information that, at best, were inferior substitutes for challenging academic experiences (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). Equally, a credit-recovery program, both online programs and those offered by teachers, differed extensively from the learning expectations or assignment of the standard curriculum high performing students

completed in schools daily. Much of the debate about credit recovery also related to issues about grading policies and grade averaging procedures implemented in schools.

Few empirical studies were found on the effectiveness of credit recovery programs and the impact these programs had on student achievement. This absence of research related to the newness of credit recovery programs as a viable addition to traditional curriculum and instruction. One of the most useful studies in the reviewed literature was the Boston Public Schools 2010-2011 Credit Skills Recovery Program. The Boston Public Schools' (BPS) Credit Skills Recovery Program (CSRP) made provisions for students to earn the course credits they needed to graduate from high school. Supporting the goal of graduation for all, this credit recovery program included students who were older than their peers, and other low performing students who were close to the age of 18 years old. For the most part, CSRP enrolled students in their senior year. Many of these students were in need of multiple course credits to fulfill the requirements for a high school diploma. Some of the enrolled students were from three-to-four courses short of graduation and were at risk of dropping out of school before meeting requirements to finish high school (Donahue Institute, 2012).

The Donahue Institute (2012) conducted this evaluation study at the end of the fourth year of implementation of the CSRP program. As a result of successful preliminary formative assessment of the CSRP, the program was approved for expansion from 4 to 18 sites, with three of those sites also providing services during the summer. Final reports showed that 441 BPS students retrieved credits for one or more courses through enrollment in the online CSRP during the 2010–2011 school year and/or the summer of 2011. By August 2011, most of the enrolled students had recovered the units they needed, had met all requirements for a diploma, and had graduated. Evaluation data from the Donahue Institute (2012) revealed that through successful implementation

activities and expansion of the CSRP, the enrollment doubled, the number of students completing one or more CSRP courses increased, and the number of students earning their high school diploma increased, all within one year of assistance from CSRP. The researchers also called attention to the fact that the number of students "completing one or more CSRP courses increased from 225 to 441 between the third year (2009-2010) and fourth (2010-2011) year of implementation" (p. 3). The number of students who graduated from high school with CSRP assistance increased from 178 to 350 (Donahue Institute, 2012).

Findings from the 2010–2011 implementation of CSRP were also encouraging, showing that CSRP coordinators and teachers worked hard and demonstrated commitment to program effectiveness and to students' success. Coordinators and teachers were responsible for facilitating and monitoring students' progress in their online course selections. However, many teachers, in carrying out their assigned roles and responsibilities, went beyond their official duties and time commitments to insure students received the guidance and support needed to succeed in their selected courses for credit recovery. Students praised teachers and support staff highly for the dedication they showed students, helping them to understand the importance of support and encouragement from CSRP teachers to their success (Donahue Institute, 2012).

Another finding from the evaluation showed that case management services were critical to increasing and supporting student participation. According to the Donahue Institute (2012), case managers spent a considerable amount of time interacting with student participants who were enrolled in the summer aspect of the CSRP. They communicated with students, helping them to understand the importance of maintaining regular attendance in class, completing work in the lab, and maintaining progress in each of the classes they chose for credit recovery. In addition, the Donahue Institute (2012)

evaluation study indicated that case managers strived to develop and maintain a close relationship with students, developing trust, and being open to students' concerns, which helped CSRP teachers to be knowledgeable about the personal challenges many of the students were facing as they strived to juggle time between personal and home issues and completing credit recovery before graduating from school.

This evaluation study indicated that in the CSRP, students viewed courses as high-quality and rigorous. Apex Learning was the software used in the program. This software was rated high and rigorous (Donahue Institute, 2012). Students and teachers in the CSRP rated the overall quality and rigor of the program higher than they rated other coursework in any typical high school class in the same content area.

Results from the evaluation report also indicated that BPS staff funded sites had higher rates of completion. The Donahue Institute (2012) report revealed BPS provided funds to cover CSRP coordinators and teachers at 8 out of 18 sites, noting that in these funded sites students had significantly higher rates of completion with approximately one-half of the students successfully completing at least one of their courses in comparison to a completion rate among students of only one-third at the 10 sites that did not receive additional BPS staff funding.

The Donahue Institute (2012) revealed that students enrolled in fewer CSRP courses had higher rates of completion. Among those students who enrolled at an earlier time in a CSRP course, 29% completed all of their courses as compared to 15% enrolled in two or three courses and 6% enrolled in four or more courses. Math and science courses were most challenging to complete. Students were significantly less likely to complete successfully math and science CSRP courses compared to history, English, and foreign languages. Algebra II, chemistry, and physical sciences particularly were

difficult. Additional supports, such as designated tutoring hours with subject experts, were needed for these courses, according to the Donahue Institute (2012).

The Donahue Institute (2012) included many factors as barriers to students' learning and causes of failure in the traditional classrooms of public schools. Some of the factors cited frequently included, "lack of school engagement in classrooms, financial concerns, work, high mobility, immaturity, frequent tardiness or absentees, issues with teachers or classmates, parental/home support, language barriers, personal issues, violence or gang-related issues, and pregnancy/parenthood" (Donahue Institute, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, online instruction was planned to provide students with self-directed, flexible format requiring students to determine how they would structure their time effectively to complete the course in a timely and successful manner. This flexibility gave students a chance to learn at their own pace, ensuring that they mastered essential concepts before moving on to the next lesson (Donahue Institute).

Based on student survey responses, most of the participants in the credit recovery program thought that the CSRP was a much needed second chance opportunity for them to succeed in school (Donahue Institute, 2012). For some students, the program was a second chance to graduate and participate in the graduation ceremony with their peers. For other students, the program enabled them to graduate on a more flexible schedule without needing to attend high school for a fifth, sixth, or seventh year as a young adult in classrooms with teenagers three or four years younger than themselves (Donahue Institute, 2012).

The researchers also indicated that CSRP could serve effectively at-risk high school students. Most of the students who recovered units for one or more of their CSRP courses were classified as at risk for failing to graduate from high school, based on the BPS Risk rating scale. In addition, the Donahue Institute (2012) reported that CSRP

enrolled students from many low-performing and disadvantaged subgroups associated with high dropout rates and lower high school graduation rates, including males, Hispanic/Latino, African American/Black students, low-income students, LEP students, and students with special education needs.

Credit recovery was an opportunity for students to repeat courses they failed in earning credit towards graduation. In Georgia, specific guidelines described credit recovery. Some of the major guidelines were:

- Courses were designed to be on a flexible schedule and were not facilitated by a teacher;
- Options allowed students who completed seat time and calendar requirements to earn credit based on competency of the content standards;
- Courses were complete courses, aligned to state standards, for which the student demonstrated mastery before receiving a grade; and
- Program offered core courses and limited electives required for graduation from a Georgia public high school. (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016, p. 1)

Even though the credit recovery program was provided free to public high school students for all first-time enrollments, the local school administrators charged a fee for any student who enrolled for a second or continuous enrollment, which the local board of education might, in turn, pass the cost on to the students or the students' families. The Georgia Credit Recovery Program was available to Georgia private high school students for a fee (Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery, 2016).

Franco and Patel (2011) provided findings from an interim report on a pilot credit recovery program in a large, suburban Midwestern high school. Using data from the

initial group of Grade 9 students, the researcher investigated the impact of credit recovery on student dropout rates, graduation support programs, advancement of virtual learning, and credit recovery as an intervention method. The goal of the credit recovery program was to offer Grade 9 students an opportunity to recover credits they needed to progress toward graduating from high school with a diploma. An associated goal was to reduce the dropout rate for Grade 9 students who failed one or more courses. Ultimately, the goal for the credit recovery program was to increase the graduation rate in schools.

The participants were made up of 39, Grade 9 students who failed one or more core content courses during the 2008-2009 school year. Of this number, one student made a decision to repeat the full course during the year, suggesting that repeating the course would be more beneficial than completing credit recovery. In addition, even though these students completed the credit recovery course, 11 did not return to school the next year. Therefore, the data reported in this study were based on 27 students who attempted credit and earned credit. Then of the 27 students enrolled in credit recovery, four dropped out of school, leaving 23 students to study in determining the effectiveness of the credit recovery program (Franco & Patel, 2011).

Measures included background information, school information, and credits attempted and recovered. Background information included demographics on gender, age, race, family socioeconomic status, parents, and years in the school district. School information included grade point average (GPA), discipline referrals, attendance rate, standardized achievement test as mandated by the state, course or subject failed, and credit attempted and credit recovered, with each semester class valued as .5 credits (Franco & Patel, 2011). These researchers gathered data on the number of semester core content courses that students failed as well as the number of recovery semester core content courses attempted via the pilot program. The data also included the number of

credits participants recovered and the number they failed to recover (Franco & Patel, 2011).

The researchers indicated that participants attempted to recover 60.5 credit courses during the pilot program and all of the credit courses were recovered. The largest number of courses attempted was in math and science with 17 attempted and recovered in each area. At the end of the Grade 9 year, 10 participants earned enough credits to attain Grade 10 status. All participants failed at least one Grade 9 credit course required for graduation and 13 participants did not earn the necessary credit to move to Grade 10. Upon the completion of the credit recovery program, three of the 13 students recovered enough credit to move to Grade 10. In addition, five students needed .5 credits to move on to Grade 10 (Franco & Patel, 2011).

Franco and Patel (2011) reported data on the same cohort of participants at the end of the Grade 10 year, which indicated that 27 participants were continuing in the credit recovery program. Overall comparison indicated no changes in GPA between Grade 9 and Grade 10. Therefore, Franco and Patel (2011) concluded that the credit recovery program had no influence in GPA. An examination of progression toward Grade 11 showed that of the 13 participants who began the Grade 10 year of high school, 12 ended the year as Grade 11 students, gaining one grade level. Overall, 16 of the participants recovered enough units of credit to be classified as Grade 12 students alongside their cohort group.

The credit recovery program provided an option for students to have classes with their peers. There was a correlation between the number of Grade 9 failures and students' probability of dropping out of school before graduation. This finding was the catalyst for the implementation of the pilot credit recovery program (Franco & Patel, 2014). Therefore, the goal for the pilot credit recovery program was to provide a means for

students to recover credits lost during the Grade 9 year, and thus, to encourage students to remain in school. An initial analysis of data showed that as a result of the pilot credit recovery program, participants recovered all of the credits that they attempted during the study. Thus, students recovered credits and gave students a chance to stay on track for graduation.

Online. Giani, Alexander, and Reyes (2014) conducted a quasi-experimental study to explore the differences within the impact of dual-credit classes on students' outcomes after high school in a group of 382,236 students in Texas. Even though there was an increasing interest in dual-credit enrollment as a strategy to prepare for college, researchers found some major limitations of the research on how effective dual-credit was on the college outcomes of student. Giani et al. investigated these limitations and gaps found in the reviewed literature through an estimation of the influence of dual-credit courses on access to postsecondary institutions, persistence in the first years of college, and eventual graduation. These researchers overcame many of the limitations in methodology of other studies by using a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS).

Giani et al. (2014) explained that the SLDS was useful in that it made provisions for the researchers to track a total group of students from high school through their transition to college. Giani et al. used propensity score matching to reduce the bias of self-selection, which related to high achieving students, who were more prevalent in dual-credit courses. The researchers explored how the number of dual-credit courses students completed and the subject of the courses impacted their college success.

The researchers also completed a comparative analysis on the effects of dual-credit to varied advanced courses. Results from the study were that dual-credit is a useful strategy for improving the likelihood of high school students getting into, continuing

through, and finishing requirements in college, and according to Giani et al., could be more influential than advanced placement courses.

In Florida, as well as in other states, dual-credit courses were designed originally to offer high-achieving students in high school with an introduction to college level classes. However, since its early inception, policy makers across states began using this strategy to ease the transition of all students, including those students from underrepresented locations, from high school to postsecondary institutions. Though the rapid growth in dual-credit, few studies estimated the influence of completing dual-credit coursework on postsecondary outcomes and many studies that used more rigorous methodologies had small sample sizes, which represented restrictions in the generalizability of results.

Giani et al. (2014) suggested that the most compelling and consistent result from this study was the positive impact of dual-credit coursework on postsecondary outcomes. This study also provided insights about the possible sources of variations in the impact of dual credit, suggesting that the subject of the course influenced its impact on postsecondary outcomes, which was congruent with the results of other studies.

Hughes, Zhou, and Petscher (2015) conducted a study to compare the success rates for general and credit recovery online and face-to-face in high school courses in Florida. These researchers described credit recovery as courses occurring outside the parameter of the regular school day schedule when a student failed a course and then repeated the same course to earn high school credit. The study examined whether Florida high school students in online courses earned better grades from students in the same courses in face-to-face classrooms. The motivation for this research was the increasing popularity of choosing credit recovery in online classes in comparison to traditional class work among Florida high school students. The data for this study were gathered from all

high school courses taken between 2007/08 and 2010/11 in Florida (excluding Driver's and Physical Education).

The researchers made a comparison of the likelihood of a student passing an online course as compared to a face-to-face course. Comparisons included courses completed for the first time and failed, and credit recovery courses in which the same students passed. The results showed that the likelihood of a student passing a course and earning credit was higher when a course was taken online than when taken face-to-face under the guidance of a classroom teacher (Hughes, Zhou, & Petscher, 2015).

According to Hughes et al. (2015), most subgroups of students also had a higher likelihood of success in online courses compared to face-to-face courses, except that English language learners showed no difference in outcomes from completed credit recovery courses online. However, Hughes et al. (2015), warned that it was impossible to determine whether consistent differences in course outcomes were relative to increased student learning. Factors such as differences in student characteristics, or differences in grading standards could have an influence on the different outcomes. Therefore, Hughes et al. (2015) suggested that further study was necessary and should focus on courses with end-of-course exams to compare levels of face-to-face and online student learning. These authors also suggested that additional research should be conducted to look at performance more closely among different groups to determine what supports might be needed for students who were unprepared for online instruction.

Lee and Choi (2011) identified the high dropout rates in online credit recovery programs as one of the challenging problems that remained. These researchers reviewed the existing empirical studies on online course dropouts in post-secondary education published since 2000 and identified 69 factors that influenced students' decisions to drop

out of online classes. The top categories included (a) "Student" factors, (b) "Course/Program" factors, and (c) "Environmental" factors (p. 593).

From these categories, Lee and Choi (2011) then examined some of the strategies included in the literature that seemed useful to overcome these dropout factors. The strategies included (a) understanding each student's challenges and potential, (b) providing quality course activities and well-structured supports, and (c) handling environmental issues and emotional challenges. Finally, the researchers discussed issues regarding dropout factors, strategies for addressing these factors, and offered recommendations for future research.

For the purpose of this study, secondary research was gleaned from case studies of school districts using the Edgenuity online credit recovery program in schools. Across the nation, Edgenuity received positive reviews in school districts in which this online program had a positive impact on student achievement across grade levels and student populations. Edgenuity partnered with school districts and research organizations to conduct evaluations that measured results and drove success for all students. A review of 30 case studies and research reports showed that Edgenuity was used for an array of school improvement initiatives. The reasons included increased graduation rates and reduced dropout rates. Other reasons included to pass state-standardized tests, to acquire advanced placement, to recover credits for courses failed, and to reduce the achievement gap.

In the first case study, Peckham (2015) reported data from Appleton Central High School in Appleton, Wisconsin. The purpose of the case study was to determine the effect of a credit recovery program on student engagement and dropout rates. A rigorous online program allowed students to master critical content materials. Preliminary findings showed that customized technology helped improve student graduation and dropout rates.

Peckham (2015) sought an online program to address high expectations for students of all levels of achievement to ensure that the online program supported struggling students, was interactive, and aligned tightly with the Common Core State Standards. Using the Edgenuity electives and core courses, the students were able to enhance their academic skills. After the first school year of implementation of blended learning using the online Edgenuity program fused with other academic and social programs and strategies, the 4-year graduation rate for at-risk students improved noticeably, from 16% to 46%, and the reduction rate for dropouts decreased from 14% to 9% (Peckham, 2015). Program success related to the implementation of blended learning, using the Edgenuity online learning program. Peckham (2015) explained that change occurred and were noticed in attendance, achievement, engagement, and final grades when students began to understand that they had some control over their own learning and had an input into their own schedule and pace of learning activities, with the assistance of a supportive teacher.

Conducted at Bald Eagle Area High School (2016), in Wingate Pennsylvania, the second case study implemented the Edgenuity biology virtual test preparation course from September, 2015 to January 22, 2016, to improve students' success rate on the high-stakes Biology Keystone Exam. The Keystone Exams were end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. The Biology Virtual Tutor was a video-based program that provided instruction, interactive assignments, and frequent assessments by expert teachers. Students used the course 44 minutes per day for five days per week for 18 weeks. The computer lab was available for a small group of high school students who failed the Biology Keystone Exam.

Bald Eagle Area High School (2016) tracked the performance of the 40 participants who did not reach proficiency on the spring administration of the exam in

2015 and retook the exam in the spring of 2016. Results showed that after using the Edgenuity Biology Virtual Tutor for 18 weeks, students gained on the Biology Keystone Exam, from a scale score of 1,471 in 2015 to a scale score of 1,492 in the winter of 2015; a gain of 21 scale score points resulted (effect size = .74). In addition, the students improved from a scale score of 1,477 in the spring of 2015 to a scale score of 1,481 in the spring of 2016, which represented a gain of four scale score points. The conclusion, as reported for Bald Eagle Area High School (2016), was that students benefitted from participation in the Edgenuity Biology Virtual Tutor course and demonstrated significant gains on the Pennsylvania Biology Keystone Exam.

Bryant (2015) reported data from the third case study, which was conducted at Barnsdall High School in Barnsdall, Oklahoma. In this case study, the researcher investigated how online learning helped high-achieving students in a small school district. The challenge in this study was the existence of a small high school with only two teachers to accommodate high-achieving students. The solution to this challenge was the implementation of an online program to give students testing above average an opportunity to complete above level courses in math for credit. When questioned about the challenges of implementing the Edgenuity Algebra 1 program for Grade 8 students, Bryant called attention to the importance of support among staff members, understanding that online learning was designed to supplement instead of supplant teachers.

During the 2014 school year, five high achieving Grade 8 students were scheduled with seven Grade 9 students in a blended Algebra 1 class. At the end of the year, 80% of the Grade 8 students and 71% of the Grade 9 students passed the Algebra I end of course test. Results of the study showed that 94% of the students passed the higher-level math end of the year high stakes test (Bryant, 2015).

The fourth case study was conducted at Washington County School District, Utah. The study was designed to determine if blended learning programs could help reengage at-risk students who needed to make up failed courses (Mitchell, 2015). The solution was a blended learning program designed to help students recover lost credits immediately, to master content, and to increase the graduation rate. After two years of implementing Edgenuity courses, from 2012 to 2014, graduation rates increased from 76% to 88%. Mitchell (2015) also reported higher scores on the ACT after two years of implementation.

Vaughn (2015) reported results from the fifth and final case study in this literature review of the Edgenuity online program. Conducted in Richmond County, Georgia in 2013, the researcher sought to determine if a blended learning summer school programs could help at-risk high school students to build cognitive skills and recover credits. The participants included a group of students who had given up on school and were failing courses consistently. As a solution to this problem, Richmond County School district implemented a blended learning summer school program designed to improve access, participation, and academic progress for failing students. Results of this case study showed that blended, personalized instruction increased positive relationships with teachers, reduced discipline referrals, and helped failing students to master content objectives and get back on track after failing courses. Vaughn indicated that program developers discovered that pairing strong, highly trained teachers with technological resources enabled teachers to set high expectations and encouraged students to learn. The summer program included: “a rigorous, multimodal curriculum that fostered cognitive and metacognitive skills” (Vaughn, 2015, p. 2).

The blended learning summer school program provided both face-to-face and online instruction for five days each week. Class instruction included two 130-minute

classes. Students then spent two hours a day after school working on Edgenuity online courses at home. In explaining what contributed to the success of the program, Vaughn (2015) stated that the program included structured and predictable instruction. The online phase of the summer program included a highly predictable instructional routine that focused student attention on content to be measured and mastered. Therefore, students generated familiarity with critical thinking skills and concepts as well as developed resilience and confidence.

Oliver and Kellogg (2015) summarized findings about high school credit programs from evaluations called for from state-sponsored on-line school in the United States. Data were collected from surveys of teachers and students, which provided insights as to why students in credit recovery programs failed the same classes previously in face-to-face settings. Oliver and Kellogg used survey data to investigate how the online credit recovery model of instructional delivery empowered low performing students to succeed and "overcome internal issues of self-direction, time management, and external issues of teacher support and feedback" (p. 191). From a comparison between the credit recovery group and the general studies and honors course groups, Oliver and Kellogg reported significant differences in the needs of the credit recovery students.

Some credit recovery students, for example, required added technology and support to participate effectively online. One of the highly successful areas in online classes was that students found that they learned at a faster rate and retained more information in online classes than they did in face-to-face encounters (Horn & Staker, 2011). In addition, areas of success in the credit recovery program included credit recovery students reporting learning higher level information in online classes (Horn & Staker, 2011).

The idea of at-risk learners completing courses in unstructured online environments appeared contradictory. Both school leaders and researchers indicated concerns over low-performing or at-risk students who demonstrated low motivation and limited self-directedness in learning online. These students were hassled and faced many distractions such as video games, email, Facebook, other social media, and outside conflicting interests at hand (Donahue Institute, 2012; Horn & Staker, 2011).

Additional Research

Even though a limited number of studies were conducted to measure the effectiveness of credit recovery programs on student achievement leading to increased graduation rates, a large number of expository research reports were found. Most of these expository research reports provided information, explaining the background that existed, which suggested a need for some type of intervention, reasons why credit recovery was chosen to address the problem in need of intervention, oppositions encountered in establishing and implementing a credit recovery program, and preliminary results of such programs.

Foran (2015) described a credit recovery program in the New Britain High School Satellite Careers Academy (NBHSSCA) in Connecticut. The credit recovery program was an outgrowth of plans to create opportunity for students struggling to remain engaged in academic activities to graduate from school along with their cohort group. In this school, administrators spent considerable time in trying to provide programs and other learning opportunities for students who were struggling in their academic performance. Foran explained that this credit recovery program was established in 2014 out of concerns about how many potentially successful students each year tend to "slip through the cracks and quietly fade away in their fourth or fifth year of high school" (p. 4).

This concern for the increasing number of students failing to graduate on time was the reason for the implementation of a credit recovery program as part of the alternative school in the NBHSSCA. Even though the NBHSSCA was a highly successful school, the ultimate goal of the credit recovery program was to provide an intervention that met the needs of struggling students (Foran, 2015). With a focus on academic achievement, the credit recovery program made provision for not only recovering credits missed after failing a course, but it also provided opportunities for students to accelerate credit-earnings through after-school, summer programs, and online credit recovery. Even though the credit recovery program initially was offered to increase graduation rates from NBHSSCA, Foran warned that the goal of simply graduating high school was not an end in itself. Instead, the goal was for students to "graduate prepared to do whatever it was that they wanted to do next" (p. 9).

As is in any new program, Foran (2014) warned that the credit recovery program at NBHSSCA was in its infancy and, therefore, student achievement data were unavailable. However, preliminary reports showed that student engagement was at a higher level than it was in the regular education program. Student and staff relationships were more positive. In addition, the students knew that the administration, faculty, and staff believed in their ability to succeed and had high expectations for all students. Students also understood that the educational administration and school staff members were committed to giving all students, whether they were struggling or not, the tools to meet and exceed standards at the classroom as well as at the state level (Foran, 2014).

Known as the Success Center, the credit-recovery program in an Iowa school district, revised its credit-recovery program to focus on lagging students (Wolff, 2014). The Success Center was an after-school intervention, which at no cost to students or their families, began immediately after school ended for summer break and lasted for 20 days,

with four hours devoted to academic training each day for approximately 60 students each summer. Summer participants earned approximately 125 units each year after this program was in operation for seven years (Wolff, 2014).

The first observation was that credit-recovery program facilitators should help students who were in viable positions by determining which students were in a position to be served through a summer credit-recovery program. Instead of having open enrollment for all students who volunteered to attend, summer participants were limited to students who were in need of some credit-recovery instead of students who failed with scores below 50 on their report cards. For such students, the decision made was that it would be more beneficial for them to repeat the courses failed. Therefore, the first lesson learned was that the credit-recovery program was more effective when students who could be helped best were enrolled.

The second observation was that students used as tutors could supplement the certified teachers in the program. High school graduates and college students majoring in education were provided assistance in the position of tutors for students, which provided an opportunity for credit-recovery students to learn from students, and students learned by serving as tutors. Wolff (2014) explained that tutors also provided counseling for credit-recovery students to keep them on tract and actively engaged in pursuing their diploma. The lesson learned from the second observation was that tutors can enhance the performance level of students because they can demand more work from the students.

Wolff (2014) stated that attendance was a major hurdle in the credit–recovery program, and that motivating the unmotivated and unsuccessful student to maintain regular attendance represented a third lesson learned from the credit-recovery program. Using resources such as parents, grandparents, and guardians encouraged attendance. In addition, taking other steps such as home visitation was necessary at time to provide the

motivation students needed simply to show up and make an effort to recover units because failing students often felt that they were unable to succeed. The importance of motivation, then was the third lesson learned, Wolff identified.

Getting students into the credit recovery program early and building positive relationships with struggling students made a difference in helping them to recover the units they needed. Wolff (2004) called attention to the fact that in addition to academic needs, struggling students in credit-recovery programs also had social and behavioral need that caused Grade 9 students to struggle during their first year in high school. For these reasons, Wolff called attention to the importance of building relationships with struggling students to keep them engaged in learning. Based on data from previous research, struggling students in online credit-recovery programs indicated they needed more directions and communication from teachers (Wolff, 2011). Thus, the final lesson learned was that credit-recovery programs, however structured, did not reach every student, and only about half of eligible students did not attend. Thus, it was important for educators to find alternatives, such as online courses and other credit recovery options during the school year for unmotivated students who were unsuccessful in after-school or summer programs (Trotter, 2008; Wolff, 2014).

Online courses have an international appeal as global education maintains a place on the national agenda (Luyt, 2014). Online learning enables students to engage in cross-cultural learning experiences as students from non-English backgrounds enroll in courses to complete credit recovery as well as credit advancement experiences. Students in online courses had to adjust their learning behaviors to make the best of online experiences and transformed practices in reading and writing (Luyt).

The aim of online courses was geared toward the construction of knowledge, but students found many challenges as they pursued online courses for credit recovery or for

other academic reasons. For example, Luyt (2014) explained that students' perceptions of the online learning environment and the interactions or lack of interactions with teachers could influence the quality of the educational experiences of online students. Some of the major challenges that online students addressed included "limited social presence, delayed feedback, lack of social cues, gender, and cultural dynamics" all which contributed to the complex online social context (p. 3).

Computer Availability. Computer availability was an issue that had to be considered as educators made choices about online credit recovery programs. Eaton, Brener, Kann, Roberts, Kyle, Flint, and Ross (2011) conducted one of the first studies to examine whether students in schools across the nation had access to the number of computers needed to complete in-class online surveys. The researchers of the study determined the perceptions of principals, relative to their preference for online surveys in comparison to their preference for paper-and-pencil surveys. The researchers mailed paper-pencil surveys to 704 public and private high school principals in the fall of 2008. The surveys examined computer availability in schools and principals' perceptions of online surveys. Of the 704 principals selected to participate in the study, researchers received responses from 500 principals, representing a 71% response rate.

Findings from this study showed that most schools had at least one computer lab, with Internet connection for computers (Eaton et al., 2011). Only half of the schools with computer labs, however, had a sufficient number of computers to accommodate a class of 20 students. Two of the common problems included providing enough computers for an entire class and rotating classes into computer labs. Most of the principals in the study preferred online assessments instead of paper-and-pencil surveys, and most of them agreed that many schools did not have the number of computers needed for students to engage in online surveys. Participants in this study also indicated that rotating classes of

students into the computer labs would be a problem in their schools. Participants believed that changing the method of administering surveys, from paper-pencil to online surveys would be problematic for school staffs. In addition, teachers preferred paper-pencil to online administration of surveys and tests. Thus, the researchers, Eaton et al. concluded that it was better for test administrators to continue to offer paper-pencil surveys rather than online surveys because many students were unprepared to complete online surveys.

Even though online learning contained little or no learner–learner interactions, the Internet offered multiple features to all for high levels of learner–learner interaction and had the potential to transform how students learned online (Borup. 2016). Many online courses focused more on flexibility and independence than on discussions, communication, interaction, or collaboration. Whether online or face-to-face, the teacher was the one who made the ultimate decision relative to how much time was devoted to interpersonal relationships and student-student involvement in classrooms. Little research, however, examined how online high school teachers perceived, valued, and facilitated learner interactions with their peers in credit recovery courses.

Borup (2016) conducted this case study to investigate teacher perceptions of learner-peers engagement at a cyber high school, using teacher surveys and interviews. The analysis identified four student behaviors that positively impacted student engagement and learning. These behaviors included befriending, motivating, instructing, and collaborating. Findings from this study showed that teachers identified several drawbacks to learner–peers interactions such as bullying and cheating. In addition, Borup indicated that there appeared to be tension between providing for students' individual needs and requiring collaborative learning opportunities in online learning programs.

Even though the number of students seeking to recover units were increasing in online courses, most of these students supplemented their face-to-face coursework with

one or two online courses. In some instances, however, the number of students completing most of their courses or all of their coursework online was also increasing. It was estimated that throughout the nation, approximately 200 full-time online programs were available (Borup, 2016). Known as cyber schools, in the United States, these schools enrolled approximately 200,000 students (Gill, Walsh, Wulsin, Matulewicz, Severn et al., 2015). This growth occurred despite lower performance outcomes than their face-to-face counterparts (Freidhoff, 2015; Miron, Gulosino, & Horvitz, 2014; Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gremin, & Rapp, 2013). Therefore, it was necessary for researchers to examine the learning materials as well as the instructional strategies teachers in cyber schools used to provide instruction, especially for credit recovery courses in which a high number of low-performing, disadvantaged, and at-risk students enrolled. The quantity and quality of communication, feedback, discussions, or other type of human interactions and support should be monitored for effectiveness as well as for quantity.

The Internet made available features for a large number of increases in levels of instructor feedback and communication as well as high levels of learner–peers interactions. In a study conducted by Gill et al. (2015), survey responses from 127 cyber school principals revealed that 60% of the principals indicated that their schools used individualized, student-driven independent studies frequently as instructional methods, while only 21% reported that their courses included collaborative learning groups, including two or more students working together.

Learning theorists contend that achievement decreases when learners worked independently of other (Bandura, 1986). In addition, Vygotsky (1978) explained that the instructional provider empowered students in the learning process through a number of avenues, such as modeling effective practices and scaffolding learning tasks for students by using psychological as well as visual and physical tools. Interaction between peer

tutors and learning teams were also effective in environments in which learners constructed meaning and expanded knowledge, concepts, and skills with each other (Garrison, 2011). Social presence and personal connections established through meaningful interactions were prerequisites to higher cognitive outcomes (Borup, West, Graham, & Davies, 2014). In addition, interactions between two learners or among a small group of learners encouraged analysis, synthesis, and critical and creativity thinking germane to continuous learning and a higher quality and quantity in understanding. On the other hand, the absence of quality interactions robbed students of advanced learning skills and left them in isolation.

Learner engagement with each other and other interpersonal interactions were important; however, in online classes, meaningful collaboration and communication were unlikely to occur unless the teacher provided incentives and directions for interactions to occur (Borup et al., 2014). However, little was known regarding how teachers perceived or valued learner-peers communication at cyber high schools, and therefore, this lack of knowledge was another aspect of online learning credit recovery that needed further investigation, even though online learning courses provided students with high levels of learner–peer interactions.

Studies Related to Credit Recovery

This literature review provided an in-depth review of credit recovery as an option used in schools to give students an alternative to failure of courses. Associated issues such as improving graduation rates and reducing drop-out rates were included (see Table 1). Table 1 provided an overview of the studies used in the literature review. The literature review addressed context, including background, history, and location; major topics (according to research questions), definitions, other sources of definition, research, secondary research, and expository research (and other types of research, as needed).

Three school districts were purposefully selected for this study. The rationale for selecting school districts was to examine the implementation of credit recovery because of low performance and high graduation rates. Table 1 provided sample case studies from the Edgenuity, My Path program, the online option for Georgia. This supplemental online program provided data-driven differentiated instruction to meet the needs of students at their learning levels. In addition to credit recovery, sample case studies from schools across the nation, including Georgia showed that Edgenuity, My Path provided opportunity for advanced placement, dual enrollment, blended learning, test preparation, and other meaning educational experiences (see Table 1).

Table 1

Topic: Studies Related to Credit Recovery

Study	Instrumentation	Type	Outcome
Eaton, Brener, Kann, Roberts, Kyle, Flint, & Ross (2011).	Online survey	Quantitative	Demographic data
Donahue Institute (2012)	Document review	Quantitative	Group performance outcomes
Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp (2013)	Annual Policy Review	Quantitative	Longitudinal student performance outcomes
Giani, Alexander, Reyes (2014)	Quasi-Experimental Analysis	Quantitative	Group performance outcomes
Hughes, Zhou, & Petsch (2015).	Document reviews	Quantitative	Group performance outcomes

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth review of credit recovery as an option used in schools to give students an alternative to failure of courses. Context, including background, history, and location; major topics (according to research questions),

definitions, other sources of definition, research, secondary research, and expository research were discussed. Credit recovery was one of the most widely documented reasons why educators in school districts selected and offered online learning choices, including blended learning, dual enrollment, credit recovery and other choices for students in high schools.

Online credit recovery programs, for the most part, addressed issues that plague high school such as high dropout rates and low graduation rates. Therefore, school districts throughout the United States opted for some form of credit-recovery course offerings or credit-recovery program to reduce the dropout rate and to give students a second chance to graduate alongside their age appropriate peers. Though credit recovery programs were a popular choice in high school, the choices relative to the kind of credit recovery program were wide and varied, from single course choices to total programs outside the parameter of the school district.

Credit recovery programs were offered at the school, district, or state level and were highly decentralized, unregulated, and under-researched dropout prevention initiative. There was little information on enrollment numbers, value, efficiency, usefulness, or helpfulness. At this time, credit recovery programs were not evaluated for rigor, equal access, or effectiveness in helping students to meet state performance standards as measured by their scores on high-stakes tests such as the Georgia Milestones Assessment System initiative.

Credit recovery classes were offered as fully online courses, as blended online/in-person instruction, or as strictly in-person instruction. Credit recovery, however, was one of the fastest growing area of online learning. Proficiency-based credit recovery, rather than time-based credit recovery, were on the rise. Re-earned credits were documented on student transcripts in a variety of ways, if at all, and admittance to credit recovery classes

was equally subjective. Some school officials were concerned that financial pressures on schools were generating the push toward credit recovery program initiatives.

Students recovered lost credits through fully online curricula, where all learning occurred online. This online curriculum was provided through software programs from a number of sources, including the district or school itself, state-run virtual schools, charter schools, non-profit consultants or for-profit consultants. Typically, in online credit recovery programs, no face-to-face meetings or opportunities for real-time instruction were available. Work occurred at home or in school labs, with little to no supervision. Course lengths varied greatly by the program and by the state. Kentucky Virtual School's credit recovery classes were nine-week courses. The maximum allowable length per class for Wisconsin's Virtual School was 12 weeks. For Florida Virtual School, one regular semester-long class was expected to be completed in 18 weeks, with a flex time of about nine extra weeks. Many states modeled virtual schools after Florida's and used Florida's courses. In Georgia, though students should only be enrolled in one credit recovery course at a time, there was no minimum time period and courses featured opened enrollment, so a student could enroll in another class immediately after completing one. No limits existed relative to the number of credits a student could earn during one semester. Students did not receive diplomas from the third-party online course providers, but from their local school districts initiative.

Blended-learning credit recovery opportunities mixed face-to-face and online learning. These courses usually were self-contained and pre-programmed. Instructors, who were either certified teachers or uncertified proctors, provided aid, as needed. Other blended online courses also offered real-time interaction with teachers. However, there were no established best practices; therefore, the degree to which the online component integrated into the curriculum varied.

The Center for Public Education described a credit recovery programs as similar to old summer school classes. The setting of an in-person credit recovery program was, in general, traditional; usually there were no online components. Classes occurred after school or a few nights each week during the school year, over the summer, or on weekends. As policy makers, school leaders, and researchers tried to improve credit recovery programs, future research was necessary to identify the features that should be retained and weeded out of programs that did not strengthen students' academic skills. Therefore, determining to what extent teachers perceive online software based credit recovery programs as effective in preparing students to be successful on the EOCA was the focus of the present study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The researcher proposed to evaluate the implementation of credit recovery as a process for improving graduation rates and preparing students to be college and career ready in three selected school districts in Georgia. Credit recovery is an online and face-to-face learning program, which allows students to recover or repair credits for courses they fail. School districts where low school performance was affecting the graduation rate, credit recovery programs were used to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates since 1998.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district?
2. Why was the credit recovery program implemented?
3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery?

Research Design

This study was a qualitative comparative research design. A comparative research design allowed the researcher to examine data from three school districts using credit recovery to provide students a chance to repair or recover credits. A comparative study provided data needed to determine the researcher to explore similarities and differences between the schools in this study. Where similarities existed, the research investigated the research questions to determine the reason for the similarities or differences. As it related to this study, perceptions of educators within three rural schools in southwest Georgia was the focus of this study.

Population

The population for this study included three purposefully selected K-12 rural school districts in southwest Georgia. Purposeful selection entailed using participants who were able provide the most useful information for this study. In this case, rationale for using purposeful selection was to make sure that schools in this study had common characteristics relative to student demographics, location, previous graduation rates, and other data related to the use of credit recovery. The criteria for participation included any school district that offered credit recovery in the rural southwest Georgia area.

School District A had one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district was 1,338. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment included 72% Black, 17% Hispanic, 9% White, 2% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district is 13.2%; students with disabilities, 9%; English language learners (ELL) were 10% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals include 68%. The overall CCRPI score for School District A was 58.1 out of 100 (GADOE, 2017).

The overall performance of this school district was higher than 4% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students was higher than 47% of the other school districts in the state, and its 4-year graduation rate was 75.4%, which is higher than 6% of the other districts in the state (GADOE, 2017).

School District B had one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district was 946. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment included 95% Black, 1% Hispanic, 3% White, 1% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district was 10.8%; students with disabilities, 14%; English language learners (ELL) are 2% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals included 100%. The overall CCRPI score for School District B was 54.3 out of 100. The

overall performance of this school district was higher than 2% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students was higher than 27% of the other school districts in the state, and its 4-year graduation rate was 95.2%, which was higher than 93% of the other districts in the state (GADOE, 2017).

School District C has one elementary, one middle, and one high school. The enrollment for this school district was 510. By race/ethnicity, the enrollment included 94% Black, 5% White, 1% Multi-Racial. The mobility rate of students in the district was 11.6%; students with disabilities, 13%; English language learners (ELL) are 0% of the student population; and students eligible for free and reduced meals included 68%. The overall CCRPI score for School District C was 72.4 out of 100. The overall performance of this school district was higher than 46% of the school districts in the state; its academic growth among high school students was higher than 88% of the other school districts in the state, and its 4-year graduation rate was 96.7%, which was higher than 98% of the other districts in the state. For the purpose of this study, School District A will be a K-12 facility. School District B will be a K-12 facility, and School District C will be a K-12 facility. The researcher had no relationships with any of these school districts in this study (GADOE, 2017).

Participants

Participants included 15 teachers, five from each of the three schools selected for this study. Participants included certified teachers. No substitute or noncertified teachers were used in the study. Participating teachers were selected from a pool of applicants who volunteered to respond to the survey provided (see Appendix C).

Instrumentation

Data were generated from the Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers (CRST). The CRST is a 20-item instrument that generates insights from teachers to determine how they feel about the implementation of the credit recovery program. The CRST was designed by the researcher, using the online software, Google Forms. Items on the CRST include a Likert scale, with a five-item, multiple choice response, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The researcher collected data from face-to-face interviews and/or email format with 10 of the 15 participants who volunteered to participate in this study. The instrumentation includes a 15-item interview guide that took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to conduct. Interview questions included items to explore how the school districts decided to implement credit recovery, why the credit recovery program was implemented, and what major outcomes resulted from the implementation.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, the researcher submitted the human research application (see Appendix B). After receiving permission from the IRB, the researcher collected data from personal interviews conducted by way of face-to-face or electronic format with 10 educators within the targeted school districts. The interview questions were created digitally and housed on a computer server at the researchers' home. Each participant was assigned a unique username and password that allowed them to login to the survey. When participants logged in, they were presented with an instructional page notifying them of their rights and any risk that could be associated with taking the survey. Participants were asked to accept that they understood the inherent risk by making the appropriate selection.

Fifteen interview questions generate qualitative data to support the quantitative findings for this study. Interview questions (see Appendix A for the interview questions) were:

1. Please describe when and why this school district chose to implement a credit recovery program.
2. What was the major goal of the implementation of credit recovery?
3. Please discuss your guidelines for students to choose a credit recovery option.
4. Please describe your scheduling and supervision process for students in credit recovery verses students in seat time only.
5. What is your perception of the credit recovery program effect on the graduation policy?

In School System A and School System F, face to face interviews were conducted with each participant. The school principal arranged for the interviews to be conducted in the conference room, which enabled the participants to be isolated from public view. This isolated area made it possible to keep the participants confidential. Before each interview began, the introductory statement was as follows:

> Thank you so much, for allowing me to interview you. Please let me remind you that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Please, be assured that your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses in the school district are guaranteed. If, at any time during this interview, you no longer wish to participate, please let me know, and the interview will stop at once. Thank you again for participating. Let's begin.

During the interviewing process, participants tended to speak liberally in answering some of the interview questions, but it was necessary to use probes occasionally to keep them focused on the interview questions. Occasionally, in District

A, participants asked that their comments were kept off the record. Therefore, assurance that the interviews were private had to be reiterated occasionally.

Immediately after the interviews were conducted, the information was transcribed and a copy made for the participants to review. Upon reviewing their own transcript, each participant had an option to add or delete any information they wanted to change. Before leaving the school district, the researcher was able to complete the member-checking process because the school principal scheduled each interview during the teachers' planning periods to avoid interference with the general operations of the school day.

In School District C, the interviews occurred during the last week of school when teachers were preparing for graduation. Each of the five teachers who volunteered to participate in the study had other obligations with the graduation program preparation. Therefore, only two met with the researcher, and the other three were unavailable. No further schedule was made in District C after school ended.

In School District B, all interviews were conducted by email. The researcher emailed the participants who volunteered for the study. Upon receiving their returned responses, the researcher made an interview transcript and email it back to each participant to give them a chance to review and accept or change their responses. Once the member checking process was complete, the responses from School District B were added to the interview transcript from School District A and School District B for the data analysis process. As a whole, seven interviews occurred across the three school districts, and three interviews occurred via email.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the CRST were analyzed using simple percentages. The CRST is a 20-item instrument that generates insights from teachers to determine how they feel about the implementation of the credit recovery program. The CRST was

designed by the researcher, using the online software, Google Forms. Items on the CRST include a Likert scale, with a five-item, multiple choice response, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The CRST was used only to identify teachers who were knowledgeable about the credit recovery program and were willing to participate in the study. Therefore, validity and reliability data for the CRST were unnecessary.

Document analysis included a review of the CCRPI report results for each school district used in the study from the GADOE website. Document analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. Thematic analysis of data occurred, based on the data gathered from 10 interviews. A thematic analysis included survey, interviews, and document reviews, the common issues that recur and identify main themes that summarized all views collected from personal interviews as researchers suggested (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2014). Steps in the data analysis process were as follows:

First, the researcher read and annotated transcripts from each of the interviews from each district and recorded preliminary observations from the transcripts. Second, the researcher reviewed the details from personal interviews to determine teacher concerns about credit recovery. Third, the researcher developed a coding scheme, or a list of all themes and codes to apply to the data collected. Fourth, the researcher used a computer software program, NVivo 11 for Windows (2014), to assist with this process. NVivo supports qualitative research by making the task of organizing, analyzing, and finding themes efficient and timely. Qualitative data from sources such as personal interviews were generated in an efficient and timely manner with the use of this computer software program.

Member Checking

Member checking occurred as a validation strategy, according to Creswell's, (2013) guidelines. The NVivo program generated findings from the personal interviews

and the researcher provided participants an opportunity to reflect upon their responses and make revisions. As the member checking process proceeded, the researcher was sensitive to deviant information in order to determine why the deviant information occurred. Creswell (2013) described a deviant case as any element of data that appears to contradict patterns or explanations that emerged from the data analysis. All research information was stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home and will remain secured for 3 years after the conclusion of the research study.

The field test created trustworthiness for this study. A field test of the instrument was conducted with three teachers in the researcher's school site to determine if the instrument would generate the information needed for the study. After the three teachers read the questions and made recommendations for changes in wording and content, the researcher asked the dissertation chair and the editor to review the questions for accuracy, ease of reading, and applicability for gathering data for the study. The editor called attention to redundancy in Items 3 and 5. Both items were revised to eliminate redundancy. The dissertation chair reviewed, offered several remarks and approved the final revision before the instrument was given to participants. Dwyer and Stringer (2005) explained that researchers are able to increase trustworthiness of a study by recording and reviewing the process of the research to ensure the problem studied truthfully and sufficiently exemplify credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility denotes trustworthiness (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this study, the researcher established credibility by making sure the results were accurate. Reporting the findings from the study were supported by the actual words and expressions the participants. Member checking, as a validation strategy, occurred as each participant

reviewed the transcription of the responses provided. Their responses provided the richness of thoughts and ideas necessary to ensure credibility.

Reporting the Data

Once the data collection process ended, findings from the study were presented in descriptive and tabular format. All findings were reported by research questions in Chapter IV in word tables and figures, and included some essential characteristics.

Summary

In this chapter the researcher provided a description of the methodology used to conduct this study. The researcher proposed to evaluate the implementation of credit recovery as a process for improving graduation rates and preparing students to be college and career ready in three selected school districts in Georgia. The three research questions that guided the study focused on program implementation, the reason why the program was implemented, and outcome of the program after implementation. This study was a qualitative comparative research design, and data from three school districts were used in the comparison. Data were collected from the CRST, a 20-item instrument. Follow-up interviews with 10 classroom teachers provided further data for comparison. Data analysis generated simple percentages and themes relative to the three research questions. Credibility of the study was strengthened through member checking processes.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The researcher examined the use of credit recovery and its implementation within three Southwest Georgia school districts. Credit recovery programs are utilized to provide students with options for repairing or recovering credit loss as a result of failing classes. Graduation rates and college and career readiness scores were examined when the researcher completed the process of choosing school districts for this study. The researcher administered the CRST to teachers in each district and conducted follow-up interviews, where permissible, with teachers from each district. With credit recovery as an option, students were more likely to satisfy requirements for graduation, but the effectiveness of the credit recovery program as an option for completing requirements for graduation was unknown.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district?
2. Why was the credit recovery program implemented?
3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery?

Research Design

A qualitative comparative research design was used to conduct this study. A comparative research design allowed the researcher to examine data from three school districts in which a credit recovery program was being implemented to give students a chance to repair or recover credits they lost as a result of failing a course or courses they needed to graduate from high school. This comparative study provided the data the

researcher needed to explore similarities and differences between the credit recovery programs in the three school districts in this study.

Respondents

Results from Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers Respondents in this study included 15 teachers, five from each of the three schools selected for this study. Of this number, 10 teachers completed the follow-up interviews. Respondents included certified teachers, who responded to the Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers (CRST).

Findings

CRST. Results from the CRST showed that only 12.5% of the respondents indicated that they perceived that the credit recovery program prepared students to be college and career ready. Only 25% of the respondents agreed that the process and guidelines for identifying students for credit recovery were clearly defined. When participating teachers were asked about their level of comfort with the credit recovery program only 18.8% were highly comfortable.

Throughout the three districts, 13.8% of respondents indicated that they were almost always involved in the credit recovery program by recommending students to repeat courses they failed. Over 50% of respondents indicated that they almost always recommended students to participate in the credit recovery program and 56.3% indicated that students they recommended were successful. Of the 16 respondents neither agreed that the credit recovery program prepared students to be college ready, while 18.8% indicated that students were career ready. When asked about the beneficial aspect of the credit recovery program, 31% strongly agreed that the program was beneficial.

Less than 10% of respondents indicated that students had a positive image of the credit recovery program, while a similar percentage indicated that the credit recovery program had a positive image in schools. As a part of curriculum and instruction, 31.3%

of the respondents strongly agreed that the program was valuable. Relative to improvement for the program, 75% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the program can be improved. Respondents strongly agreed (37.5%) that the program has an overall positive response on student outcomes. Finally, when asked if respondents were willing to participate in a face to face interview, 75% agreed to participate. Results from interviews are presented in Tables 2 through 10.

Interviews. Research question 1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district? Interview question 1 generated the answer to this research question. Table 2 provides the findings from the three school districts.

Table 2

Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District A

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*The credit recovery is available for the students who are failing, and need to be on track for graduation. The program is a second chance option to get failing students back on track for graduation and to increase the graduation rate.*
P-2	*The credit recovery program was a part of the curriculum when I came here in 2008 and was mainly for juniors and seniors recovering credit that they missed. It was done during the school day, after school, and during the summer.*
P-3	*I estimate the beginning of credit recovery was in the school system was about 2010. The program was designed to give the students who failed a second chance to pass required courses without actually having to sit through the entire class for the entire semester.*
P-4	*The credit recovery program was introduced along with some other major initiatives for school improvement. Once students are in the credit recovery class, the supervision the students get is through the credit recovery teacher, who is a certified professional. The students in the credit recovery program are always supervised by the credit recovery teachers. In the after-school program, a certified instructor supervises that program as well. We also have credit recovery on site, or inside, that I can say that are three teachers catering to the credit recovery programs during school time and after school time we have four teachers for four subject areas.*
P-5	*Moving from a year-long system to a semester system is a very fast pacing program. Just after four months it's done. Many students have problems trying to complete the syllabus in such a short time. Credit recovery really helps our students to achieve, to gain the content knowledge and try to have a one-on-one tutoring with the teacher. This kind of credit recovery has helped students gain credit and knowledge in school.*

Table 3

Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District B

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*Credit recovery is implemented as an online curriculum to give students a second chance to graduate on time. A prerequisite to entering the credit recovery program was failing a course. Beyond this requirement, the counselors kind of go more in depth with that than the teachers. Teachers mainly do the recommendations.* *Seat time is only for regular students, but the credit recovery program is for students who need help; therefore, if students are working to improve their grades, those students like a program where teachers can substantiate the students with a lot of content for mastery. Those students who have achieved mastery can be accelerated to higher levels of thinking because we wanted more professional learners today. In our department, we are two teachers who are catering to the science content area. So, we take the names of all the students that need help, and we are the two teachers who cater to their demands, or needs during the school day.*
P-2	*Students cannot take a course in the credit recovery program if they have not attempted that course during seat time and failed. The only thing is students that have failed a course or if they did not get the actual credit for lack of attendance. If they made below, what 65, they're able to go in there after school and still get credit for taking the class. They can't get up to a 100 though, in that case.* *First we take the pretest scores and if the students are below average; those are the students who need to be in the credit recovery program. That's mandatory.*
P-3	*Each student is in front of a computer during the school day in the alternative school, and the students see that the instructor can see their work on the screen. The instructor can monitor the students' progress. As the official classroom teacher for the course the student has failed, I can't see their progress. I would have to go through the counselor or go through the credit recovery teacher to see my students' progress. Students are supervised throughout their work on the computer during the school day. The students have the password to the courses they need and they have their usernames and stuff. They can also do it at home and there's no supervision.*

Table 4

Credit Recovery Implementation Process in School District C

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*In 2007, this school district set a standard for promotion; the semester and End of Course Tests to count for 40% of the student's passing grade. In the first stages of the implementation, approximately 40% of the students in Grades 9-12 failed one or more core classes, causing a drastic decrease in the graduation rate. To address the problems, the school board established an after-school program to give students a chance to make up core subjects, using NovaNet. This program was successful in helping students to achieve credit recovery, but only disengaged students in the alternative school had access to NovaNet. In addition, prior to the implementation of the new testing policy, in 2005, no students with disabilities received a regular diploma and a decline occurred in the graduation rate. No students with disabilities received a regular diploma. When the Board of Education realized the high number of seniors needing credit recovery to graduate, in the spring of 2008, the Odysseyware program, was purchased to replace NovaNet.*
P-2.	*I think it was maybe 10 years ago or more when the board of education passed that ridiculous promotion policy. Of course, the state began requiring schools to use passing the state Criterion Referenced Competency Test at Grades 3, 5, and the End of Course Tests (EOTC) in Grades 7 through 11. The graduation test was already in effect, and all students could hear in schools was test, test, and more test.* *The classroom teachers do not put students into credit recovery. Classroom teachers only make the recommendation to the counselors and the counselor assesses the whole picture. Though we're assessing the picture, we only have a certain part to do. Our part is the referral, you know.*

Research question 2: Why was the credit recovery program implemented? This research question generated insights relative to the reason why district decision makers chose to include a credit recovery program to the school curriculum. Responses from Interview questions 1 and 2 were used to answer Research question 2. A summary of responses are included in Table 5.

Table 5

The Reason for Credit Recovery Implementation in School District A

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*The goal of the credit recovery program was to increase or improve graduation rates. It was also used to reduce dropout rates. The whole idea of credit recovery was a reaction to the new promotion and retention policy the board of education passed in the mid-2000s. Teachers and parents were very distraught about the new formula for computing a student's final grade*
P-2	*The credit recovery program was an option available to students in special education who needed to earn units for graduation. I had an exceptional education student. His exceptionality was an emotional behavior disorder (EBD) and his disorder was anxiety. He was served via E2020 from his ninth grade year to his 12th grade year. He actually got a diploma doing nothing but E2020, and I served him for a minimum of three hours a week.*
P-4	*Students are identified by their actual grade. So, if a student has 65 or above, they enroll in credit repair, where they complete units of work the teacher identifies. For students whose grades are lower than 65, they enroll in credit recovery where they actually have to go in and complete the whole class. I guess they're identified by maybe their teacher as advisor or even the counselors going in and seeing what subjects or courses have been failed. In addition to having a failing grade at the end of a class or too many days absent is another reason to enroll a student in credit recovery.*

Table 6

The Reason for Credit Recovery Implementation in School District B

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*Credit recovery was made available to reduce the dropout rate in the school district. In high school, when a student begins to fall behind their peers, they get discouraged and drop out. If students are in credit recovery, that means they did not pass a class. However, if they're in credit recovery to possibly avoid not passing a class, the student can get extra help.*
P-2	*The major goal of the credit recovery program is to keep students on track for graduation. I am comfortable with the credit recovery program in my school because students in the program are monitored closely by a trained professional to ensure they have mastered the skills and standards needed to progress to the next course.*

Table 7

The Reason for Credit Recovery Implementation in School District C

Participant	Commentary
P-1.	*The major goal of credit recovery was to increase the graduation rate in the school. Low graduation rates was beginning to be a sticky issue in this rural school area, and parents were putting pressure on school administrators, especially for denying their child a chance to participate in the graduation ceremony, especially those students who had passing grades in the classroom but were failing the state graduation tests. The whole idea of credit recovery was a reaction to the new promotion and retention policy the board of education passed in the mid-2000s. Teachers and parents were very distraught about the new formula for computing a student's final grade. With the EOCT counting as 40% of a student's final grade, the graduation rate plummeted, parents were raging, and many began pulling their children out of the school system and enrolling them elsewhere.*
P-2	*NovaNet was a second chance to graduate option. However, some smart students began accepting a failing grade and making up the same in the NovaNet program. Other students created ways to confiscate the NovaNet program and get credits for their friends. The school board canceled the contract with NovaNet and introduced Odysseyware with controls against student schemes. Prerequisites were established as having a recommendation from the classroom teacher that is signed by the counselor, verifying that the student has failed a class after (a) maintaining seat time in the classroom during the grading period, (a) possessing an excuse for absentee, or (c) failing a course.* *Credit recovery is not the only initiative we have in place to improve graduation rates and CCRPI scores. We are implementing dual enrollment and giving students opportunity enroll in online learning for overall school improvement. We also have an alternative school for repeat discipline offenders. Now these students receive service through the credit recovery program, but to tell the truth, most of the students in the alternative school cannot recover credit because they don't have any credits to recover. Actually, the credit recovery program becomes a holding cell until they drop out. With all programs initiatives focused on improved learning, we might not need credit repair or credit recovery as time moves on.*

Research question 3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery? This research question focused on the outcome of the credit recover program as it stands in the school system. Interview questions 5, 6, 7 8, and 9 were used to answer research question 3. A summary of responses is included in Table 8, 9 and 10.

Table 8

Outcome After the Implementation of the Credit Recovery Program in School District A

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*Honestly, I'm not sure how much money the school system gets from the credit recovery program, but money wise, if they get money for it, some of the students don't benefit from it because they haven't learned anything. If it takes a student another whole semester to complete a course failed during the past year and then at the end of the school year, the student is still not finished with courses failed last fall, then the student is not benefiting from the program.*
P-2	*The outcome is how the program benefits students. Students benefit because they get their credit and graduate with their friends. I also think the credit recovery program is a crutch. I just feel that some students know if they do not do well in a course, they will just take credit recovery. I think it's a huge crutch. E 2020 does not give them the skills to be prepared to meet demands of the world of work.*
P-4	*The outcome is beneficial to students who transfer into the school district from another school district. Students may have been scheduled for six periods per day, and now they're on block schedule and need to catch up or they were in a situation where they received half credit. Now they need a whole credit for graduation requirements, but other than those circumstances pretty much just those would be the students that benefit more than the seniors.*
P-5	*The outcome of the credit recovery program is a community benefit. Students of age to go to work or move on with their lives. They don't drop out. Actually, we had to send the reports about the outcomes of the students when they joined the program and what was happening during the program and after the program. So, we really track their progress. So, we do know that the students are highly benefited. For example, today you can see one of my students here who has got a 94 in the semester average. So, she's trying to make up work to get a 98 or 99.*

Table 9

Outcome After the Implementation of the Credit Recovery Program in School District B

Participant	Commentary
P-1.	*I am comfortable with the outcome of credit recovery program because it has enable many students to earn their high school diploma. The after-school program and the summer program provide opportunities for students to recover credit lost due to failing the EOCT. They're always gathering data, they are always asking us what percent, how many students, look at this, tell us how many students you have failing on this subject that subject so I think it's just an accumulation of data along the way that's determined why a student should be in credit recovery.*
P-2	*No type of data that I receive show how the outcomes of the credit recovery program for the school or the students. But when the students are receiving passing scores, the teachers judge the outcome of the program on their scores. That is the only measure. Credit recovery's not gonna help anybody with college; it's just to boost our numbers. I can't think of any instance ... If you're taking a credit recovery course that almost tells us you're not ready for college. So, no. The outcome of the credit recovery program is a graduation rate, but not a college and career ready student.* *Many students do not try to succeed in classes because they know if they fail, they will enroll in credit recovery. When they're in the credit recovery class and not doing anything, they take their work home and let other people do it for them. So, they're still not learning. The program is not beneficial because the ones who passed the course don't take credit recovery. Most times, they have what you call a prescription test. I get the skill ... I'm gonna use math for example. I get the algebra part, because I do well on the prescriptive test. But, then just say geometry is my weakness. If I don't pass the prescription test for the geometry part, then those are the lessons that I'm gonna have to see again.* *The program is a safety net to keep students on tract for graduation. Students enrolled in the traditional classroom setting have a deeper understanding of the curriculum and can apply that understanding to future learning goals. Students in credit recovery look toward graduating from school with their classmates.*

Table 10

Outcome After the Implementation of the Credit Recovery Program in School District C

Participant	Commentary
P-1	*I don't think so. There may be some stuff that may be put in place to make sure that students are actually doing the actual work. Whereas, I may get my bigger brother or little sister, somebody, to do the work. That may be one of the criteria, but most of it, from my understanding, probably is a hands-on. Some of it, when it's outside of school time, it may not be ... you can't prove that that particular student did it. But other than that, I don't think there's anything else.* *The outcome is a crippled student. Many students are not college and career ready because like I said, once again, they take it for granted, once they get in credit recovery and they're not doing the course work, and if this is off the record, I've even heard students just say, 'Oh yeah, I pay somebody to do mine.' That's how you know that they're not learning the information because they can't even pass a standardized test. They don't know the information.*
P-2	*Honestly, I've had students take the program for granted. They intentionally fail courses, so they can get into credit recovery program. That was one thing they did change though. They said they had to have certain requirements, which like, once again, I don't know what those requirements are. They can't just fail the class now. That recommendation now comes from the teachers themselves.* *Like a bad student is failing. At some point in the course the teacher could say, 'I could put you in credit recovery so you can kind of catch-up.' I just want them to be held accountable. I think, the credit recovery could have better outcomes if it was being utilized the way it should be utilized and when we say that kind of speaks real volume because I need to know all the ins and outs of it before I can say how it's being utilized or is it being utilized correctly.*

Data Analysis

The CRST included 20 items that allowed the researcher to collect background data on the teachers' knowledge of their use of the credit recovery program within their school district. Items included questions such as teacher involvement, perceptions of the goals and objectives, processes, guidelines and so forth. The data analysis generated from the CRST are provided in word tables and pie graphs (see Appendix D). The CRST was also used to identify which respondents would volunteer to participate in follow-up interviews.

CRST. Of the 15 respondents who volunteered to participate in the interviews, 10 respondents completed the interview process. Interview transcripts were entered into NVivo 11 for analysis. The interviews included 15 items, and themes derived from the interview questions were used to answer the three research questions. Emergent themes from the data analysis are presented according to research questions and the themes that emerged are reported by district. Themes are reported in word tables for each research questions for each of the three school districts. The results show the themes emerging from the analysis of interview questions in School District A, School District B, and School District C.

Interviews. The results include the themes that emerged from each of the interview questions. Even though some of the responses that resulted from the 15 interview questions did not address either of the three research questions directly, the responses were useful or supportive in an indirect way. For example, in each of the school districts, there were respondents who indicated that they had no knowledge of the subject presented in one or more of the interview questions. This lack of response was useful in making decisions about recommendations for future practice. Themes emerging from the analysis of interviews in District A are included by category in Table 11.

Themes emerging from the analysis of interviews in District A were included by category in Table 11.

Table 11

Emergent Themes from Interviews: District A

Interview Question	Category	Emergent themes
1.	Reason for program	Low graduation rate
2.	Program goal	Increase graduation rate; reduce dropout rate
3.	Prior knowledge of teachers	No prior knowledge of program procedures
4.	Comfort level with program	Some comfort level with program
5.	Extent of teacher training	None
6.	Eligibility for enrollment	Course failure; receiving special services
7.	Scheduling process	Alternative school, after school, & summer
8.	Prerequisites for entry	Meet seat time requirement, alternative school referral, & special education referral
9.	Supervision provided	Certified instructor to monitor progress
10.	Teacher involvement	Recommend students for enrollment
11.	Beneficial effects	Second chance program
12.	Measures of benefits	No measures of benefits in place
13.	Unfair advantage	Second chance to see lessons;
14.	Effect on CCRPI	None
15.	Additional information	Further student accountability needed

Themes emerging from the analysis of interviews in District B were included by category in Table 12.

Table 12

Emergent Themes from Interviews: District B

Interview Question	Category	Emergent themes
1.	Reason for program	Low graduation rate
2.	Program goal	Increase graduation rate; reduce dropout rate
3.	Prior knowledge of teachers	No prior knowledge of program procedures
4.	Comfort level with program	Some comfort level with program
5.	Extent of teacher training	None
6.	Eligibility for enrollment	Course failure; receiving special services
7.	Scheduling process	Alternative school, after school, & summer
8.	Prerequisites for entry	Meet seat time requirement, alternative school referral, & special education referral
9.	Supervision provided	Certified instructor to monitor progress
10.	Teacher involvement	Recommend students for enrollment
11.	Beneficial effects	Second chance program
12.	Measures of benefits	No measures of benefits in place
13.	Unfair advantage	Second chance to see lessons;
14.	Effect on CCRPI	None
15.	Additional information	Further student accountability needed

Themes emerging from the analysis of interviews in District C were included by category in Table 13.

Table 13

Emergent Themes from Interviews: District C

Interview Question	Category	Emergent themes
1.	Reason for program	To counteract student grading policy
2.	Program goal	Increase graduation rate; reduce dropout rate
3.	Prior knowledge of teachers	No professional development training
4.	Comfort level with program	Some comfort level with program
5.	Extent of teacher training	Procedures for recommending students
6.	Eligibility for enrollment	Course failure, chronic discipline, special ed
7.	Scheduling process	In-school, after school, summer, and home
8.	Prerequisites for entry	Teacher/administrator/parent referrals
9.	Supervision provided	Paraprofessional, noncertified teacher
10.	Teacher involvement	Recommend students for enrollment
11.	Beneficial effects	Second chance opportunity
12.	Measures of benefits	Increase in graduation rate, decrease in Dropout
13.	Unfair advantage	Second chance to see lessons before testing; Outside assistance with required work modules
14.	Effect on CCRPI	None
15.	Additional information	Closer supervision needed

Document Reviews. Findings from document reviews revealed a similar pattern of differences between the graduation rate and the CCRPI scores within the three school districts. The documents used in this review included the CCRPI report for each school district from Georgia Department of Education for 2017. Though the graduation rate within the school districts range from 74.1% to 96.7%, neither of the school districts had 50% of the students college ready at the time of graduation. Table 14 provided the findings.

Table 14

Document Review Findings from School Districts A, B, and C

School District	Students Enrollment	Graduation Rate	CCRPI Score	College Ready
School District A	1338	74.1%	58.1	40%
School District B	946	95.2%	54.3	36.7
School District C	510	96.7%	74.4	47.4

Summary

In this study, the researcher examined teacher perceptions of credit recovery in three South Georgia School Districts. The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of a credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district?
2. Why was the credit recovery program implemented?
3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery?

In order to generate answers to the research questions, interviews were held with 10 participants from three school districts. Initially, 15 teachers were identified to participate in the study based on results from the CRST. However, during data collection, the number of respondents by districts included, five respondents were from District A, three from District B, and two from District C. Overall, participants were in agreement about how the credit recovery program was implemented in each of the three school districts. Findings show that the credit recovery program was a part of the curriculum presented in the form of an online program.

All three school districts made provisions for online learning during the school day, after school, and during summer school. In each of the school districts, teachers were responsible for recommending students to the credit recovery program for either credit repair or credit recover after a student failed a course during the regular school day. Though regular classroom teachers were responsible for recommending students to the credit recovery program, no teacher indicated that professional development training was provided for them to thoroughly understand the implementation process of the credit recovery program.

In providing data to answer Research question 2, participants were in agreement that the credit recovery program in the school district was in response to a state mandate to increase graduation rates among all students, including students in special education. In addition, participants were also in agreement that the reason for implementing the credit recovery program was to decrease dropout rates. One participant called attention to the fact that credit recovery became the norm for students in the alternative school. In as much as most of the students placed in the alternative school had no credit at all to recover, the credit recovery program served as a means to keep students enrolled, and thus, reduce the dropout rate in the school.

Participants had mixed perceptions about the outcome of the credit recovery program. While participants, in general, considered the major outcome of the credit recovery program as a second chance option for students to graduate on time alongside their peers, they were almost in total agreement that students who complete coursework in the credit recovery program were not college and career ready. Therefore, participants identified a need for improvement such as further accountability measures in the credit recovery program to increase its effectiveness in producing students who not only graduate on time but who are also college and career ready when they graduate from high school.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS. RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The researcher proposed to explore the implementation of a credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. Literature reporting the effectiveness of credit recovery, as a method of increasing graduation rates and increasing the college and career readiness of students, was limited. Hence, investigation of the effectiveness of the online credit recovery program was justified. The research questions that guided this study included:

1. How was the credit recovery program implemented in each school district?
2. Why was the credit recovery program implemented?
3. What was the outcome after implementing credit recovery?

The researcher explored the implementation of a credit recovery program which districts used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. This study was important for school districts because it helped increase awareness about credit recovery and its effect on graduation rates in schools in comparison to students' college and career readiness levels as provided on the CCRPI report for schools. Based on the data collected from document reviews, a vast difference between the graduation rate and the college and career readiness score in each school district was evident. For example, in School District A, 74.1% of the students graduated, but only 40% were college and career ready. In School District B, 95.2% of the students graduated, but only 36.7% were college and career ready; and in School District C, 96.7% of the students graduated, but only 47.3%

were college and career ready. As it related to improvement of educational organizations, this study added to the body of literature available to study increasingly popular interventions such as online credit recovery programs.

This study was compelling enough to justify sufficiently the time, effort, finance, and human resources committed because the findings provided a clear picture of the nature and extent of the credit recovery program as it relates to producing graduates who are well-prepared to achieve in higher education as well as progress successfully in the world of work. The business of schools is the education of students, the consumers of all educational efforts. Therefore, the study provided data that can be useful in making decisions about the strengths and weaknesses of computer based, online learning programs in providing opportunity for credit recovery and graduating in a timely manner in Georgia.

Understanding the effect of the implementation of online credit recovery programs on the graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in Georgia empowered the researcher to make recommendations for future research and recommendations for practice, relative to how these online programs needed to be revised, expanded, or eliminated as a tool for increasing the graduation rates of students.

A limitation was that credit recovery programs were perceived to have limited academic rigor in comparison to face-to-face academic programs, which were necessary for graduation. Generalization from the study was a limitation to a population which included three school districts in which a credit recovery program was used to improve graduation rates and reduce dropout rates. Limitation of school districts meant that the only districts selected included Kindergarten through Grade 12 facilities in which credit recovery was used. The study was conducted only in Georgia. Purposefully selected school districts and schools were used; these participants were able to provide the most

useful data and information to conduct this study. Qualitative data analysis was limited to document analysis and interviews.

Delimitations included the choices the researcher made to conduct the study. This study included only the graduation rates from three purposefully selected school districts in rural areas of Georgia. Purposefully selected sites included school districts in which educators could help the researcher most effectively "to understand the research problem and the research question" (Creswell, 2009, p. 231). The researcher examined the effects of the implementation of credit recovery on the graduation rate of students and their college readiness levels, reported in the CCRPI. The purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, choices of definitions, methodology, and research strategy selected were also delimitations because the writer had many choices from which to select that equally were useful.

High school graduation and dropout rates were useful indicators to determine if education programs were effective in providing best practices to meet the needs of students. One of these educational initiatives was an online credit recovery program. The program was an online curriculum available statewide for students who failed courses during the regular school day. In general, the focus of the credit recovery program in Georgia was to help students to stay in school and graduate on time. Therefore, the researcher in this study interviewed five participants from each of the three school districts selected to generate answers to the research questions.

This study was a qualitative comparative research design, which allowed the researcher to examine data from three school districts using credit recovery to provide students a chance to repair or recover credits. This comparative study provided data the researcher needed to explore the similarities and differences between the three schools in this study.

The population for this study included three purposefully selected K-12 rural school districts in southwest Georgia. The rationale for using purposeful selection was to make sure that school districts in this study had common characteristics relative to student demographics, location, previous graduation rates, and other data related to the use of credit recovery. Participants included 10 teachers: five from School District A, three from School District B, and two from School District C. Participants included certified teachers. No beginning teachers, substitute, or noncertified teachers were used in this study.

Quantitative data were generated from the Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers (CRST), a 20-item instrument that generates insights from teachers to determine how they feel about the implementation of the credit recovery program. The CRST was designed by the researcher, using the online software, Google Forms. Items on the CRST include a Likert scale, with a five-item, multiple choice response, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Qualitative data derived from follow-up, face-to-face interviews with 10 respondents who volunteered to participate in this phase of the study. The instrumentation included a 15-item list of interview questions that took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to conduct. Where permitted, the individual interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis. However, wherever face-to-face interviews were prohibited, the interview questions were emailed to the participants for their response with permission.

After receiving permission from the IRB, the researcher collected qualitative data from personal interviews conducted by way of face-to-face or emailed interviews with 10 educators. The interview questions were created digitally and housed on a computer server at the researchers' home.

Document analysis included a review of the CCRPI results for each school district used in the study from the GADOE website. Document analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. Thematic analysis of data occurred, based on the data gathered from 10 interviews. Thematic analysis included looking across all data to identify the common issues that recurred and identifying main themes that summarize all views collected from the personal interviews. The steps in the data analysis process followed guidelines from the literature (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2014). Fourth, the researcher used a computer software program, NVivo 11 for Windows (2014), to assist with this process. NVivo supported qualitative research by making the task of organizing, analyzing, and finding themes more efficient and timely. Qualitative data from sources such as personal interviews were generated in an efficient and timely manner with the use of this computer software program.

NVivo was used in the data analysis process. The NVivo program generated findings from the personal interviews and the researcher provided the participants an opportunity to reflect upon their responses and make revisions, as necessary. As the member checking process proceeded, the researcher was sensitive to deviant information and strived to determine why the deviant information occurred. Creswell (2013) described a deviant case as any element of data that appears to contradict patterns or explanations that emerge from the data analysis. All research information was stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home for the duration of the study, and afterward, will remain secured for 3 years after the conclusion of the research study. The CRST created trustworthiness for this study. Dwyer and Stringer (2005) explained that researchers are able to increase trustworthiness of a study by recording and reviewing the process of the research to ensure the problem studied truthfully and sufficiently exemplify credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Analysis of Research Findings

In this study, the researcher examined teacher perceptions of credit recovery in three South Georgia School Districts. The purpose of the study was to explore the implementation of a credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. In order to generate answers to the research questions, interviews were held with 10 participants from three school districts. Initially, 15 participants, five from each school districts were identified to participate in the study. Of this number 10 participants completed the data collection process. Five respondents were from School District A, three from School District B, and two from School District C.

Research question 1 investigated how the credit recovery program was implemented in each school district. The major finding was that the credit recovery program in District A, District B, and District C were, for the most part, implemented in schools through the alternative school program, in the after-school program, or during the summer school program.

Research question 2 investigated why the credit recovery program was implemented in the three school districts. The major finding was that the credit recovery program was implemented to give students a second chance to earn required credits in order to graduate from high school alongside their peers. Another finding was that the credit recovery program was implemented to serve the needs of students referred for special education services and to accommodate students with chronic discipline problems who received administrative placement in the alternative school. Even though Response to Intervention (RTI) was implemented in each school, no information in this study was associated to the RTI process.

Research question 3 investigated the outcomes after implementing credit recovery. Findings showed that respondents in the three school districts had mixed perceptions about the outcomes of the credit recovery program after implementation. Respondents were in agreement that the credit recovery program did, in fact, increase the graduation rate in each of the school districts. In like manner, the credit recovery program did reduce the dropout rate in each of the school districts. A secondary finding to Research question 3 showed that even though the graduation rate increased during the implementation of the credit recovery program, less than 50% of the students who graduated in each school district were college and career ready, based on CCRPI reports (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Therefore, participants were in agreement about how the credit recovery program was implemented in each of the three school districts. Credit recovery program was a part of the curriculum presented in the form of an online program. Based on interviews with participants, all three school districts made provisions for online learning during the school day, after school, and during summer school. In each of the school districts, teachers and counselors were responsible for recommending students to the credit recovery program for either credit repair or credit recover after a student failed a course during the regular school day. Though regular classroom teachers were responsible for recommending students to the credit recovery program, no teacher indicated that professional development training was provided for them to thoroughly understand implementation process of the credit recovery program.

Participants also were in agreement that the credit recovery program in the school district was provided to address a state mandate to increase graduation rates among all students, including students in special education. In School District C, for example, when educators discovered that no special education students were eligible for graduation, the

credit recovery program became an option for placement of students in the special education program and the alternative school and served as a means to keep students enrolled to reduce the dropout rate in the school.

Respondents had mixed perceptions about the outcome of the credit recovery program. Though they considered the major outcome of the credit recovery program as a second chance option for students to graduate on time alongside their peers, they were almost in total agreement that students who completed coursework in the credit recovery program were not college and career ready based on the CCRPI score of the school district.

Discussion of Research Findings

Overall, based on results from the CRST, the perceptions of participants in the study were positive, relative to the extent in which the program increased graduation rate in each of the school districts. There were, however, several concerns about the implementation process and the overall outcome of the credit recovery program. Each respondent in the study, however, understood the importance and purpose of credit recovery and why it had been implemented.

Throughout the literature review, research reported similarities in the manner in which credit recovery programs were implemented. In a similar manner to School Districts A, B, and C, credit recovery programs were implemented during the school day as well as after school, and summer school. Peckham (2015), for example, reported that after the first school year of credit recovery, fused with other academic and social programs and strategies, the 4-year graduation rate for at-risk students improved noticeably, from 16% to 46%, and the reduction rate for dropouts decreased from 14% to 9%. Mitchell (2015) reported findings from a credit recovery program implemented during the school day and after school to help students recover lost credits immediately,

to master content, and to increase the graduation rate. After two years of implementing the credit recovery program from 2012 to 2014, graduation rates increased from 76% to 88%. Mitchell (2015) also reported higher scores on the ACT after two years of implementation.

Vaughn's (2015) included results from a credit recovery program implemented in Richmond County, Georgia in 2013 as a summer school program designed to improve access, participation, and academic progress for failing students. Similar to the three school districts use in this study, the summer program included: "a rigorous, multimodal curriculum that fostered cognitive and metacognitive skills" (Vaughn, 2015, p. 2). Class instruction included two 130-minute classes. Students then spent two hours a day after school working on online courses at home. In explaining what contributed to the success of the program, Vaughn (2015) stated that the program included structured and predictable instruction. The online phase of the summer program included a highly predictable instructional routine that focused student attention on content to be measured and mastered.

Through a computer lab for students who failed the Biology Keystone Exam in Wingate, Pennsylvania, the Bald Eagle Area High School (2016) implemented the Edgenuity biology virtual test preparation course from September, 2015 to January 22, 2016, to improve students' success rate on the high-stakes Biology Keystone Exam. The Biology Virtual Tutor was a video-based program that provided instruction, interactive assignments, and frequent assessments by expert teachers to help students to pass the state test. Online credit-recovery programs, compared to older models of summer and after-school programs for credit, represented new innovations; online credit recovery provided a wide range of designs and structures for implementation in school districts (Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014).

In a similar manner, School Districts A, B., and C, used the credit recovery program from the Georgia Department of Education. This program was a state approved option for school systems that offered 27 courses, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for 365 days a year (GaDOE, 2018). Therefore, students had an option to complete coursework at school, at home, or at any time that they found convenient for them to work. Credit recovery classes were available in the school districts as independent study, making provisions for students to work at their own pace or through guided learning experiences in which students had the guidance and support of an instructor who supervised the students' work and provided monitoring, formative assessment, and feedback as necessary.

Goals. The goal of the credit recovery program in School District A, School District B, and School District C were similar to the goals of the credit recovery programs in the literature review. For example, Peckham (2015) reported data from Appleton Central High School in Appleton, Wisconsin, which showed that the goal of the credit recovery program was to determine the effect of a credit recovery program on student engagement and dropout rates. Credit recovery programs, in general, represented a primary focus of helping students to stay in school and graduate on time (Davis, 2015; Foran, 2015; Ingram, 2015; Powell, Roberts, & Patrick, 2015; Watson & Gemin, 2008). These goals were similar to the goals in School District A and School District C. Results from Research question 2 provides similar findings relative to the goals for the recovery program.

Outcomes. Outcomes from the implementation of credit recovery programs in School District A and School District C were also similar to findings from the literature review. Mixed findings occurred in the different studies of credit recovery programs. For example, Peckham's (2015) outcomes included positive change in attendance,

achievement, engagement, and final grades when students realized that they had an input into their own schedule and pace of learning activities, with the assistance of a supportive teacher.

Peckham (2015) reported that after the first school year of credit recovery fused with other academic and social programs and strategies, the 4-year graduation rate for at-risk students improved noticeably, from 16% to 46%, and the reduction rate for dropouts decreased from 14% to 9%. In the present study, the graduation rate in School District C, credit recovery was a reaction to the new promotion and retention policy, which identified the EOCT as 40% of a student's final grade. After implementing the credit recovery program, the graduation rate has increased to 96.7, which is within the top 10% of all schools in Georgia.

Oliver and Kellogg (2015) summarized findings about high school credit recovery programs from evaluations called for from state-sponsored on-line school in the United States. Some credit recovery students, for example, required added technology and support to participate effectively online. An outcome of credit recovery programs offering online classes showed that students found that they learned at a faster rate and retained more information in online classes than they did in face-to-face encounters (Horn & Staker, 2011). In addition, outcomes included credit recovery students reporting learning higher level information in credit recovery classes (Horn & Staker, 2011). Issues related to outcomes were similar in the literature.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded the credit recovery programs in the three school districts were implemented according to fidelity, were established to meet specific goals, which included improving graduation rates, decreasing

dropout rates, and providing failing students a second chance or opportunity to graduate with their peers. Even though there was evidence of a lack of trainings for teachers, as a whole, and no procedures in place to hold students accountable when they used the available online program after school and at home, goals and objectives as established for the credit recovery program were met. When asked about credit recovery trainings and whether or not students were held accountable, participants' responses varied. Therefore, the researcher concluded that a recommendation for future study should include the establishment of further accountability and control for students in order to increase the college and career ready rate in each school system.

Respondents stated that there were no trainings in place for teachers, beginning or ongoing. Respondents also stated that there were no expectations in place for students besides completing the assigned sections. The overall impression of the credit recovery program within given school districts were somewhat the same. Respondents stated that the program could be much better if students were held accountable for their learning and not just placed in the program and told to complete assigned sections and better trainings for teachers. A conclusion was, therefore, that training of teachers could strengthen the credit recovery program in order that the goal of the program could focus more of helping students to become college and career ready rather than simply improving the graduation rate in each school.

Respondents reported that there were no trainings in place for implementing the credit recovery program. Respondents also stated that it was the task of teachers and counselors to identify which students needed to enroll. When asked about looking as student test scores on the EOCA and EOPA after recovering a class, respondents stated that they were never reviewed after students completed a course within credit recovery.

Respondents stated they needed more training on how to effectively use and monitor students within credit recovery. Therefore, the researcher concluded the credit recovery program in School Districts A, B, and C could be strengthened with continuous professional training and a higher level of involvement of teachers.

Researchers of previous studies on credit recovery had found a lack of teacher training on the use and implementation of credit recovery. Teachers have expressed concerns about implementing blended learning and have also identified a need for additional time for planning with instructional coaches and additional time for collaboration amongst colleagues. Now that teachers have had time to train and learn about credit recovery programs they now understand the full benefits of the program. The focus now should be on bettering the implementation process of the program and equipping teachers with the necessary tools needed to help students benefit from the program on the front end. In the current study, one respondent stated that she used the program as a remediation and enrichment tool.

Research Framework

The learning theory that underpinned this study was Jerome Bruner's Constructivism. Bruner (1966) theorized how individuals learn, suggesting that individuals construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, by experiencing new knowledge, concepts, and skills; then individuals reflect upon their new knowledge and make applications to previous knowledge and understandings. When individuals encounter something new, Bruner (1973) explained that they have to go beyond the information given and use it with their previous ideas and experience. Sometimes individuals have to change what they understand or eliminating the new information as unnecessary to their learning goals and objectives. In any case, Bruner

(1973) stated that individuals are active creators of their own knowledge; and therefore, individuals must be inquisitive about new knowledge, concepts, and skills. They must explore and assess what they know and be curious about what they do not know.

In the credit recovery program, the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different ideas. In general, students in the credit recovery program have to use active techniques such as experiments and real-world problem-solving skills to create new knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing (Cavanaugh, 2009).

Constructivism as a learning theory posits that learning is an active, constructive process. Therefore, students are information constructors who actively construct or create their own learning opportunities. The credit recovery program was available for students to use as a linkage of new information to prior knowledge. In looking back over the findings from the study, a constructivist mindset could be strengthened by making the credit recovery program available for students as early as possible. For example, an effective place to begin could be with ninth grade courses that are prerequisite to later courses. Students who have failed prerequisite courses could enroll in credit recovery courses to learn how credits build toward graduation requirements as well as learn how content builds from one course to the next and learn how content in one course can be applied in other courses across the curriculum.

The importance of recovering credits as soon as possible is crucial for on-time graduation (Allensworth & Easton, 2005). Even though credit recovery is an essential goal, it is not the only goal, from a constructivist point of view. Engaging in the credit recovery process early could enable students to put structures in place for mastery of important knowledge, concepts, and skills, which could be germane to assessments and college and career readiness (Fetsco, Donnelly, Tang, 2016).

Early enrollment in the credit recovery enables students to focus on their motivational needs for a successful learning journey through high school. For example, making provisions for students construct their own learning experiences through a course at different rates could be motivational for students who fear that they will not meet all of their requirements in order to graduate with their peers (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; (Fetsco et al., 2016). In addition, these researchers suggested that making provisions for students to construct content and connect the content to their career interests could be motivational. A student who desires to enter the field of engineering, for example, could opt to repair credits in math and science to prepare for geometry and physics as they reach their senior year.

Though constructivism focuses on students constructing their own learning experiences, guidance and assistance are necessary to help students to make effective choices as they make an effort to repair or recover credit (Fetsco et al., 2016). Participants in this study were concerned about students having the guidance they need to make good decisions about entering the credit recovery program. This concern seems to point toward the establishment of a credit recovery team for both planning and implementation of credit recovery to make sure that the results of the credit recovery program in in accordance with the goals and objectives of the program. Guidance and assistance could result from available curriculum specialists and master teachers who could ensure rigor (Fetsco et al., 2016). Counselors or social workers could be available for personal issues and social concerns, and highly qualified teachers or well-trained paraprofessionals could be available to offer support, encouragement. These professionals could motivate students to set high goals and keep their focus on developing and expanding their repertoire of knowledge, concepts, and skills rather than minimizing their goal to simply passing assessments for graduation.

Constructivism does not mean that students should be left alone to learn on their own without guidance and directions (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; Bruner, 1966; Cavanaugh, 2009; Fetsco et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to help students develop the technological skills and independence they need to use the online credit recovery program effectively and successfully. In addition, for constructivism to be effective as a learning theory, an evaluation plan provided early and continued through the grades could make the credit recovery program more useful for students.

Implications for Practice

Respondents indicated that the use of the credit recovery program was beneficial to students when used the correct way. One respondent stated that without the use of credit recovery students would not be able to receive the enrichment needed for a higher level of learning. While another respondent stated that students took advantage of the program, allowing others to complete their assignments for them. In some instance the presence of the credit recovery program benefited teachers who used the program as a remediation and enrichment tool, and also benefited students because they were exposed to the use of the program as a remediation and enrichment tool, hence no need for failing a course. Therefore, respondents continuously voiced a need for the use of the program as a remediation and enrichment tool. Superintendents, principals, and other stakeholders in the field of education should take notice of the positive effects the credit recovery program had on student learning when used properly by teachers.

Respondents were also concerned with the benefits of the program on students' college and career readiness. One respondent indicated that if students were enrolled in a course through credit recovery they were not college material and that the program could not in any way prepare students to be career ready. Participants continuously stated that

the program needed revamping to help with increasing the positive outlook among stakeholders. Another participant stated that they had students who took the program for granted by intentionally failing courses, instead the program would prove beneficial if student used it correctly. Superintendents, principals, and other stakeholders in the field of education should take notice of the positive effects the credit recovery program had on student learning when used properly by teachers.

Limitations

The present study included only three selected school districts in one area of Georgia, with a total 10 respondents in the interviews and 15 in the survey. This number represented a limitation because using such a small number reduced chances of the findings being transferable to lager populations. In addition, responses collected from interviews also represented a limitation because the participants could have provided responses that were inaccurate, biased, or somewhat inaccurate because of lack of involvement or training related to the credit recovery program. Other limitations that might have influenced the results of this research were present. Therefore, specific precautions were made to protect the integrity of the study so that it could be useful to school administrators who were striving to meet the requirements of the Georgia high school graduation policy. In as much as the credit recovery programs was considered as a faulty or non-productive program to prepare students for successful futures, a limitation was also possible in the qualitative data analysis, which included only responses from interviews and document reviews from the Georgia Department of Education for three selected school districts.

A final limitation related to the number of respondents. Initially, the study was constructed to include five participants from each school districts, which would have

equaled the number participants included in the study from each school district. However, with data collection occurring at the end of the school year, participants began dropping out of the study. In addition, those who remained in the study and responded electronically often left questions unanswered, gave responses unrelated to the research question, or limited their responses in an effort to complete the interview speedily. Each of these issues represented problems encountered, which were out of the researcher's control, and therefore were considered as a limitation.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of a credit recovery program used as a tool for improving graduation rates and college and career readiness of students in three purposefully selected school districts in Georgia. Recommendations focus on future directions for research in education, future research questions, other populations, other explorations that could lead to a better understanding of the credit recovery program.

1. Future directions for research in in education could include studies conducted to compare the short-range and long-range effect of credit recovery programs on the productivity level of employees who earned their high school diploma after completing one or more courses through the credit recovery concept.

2. Future research questions could be:

a. What perceptions do teachers have about the makeup of and effective online credit-recovery program?

b. What is the long-term effect of offering expanded credit recovery options early in high school?

3. A recommendation is to extend the study to other populations such as urban high schools, youth development centers, and schools with high migrant populations.

4. The short-term goal of credit recovery programs, in general, is increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate in schools. However, preparing students to be college and career ready is equally an import goal of credit recovery. Therefore, a final recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study over a 10-year period to follow a selected group of graduates who completed credit recovery courses in high school through college, work, or military to examine how well the credit recovery program prepared them as life-long learners.

5. Conduct further study to determine what resource can be used to supplement credit recovery and help students to reach a higher level of excellence than simple basic content knowledge to gain a better understanding of credit recovery as a useful option for strengthening the education program.

Dissemination

Results from this study will be available for review and use by persons interested in making changes to existing credit recovery programs in schools across or within the three school districts that were represented in the data gathering process. In as much as credit recovery programs are increasing in popularity throughout the United States, results from this study will be available via the internet database from the local websites of the local school district as well as from the Columbus State University database. The researcher will prepare a research report to communicate findings to interested audiences. The report will include an introduction, a description of the method, results, discussion of major findings and implications for practice. The research report will be peer-reviewed by an independent colleague in education who did not participate in the study. The research report will be made available on the researcher's webpage for other researchers, educational professionals, and policy makers in school systems.

Concluding Thoughts

Expectations were that the respondents interviewed in this study would be using and implementing a credit recovery program as a tool to remediate poor performance in schools. Based on the findings from the review of literature, I found that some researchers were in agreement that the credit recovery program was not the best program, while some thought it worked wonders for students. However, I had few respondents who had negative perceptions about the credit recovery program. While on the other hand, respondents expressed concerns about the implementation process. All respondents knew of the program and most agreed that the program was put in place to increase graduation rates.

The knowledge that respondents possessed was based on what they had learned, based on their own experience with the credit recovery program and not based on any source of formal training. Therefore, respondents in each of the three school systems shared concerns about teachers in the school system being trained about the credit recovery program in order to be knowledgeable about the extent of the program and how the program fits into the total curriculum context. Respondents stated that they had taught themselves most of what they knew through trial and error within the program itself.

Based on the findings from this study, the principal of schools and superintendent might need to consider making some considerable changes in how the credit recovery program is implemented in the school district, with further strategies put into place to strengthen quality control. With professional learning for all teachers in place, it would strengthen the referral process and help teachers use the credit recovery program effectively to provide the knowledge, concepts, and skills the Georgia Performance Standards require for each of the contents the EOCT measures.

As professionals in the field of education, our business is providing the knowledge, concepts, and skills students need to build the foundation for future learning and higher levels of educational attainment. Identifying remediation as well as enrichment in content area subjects would be a useful way to improve the implementation process because the credit recovery program offers the same online instruction through internet access such as NovaNet, Odysseyware, and Edgenuity, some of the widely used online programs in Georgia.

From what I learned from this study, several effective ways are available to strengthen the credit recovery program in school districts without making major changes. For example, restructuring the implementation process, with added quality control, could allow students to remain on track and keep students from failing required content needed to pass state assessments. For example, providing students with opportunities to repair credits before they fail a course, could change the course of history for many students. Once the teacher is knowledgeable about the concepts or skills students invariably find difficult, the teacher could arrange to have students reinforce those concepts and skills during after school or at home study sessions as a proactive way of completing required courses before initially failing these courses. Implementing credit recovery proactively could also help students remain on track for graduation, while using the credit recovery program for remediation and enrichment in an ongoing manner rather waiting until the end of a grading period to complete credit recovery reactively. The benefit of using the credit recovery program proactively could include maximizing instructional time instead of wasting time remediating students from one grade to the next, increasing student engagement in the learning process, and forging a balance between graduation rates and college and career readiness rates among students.

REFERENCES

Allensworth, E., & Michelman, V. (2014). *Paper 4: Effects of expanding summer credit recovery in algebra*. SREE Fall Conference Abstract.

Bald Eagle Area High School. (2016). Research Brief: Edgenuity students demonstrate significant improvements on the Biology Keystone Exam. *Edgenuity Research.* Available at 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544-559. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2

Bridgeland, J. M., Dilulio, J. J., & Morrison, K. B. (2006). The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts. *A report by Civics Enterprises in association with Peter S. Hart Research Associates for the Bill& Melinda Gates Foundations.* Available at www.ignitelearning.com/pdf/TheSilentEpidemic3-06FINAL.pdf

Borup, J. (2016). Teacher perceptions of learner-learner engagement at a cyber high school. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 17*(3), 232-250

Borup, J., Graham, C. R., & Davies, R. S. (2013). The nature of adolescent learner interaction in a virtual high school setting. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, *29*(2), 153–167. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2729.2012.00479.x

Borup, J., Stevens, M., & Hasler Waters, L. (2015). Student and parent perceptions of parental engagement at an online charter high school. *Online Learning Journal, 19*(5). Retrieved from http://olj.onlinelearningconsortium.org/index.php/olj/article/view/699

Borup, J., West, R. E., Graham, C. R., & Davies, R. S. (2014). The adolescent community of engagement: A framework for research on adolescent online learning. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, *22*(1), 107–129.

Bruner, J. (1966). *Toward a theory of instruction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1973). *Going beyond the information given.* New York, NY: Norton.

Bryant, S. (2015). Case study: Barnsdall High School. *Edgenuity Research.* Available at 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

Bush, S. C. (2012). *Issue Brief: Building effective learning environments in California's Continuation High Schools.* Los Angeles, CA: John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Carney, J. H., Joiner, J. F., & Tragou, H. (1997). Categorizing, coding, and manipulating qualitative data using WordPerfect Word processor. *The Qualitative Report, 3*(1), 1-9. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol3/iss1/4

Cavanaugh, C. (2009) Getting students more learning time online—A distance education in support of expanded learning time in K-12 schools. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2009/05/pdf/distanc elearning.pdf

Center for Public Education. (2012). *Credit recovery programs: Full report.* Retrieved from www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Credit.

Chapman, C., Laird, J., Ifill, N., & KewalRamani, A. (2011). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 1972–2009.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (Second Ed.).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, Merrill, and Prentice Hall.

Croft, S. C., Roberts, M. M., & Stenhouse, V. S. (2016). The perfect storm of education reform: High-stakes testing and teacher evaluation. *Social Justice*, *42*(1), 70-92.

D'Agustino, S. (2014). *Providing innovative opportunities and options for credit recovery through after-school and summer learning programs.* Washington, DC: The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project

Davis, M. R. (2015). Online credit recovery in need of overhaul, study says. *Education Week Webinar*: www.edweek.org/go/webinars

Dessoff, A. (2009). Reaching graduation with credit recovery. *District Administration.* Available at www.DistrictAdministration.com

Donohue, N. C. (2009). Afterschool: Providing a successful route to credit attainment and recovery. *Afterschool Alert: Issue Brief* No. 39. Available at www.afterschool.alert.com

Donahue Institute. (2012). *Boston Public Schools, 2010-2011 Credit Skills Recovery Program (CSRP): Key research findings*. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts; Donahue Institute, Research and evaluation Group. Retrieved from https:://connect.mybps.org

Dwyer, R., & Stringer, E. (2005). *Initiating an action research study: Research design. Action research in human services*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Eaton, D. K., Brener, N. D., Kann, L. Roberts, A. M., Kyle, T. M., Flint, K. H., & Ross, A.L. R. (2011). Computer availability and principals' perceptions of online survey. *Journal of School Health, 81*(7), 00224391

Edgenuity (2015). My Path. Retrieved from 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

Fetsco, T. G., Donnelly, S., & Tang, M. A. (2016). Credit recovery programs: Recommendations for effective implementation. *Arizona GEAR UP: Research in Practice, 4*(2), 1-10.

Fiels, K. M. (2016). Executive Director's Message. Every Student Succeeds. *American Libraries*, *47*(3/4), 6.

Foran, M. (2015). Creating opportunity for struggling students. *Principal Leadership,* 44-48. Available from www.eddigest.com

Franco, M. S., & Patel, N. H. (2011). An interim report on a pilot credit recovery program in a large suburban Midwestern high school. *Education, 132*(1), 131-172

Frazelle, S. (2016). *Successful strategies for providing online credit recovery in Montana*. REL Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Garrison, D. R. (2011). *E-Learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge

Georgia Department of Education. (2010). *Georgia high school graduation requirements: Preparing students for success.* Retrieved from www.oconeeschools.org/cms/lib/ GA01903601/Centricity/Domain/32/Catalog-CounselorSection%2016-17%20Final.pdf

Georgia Department of Education. (2012). *Georgia Department of Education Releases List of Reward Schools.* Retrieved from http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=71

Georgia Department of Education. (2015). *Georgia virtual learning-Georgia credit recovery. Best practices.* Atlanta, GA: Author. Available at http://www.gacreditrecovery.org/ Guidelines/Best/Practices.aspx

Georgia Department of Education. (2016a). Georgia Milestones Assessment System: Validity and reliability for the 2015-2016 Georgia Milestones Assessment System. Retrieved from https://www.gadoe.org/ Curriculum-Instruction-and Assessment/Assessment/ Documents/Milestones/2015 16_Georgia_Milestones_Validity_and_Reliability_Brief.pdf

Georgia Department of Education. (2016b). *Testing/assessment - Georgia Department of Education.* Retrieved from www.gadoe.org›

Georgia Department of Education. (2017). *College and career ready performance index.* Retrieved from http://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx

Georgia Department of Education. (2018). *Georgia school reports: District wide.* Retrieved from https//schoolgrades.georgia.gov/----county

Georgia Virtual Learning/Georgia Credit Recovery. (2016). *Welcome to Georgia Credit Recovery.* Available at http://www.creditrecovery@gavirtualschool.org

Giani, M., Alexander, C., & Reyes, P. (2014). Exploring variation in the impact of dual-credit coursework on postsecondary outcomes: A quasi-experimental analysis of Texas students. *The High School Journal*, *97*(4), 200-218.

Gill, B., Walsh, L., Wulsin, C. S., Matulewicz, H., Severn, V., Grau, E., Kerwin, T. (2015). A *report of the national study of online charter schools: Inside online charter schools*. Retrieved from http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/~/media/publications/pdfs/education/ inside_online_charter_schools.pdf

Globokar, J. L. (2010). *Where do I turn for help? Knowing your resources*. Sage Research Methods. doi: http://dx.doi.org.proxylibrary.ashford.edu/10.4135/978145226491

Green, J. A., Mason Bolick, C., Caprino, A. M., Deekens, V. M., McVea, M., Seung, Yu., & Jackson, W. P. (2015). Fostering high school students' self-regulated learning online and across academic domains. *High School Journal, 99*(1), 88-106

Hawthorne, S., & Mulligan, T. (2015). Making the transition to blended learning. Edgenuity. *District Administration Web Seminar Digest,* 50-51.

Heppen, J. Allensworth, Walters, K., Pareja, A. S., Kurki, A., Nomi, T, & Sorensen, N. (2011). *Implementing student-level random assignment during summer school: Lessons learned from an efficacy study of online Algebra 1 for credit recovery.* Retrieved from SREE Fall 2011 Conference Abstract Template.

Hidden curriculum. (2014, August 26). In S. Abbot (Ed.) *The glossary of educational reform.* Retrieved from http:edglossary.org/hidden-curriculum

Horn, M., & Staker, H. (2011). The rise of K-12 blended learning. *Innosight Institute.* Retrieved from [1.2][2011.01.01_The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning.Innosight Institute.pdf][Page 1 0f 18]

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687

Hughes, J., Zhou, C., & Petsch, Y. (2015). *Comparing success rates for general and credit recovery courses online and face to face: Results for Florida high school courses.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences.

Ingram, V. H. (2015). Georgia virtual school: Student success in a computer generated world. *Distance Learning, 13*(1), 33-39.

Koenig, J. A., Hauser, R. M., National Academies Press, National Research Council, & National Academy of Education. (2010). *High school dropout, graduation, and completion rates: Better data, better measures, better decisions*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Learning Theories. (2015). *Constructivism.* Available at Learning-Theories.com

Lee, Y., Choi, J. (2010). A review of online course dropout research; Implications for practice and future research. *Education Tech Research Development, 59*, 593-618. doi.10.1007/s11423-010-9177-y

Levy, M. S. (2011). Migrant laptops: Extending the academic day for the children of farm workers and their credit recovery via laptops. *Computers in Schools, 28*(2) 140-157.

Lewis, S., Whiteside, A., & Garrett-Dikkers, A. (2014). Autonomy and responsibility: Online learning as a solution for at-risk high school students. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education, 29(*2), 1-11. Available online at: http://ijede.ca/index. php/jde/article/view/883/1543

Luyt, I. (2014). Bridging space: Cross-cultural perspectives on promoting positive online learning experiences. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 42*(1), 3-20.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis: Forum qualitative sozialforschung/forum. *Qualitative Social Research, 1*(2). Retrieved from Art. 20, http://inbn-resolving.de/um:nbn:de:0114-fqs0002204.

Merriam, S. B. (2014). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Mileaf, M., Paul, A., Rukobo, E., & Zyko, A. (2012). *Credit recovery information brief: A look at credit recovery across the United States.* Brooklyn, NY: New York

Comprehensive Center. Available at http://nycomprehensivecenter.org/wp-content/uploads2013/03/ Credit-Recovery-Programs-across-the-United-States.pdf

McCabe, J., & St. Andrie, R. (2012). *Credit recovery programs: Full Report*. Washington, DC: Center for Public Education.

Miron, G., Gulosino, C., & Horvitz, B. (2014). Section III: Full time virtual schools. In A. Molnar (Ed.), *Virtual schools in the U.S. 2014* (pp. 55–73). Retrieved from http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/virtual-2014-all-final.pdf

Mitchell, L. (2015). Case study: Utah online. *Edgenuity Research.* Available at 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

NVivo. (2014). *Discover NVivo 11 for Windows.* Retrieved from http://www.qsrinternational.com/ upgrade-from-nvivo-10.aspx

Ouyang, J. R., & Stanley, N. (2014). Theories and research in educational technology and distance learning instruction through Blackboard. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 2*(2), 161-172. doi:1013189/ujer.2014.020208

Peckham, K. C. (2015). Case study: Appleton Central High School. *Edgenuity Research.* Available at 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

Pemberton, B. (2011). Supporting online credit recovery students to find success. *Educational Technology.* Honolulu, HI; University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Plummer, L. (2012). *Credit recovery programs combine the best of online and in-class instruction.* ThejOURNAL@1105service.com

Powell, A., Roberts, V., & Patrick, S. (2015). *Using online learning for credit recovery: Getting back on track to graduation.* Available from INACOL, The International Association for K-12 Online Learning, http://www.inacol.org/

Oliver, K., & Kellogg, S. (2015). Credit recovery in a virtual school: Affordances of online learning for the at-risk student. *Journal of Online Learning Research, 1*(2), 191-218.

Robertson, J. S., Smith, R. W., & Rinka, J. (2015). How did successful high schools improve their graduation rates? *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 19*(1), 10-18.

Schachter, R. (2014). Credit recovery boosts graduation rate. *District Administration*, *50*(11), 39.

Steinberg, A., & Allen, L. (2011). Putting off-track youths back on track to college. *Kappan, 92*(5), 21-26.

Stevens, D., & Frazelle, S. (2016). *Online credit recovery: Course enrollment and passing rate patterns in Montana Digital Academy Schools* (REL 2015-137). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional; Assistance, Regional Educational Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest.

Trotter, A. (2008). Online options for 'credit recovery' widen. *Education Week, 27*(38), 1.

U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA*). http://www.ed.gov/ essa?src=rn

Vaughn, R. (2015). Case study: Richmond County Schools. *Edgenuity Research.* Available at 877.7CLICKS solutions@edgenuity.com

Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2008). *Promising practices in online learning: Using online learning for at-risk students and credit recovery*. Washington, DC: North American Council for Online Learning.

Watson, J., Murin, A., Vashaw, L., Gemin, B., & Rapp, C. (2013). Keeping *pace with K–12 online & blended learning: An annual review of policy and practice*. Retrieved from http://www.kpk12.com/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2013-lr.pdf

Wolf, L. L. (2014). Course credit recovered: An Iowa district fine-tunes its summer school credit-recovery program to reach lagging students. *Education Digest, 79*(8), 55-59.

Zvoch, K., & Stevens, J. J. (2011). Summer school and summer learning: An examination of the short- and long-term changes in student literacy. *Early Education & Development, 22*(4), 649-675.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Describe when and why this school district chose to implement a credit recovery program.

2. What was the major goal of the implementation of credit recovery?

3. Do you have any prior knowledge of the credit recovery program? If yes, explain?

4. To what extent are you comfortable with using the credit recovery program?

5. Was training provided before or after the implementation of the program?

6. How were students identified to participate in the credit recovery program?

7. Describe your scheduling process for students in credit recovery versus students in seat time only.

8. What prerequisites must students meet to be considered for admission into the credit recovery program?

9. To what extent are students supervised throughout the use of the credit recovery process?

10. To what extent are you as a teacher involved in the credit recovery process?

11. To what extent do students benefit from the use of the credit recovery program?

12. Were any measures put in place to identify if a student benefited from the use of the credit recovery program?

13. Do students enrolled in the credit recovery program receive an unfair advantage over students enrolled in a traditional classroom setting?

14. To what extent has the credit recovery program effected students' college readiness?

15. To what extent has the credit recovery program effected students' career readiness?

Appendix B

Human Research Application Certificate

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Date: 5/4/18
Protocol Number: 18-104
Protocol Title: An Examination of Teacher Perceptions of Credit Recovery in Three South Georgia School Districts
Principal Investigator: Brooks Robinson
Co-Principal Investigator: Michael Richardson

Dear Brooks Robinson:

The Columbus State University Institutional Review Board or representative(s) has reviewed your research proposal identified above. It has been determined that the project is classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations and has been approved. You may begin your research project immediately.

Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.

Sincerely,

Amber Dees, IRB Coordinator

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

*** Please note that the IRB is closed during holidays and breaks. Visit the **IRB Scheduled Meetings** page on the IRB website for a list of upcoming closures. ***

Appendix C

Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers

Survey - Informed Consent

Directions: Please review the informed consent in section 1 before completing the survey. * Required

By submitting this survey, you hereby agree that the data collected, obtained, stored and processed is that of which you have provided at your own free will. Please leave your mark by typing your name in the space below in lieu of your signature to provide consent. *

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Brooks Robinson, a student in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership Department at Columbus State University under the supervision of Dr. Michael D. Richardson.

I. Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to gather teacher perceptions about credit recovery.

II. Procedures:
The researcher will obtain consent from all participants who agree to participate in an individual interview. Participants will not be identified and interview responses will be kept confidential. To collect data for this study, a survey link will be sent to each teacher to be completed after school hours by the principal of schools. The survey will consist of questions related to your perceptions of credit recovery and will last approximately 10-15 minutes. Additionally, for those teachers who provide contact information, I will send a follow-up questionnaire and or individual interviews will be scheduled where permissible. The follow-up questionnaire and interviews will each take approximately 30-60 minutes to complete. There is a possibility that non-identifiable data will be used in future research projects.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:
There are no possible risks involved in this research study. The researcher will minimize discomfort by assuring anonymity and confidentiality to the participant. The participant may feel discomfort in answering some of the interview questions for fear of their employer knowing their thoughts and perceptions. Interview responses will be kept confidential by the researcher.

IV. Potential Benefits:
The participant may be benefited through the research study. Information from the study may provide for information about credit recovery.

V. Costs and Compensation:
There will be no cost or compensation for participants in this research study.

VI. Confidentiality:
All data will be password protected and responses will not be linked to the participants. Data will be kept on file by the researcher in a password-protected electronic device, stored at the home of the researcher, and data will be deleted or destroyed in one year.

VII. Withdrawal:
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, contact robinson_brooks@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this Informed Consent Form. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age or older.

Participant's Signature

Credit Recovery - Follow-up Questionnaire

Answer and respond accordingly to each question, remember it is important for you to be truthful in your response. All responses are confidential and will be used only for my completion of the requirements for the doctoral degree in educational leadership at Columbus State University. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. The goals and objectives of the credit recovery program prepares students to be college and career ready. * Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

2. The process and guidelines for identifying students for the credit recovery program are clearly defined. * Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

3. To what extent are you comfortable with the credit recovery program with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest? * Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

4. Students received adequate information concerning the credit recovery program. * Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

5. To what extent were you involved in any aspect of the credit recovery program implementation? * Mark only one oval.

- Almost always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

6. How were you involved? *

7. To what extent have you recommended students who failed in your class to enroll in the credit recovery program? * Mark only one oval.

- Almost always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

8. To what extent have the students in your class who are enrolled in the credit recovery program been successful? * Mark only one oval.

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Seldom
- Never

9. Students enrolled in the credit recovery program are college ready. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. Students enrolled in the credit recovery program are career ready. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. The credit recovery program is beneficial to students. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. The credit recovery program has a positive image among students. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. The credit recovery program has a positive image at my school. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14. Overall the credit recovery program is a valuable part of instruction. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

15. There are several ways this program can be improved. * Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

16. Such as _____. *

17. This program has had an overall positive response on student outcomes. * Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

18. How so _____. *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Volunteer to participate!!!

Please respond to each question before submitting the survey.

19. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up questionnaire and or a face-to-face interview? * Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

20. If you answered yes to question 19, please contact me by email

(robinson_brooks@columbusstate.edu) or phone (229.938.0310) or provide your email address and I will contact you. *

_____

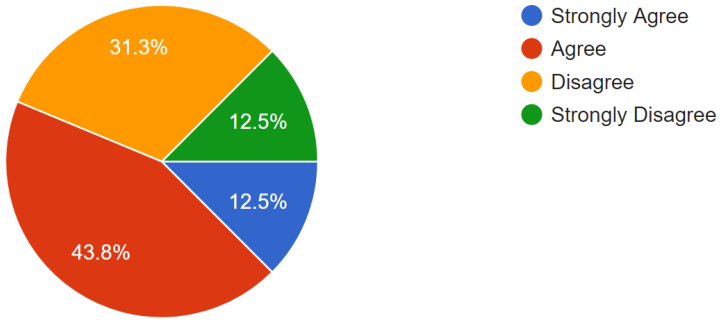
Powered by

Google Forms

Credit Recovery Survey for Teachers

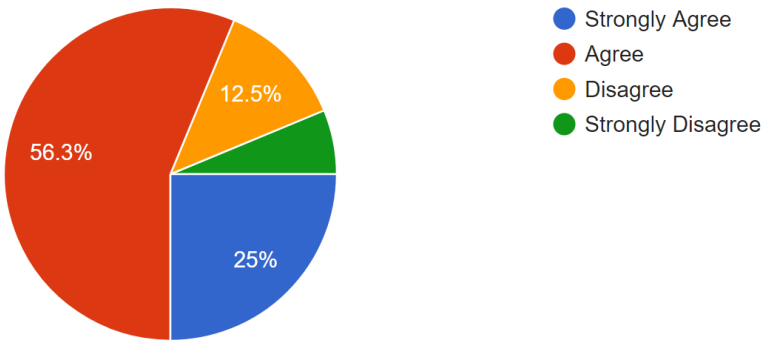
1. The goals and objectives of the credit recovery program prepares students to be college and career ready.

16 responses



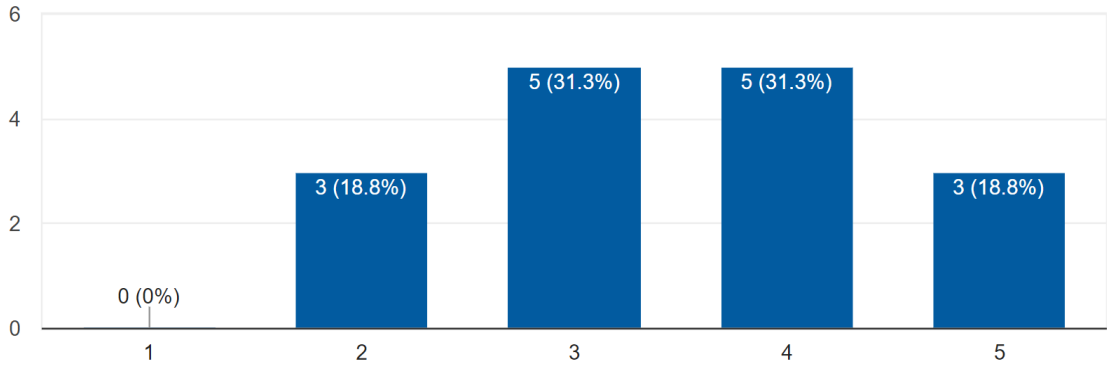
2. The process and guidelines for identifying students for the credit recovery program are clearly defined.

16 responses



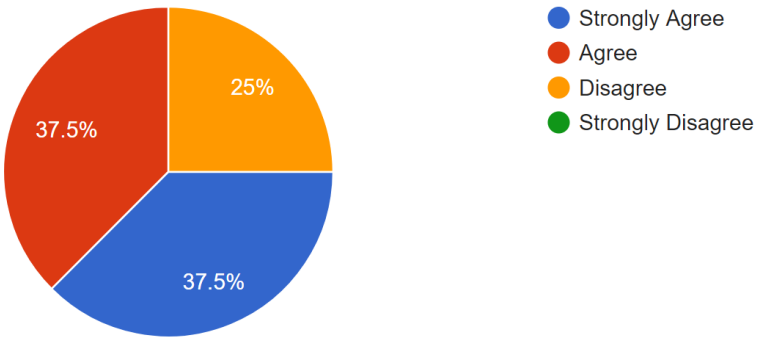
3. To what extent are you comfortable with the credit recovery program with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest?

16 responses



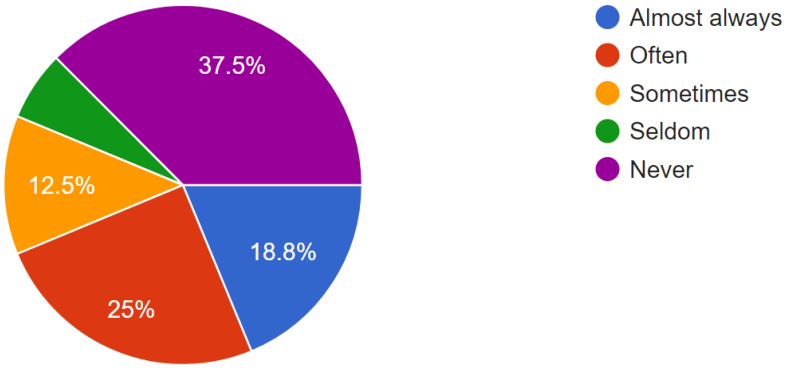
4. Students received adequate information concerning the credit recovery program.

16 responses



5. To what extent were you involved in any aspect of the credit recovery program implementation?

16 responses



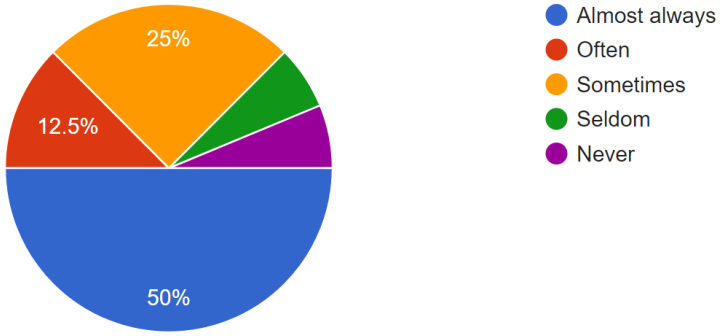
6. How were you involved?

16 responses

N/A (2)
The only involvement I have is to teach a student who fails my class.
I created the program and ran it for 6 years.
I served a student via homebound until he graduated! He never attended high school due to severe anxiety
Reviewing data in leadership teams to make decisions to drive instructional practices in the classrooms.
I teach JROTC
teach the class
I am not involved other than reporting grades and failures to administration.
Alternative school director
I am the Credit Recovery Director. As Director of the Credit Recovery Academy, I work with the counselors and administrative staff in tracking all students in the program.
I schedule students for credit recovery and credit repair.
I have worked with this program for several years and have collaborative with others teachers and administration to implement a program that will benefit the students the most.
Afterschool/PASS instructor
As a teacher I can identify which students may benefit from the program.
Referrals through advisement

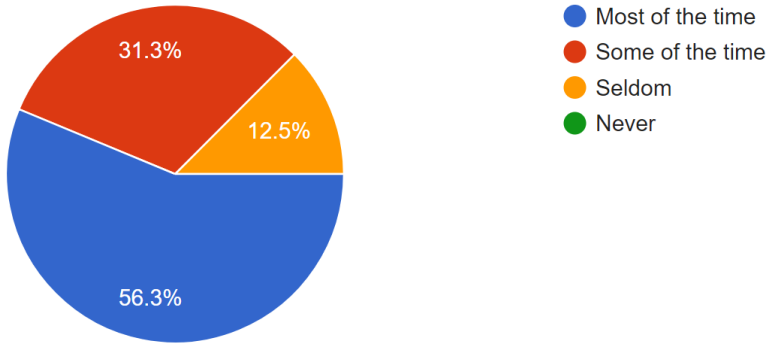
7. To what extent have you recommended students who failed in your class to enroll in the credit recovery program?

16 responses



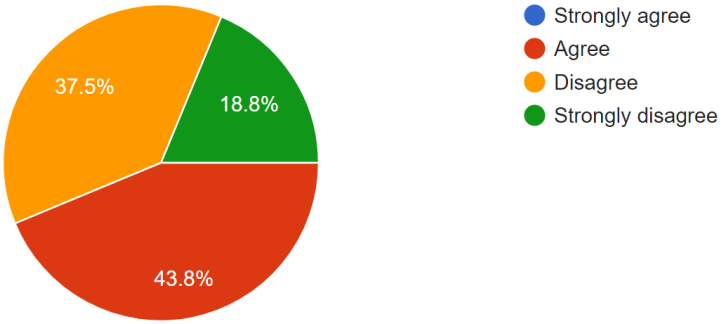
8. To what extent have the students in your class who are enrolled in the credit recovery program been successful?

16 responses



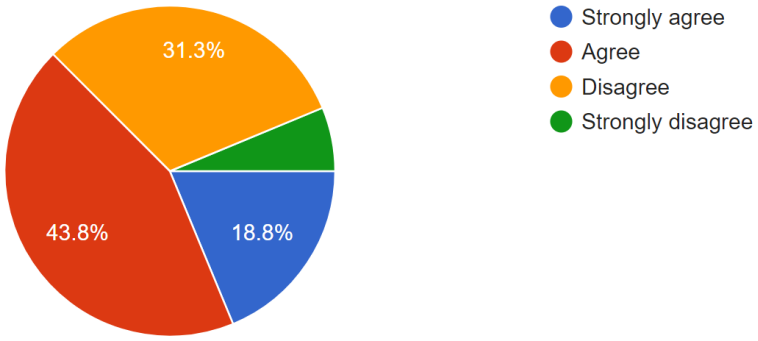
9. Students enrolled in the credit recovery program are college ready.

16 responses



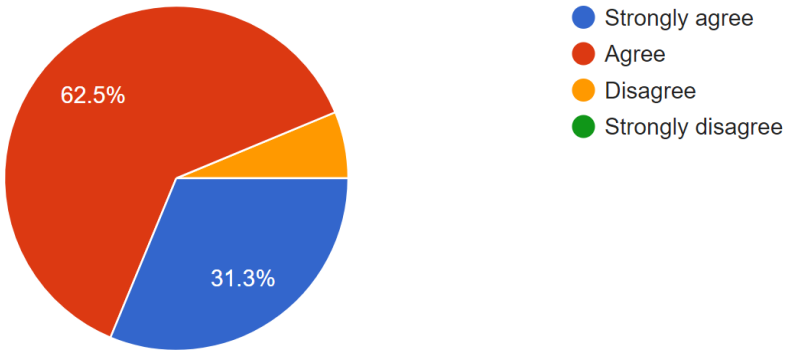
10. Students enrolled in the credit recovery program are career ready.

16 responses



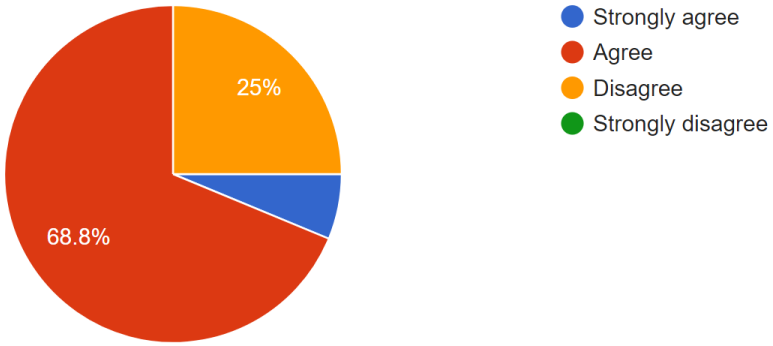
11. The credit recovery program is beneficial to students.

16 responses



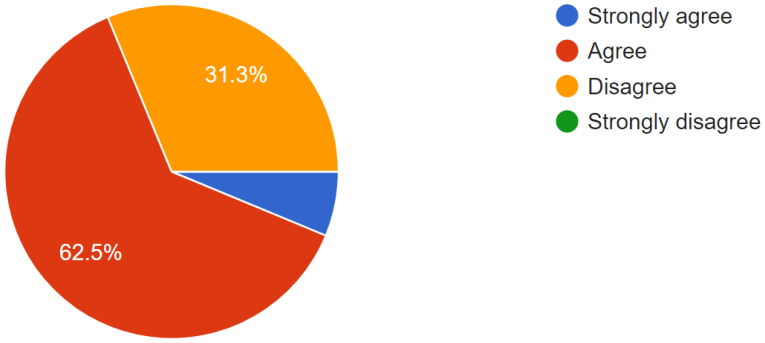
12. The credit recovery program has a positive image among students.

16 responses



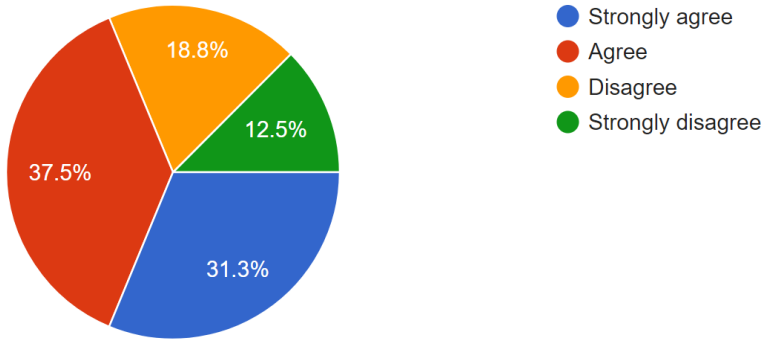
13. The credit recovery program has a positive image at my school.

16 responses



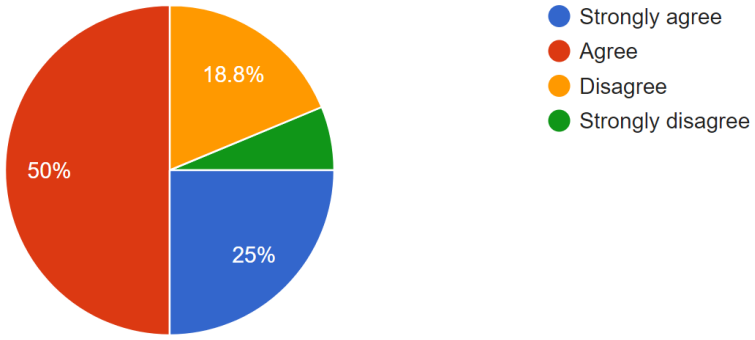
14. Overall the credit recovery program is a valuable part of instruction.

16 responses



15. There are several ways this program can be improved.

16 responses



16. Such as _____.

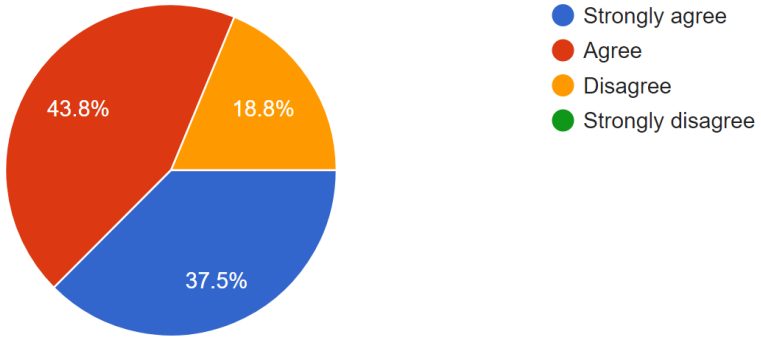
16 responses

It is too much of a crutch. Students don't have to put forth effort the first time because there is a well-used back-up plan that does not have any writing involved.
Consistently following the established guidelines and monitoring to make sure the students are using the program with fidelity. Milestone scores should be similar to course grades in credit recovery if it is being implemented with fidelity.
Students should be charged to take a credit recovery class and it should only be offered during the summer.
I feel as though students should receive tutorial classes (involuntarily) if they are struggling in classes, so that would eliminate a large number of students in credit recovery program.
It takes away the actual ability for the student to be in the classroom. He/she has no one to ask questions to and limits interpersonal skills needed to build social skills that are actually needed in the real world. Some students are taking 3 or 4 credit recovery class and one has to wonder if it really benefiting the student other than for the graduation rate
the program is run well
Given the students time limits
Some students / parents view credit recovery as an easy way to get a credit if a student fails a class.

Dropout prevention, home bound, early college enrollees,
One adjustment we have made over the last year is incorporating the program at the ninth grade academy to give students an early opportunity to recover credits and remediate learning.
Limit the amount of time that students have to finish assignments in the program.
The program is very successful and at this time it is working best to serve our students.
Focused learners with accountability
Causing students to complete a course in an allotted amount of time
Providing students and parents with a clear path to completing a credit recovery course. Give them the raw realistic information so they will know what has to be done to complete the class, especially if they will need that class to graduate.
Better scheduling

17. This program has had an overall positive response on student outcomes.

16 responses



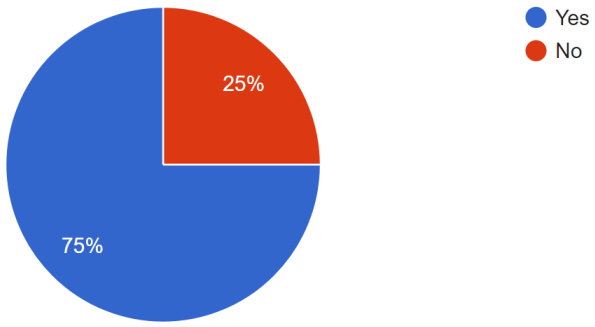
18. How so _____.

16 responses

This program encourages academic laziness.
A significant improvement in the graduation rate and preventing repeaters in academic courses.
More students graduate that probably would not have graduated when they did
Its a remediation program that allows the students to complete the course and earned credit.
It does help those who enroll to graduate
help students stay on track and recover credit
Most would not have graduated if they had not completed the credit recovery courses
Students feel a sense of accomplishment and pride when they work hard for something. They also learn a life lesson that they fail at something they can still find alternate ways to reach their goals.
Once a student recovers the credit to proceed to the next grade, the student has missed vital info for the next class
This program helps students stay on track for graduation.
It is a part of RTI for students who struggle inside a normal classroom setting, and allows students to catch up on assignments.
The students are able to complete a failed course in school, after school, or in some cases at home.
7 out of 9 students benefited this semester with Credit recovery
Students that may have failed due to medical reasons or family issues have an opportunity to work on a course without having to sit through the entire class.
Students do not take it seriously; just another cop out for the student not to be in a classroom with a teacher. For example, like in-school suspension. They sit in the class and their progress is even slower and their numerical grade is even lower than it was sitting in a class.
It allows them to make up courses which will allow them to graduate.

19. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up questionnaire and or a face-to-face interview?

16 responses



20. If you answered yes to question 19, please contact me by email (robinson_brooks@columbusstate.edu) or phone (229.938.0310) or provide your email address and I will contact you.

16 responses