

ClassNotes

A newsletter for teachers, staff developers, and administrators



Credit Gains So Far

In the summer of 2007, nine NYC high schools used our program for credit recovery. Seven hundred and fifty students at these schools earned credits in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and electives. Because our program is so interdisciplinary, some students used it to recover needed credits in more than one subject area. Among the four high schools reporting exact credits earned, 86% of students successfully gained credits toward graduation—an unusually high completion rate.

REVIVING HOPES: HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY

“America is enduring an epidemic right now that causes its victims lifelong pain and misery. It’s called the high school dropout crisis.”

*from “National Epidemic, Economic Necessity,” 2007,
by Secretary Margaret Spellings and Sen. Edward Kennedy*

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS TODAY

As the U.S. has moved from an industrial to a service-based economy, and as it now transitions to a global knowledge-based economy, job opportunities for high-school dropouts have steadily declined. The days of making it on ingenuity and hard work alone are likewise dwindling. Whereas a high school dropout had a hope of building a successful career in 1908, in 2008 a dropout’s future is in jeopardy.

Among selected industrialized nations studied by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2007, the average high-school graduation rate was 82%. The U.S. rate was 72%, making us the third-lowest ranking among the 14 nations studied. Dropout rates in many U.S. urban high schools

exceed 50%. These alarming statistics forecast bleak news for our future as a competitor on the global market. So pervasive is the problem that Bob Bal-fanz, a Johns Hopkins researcher, coined the term “dropout factories” for schools with a 60% or lower graduation rate—a term so controversial that, if nothing else, it has served to raise awareness about this critical problem.

VARYING PATHWAYS TOWARD HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

The high school dropout crisis has led to widespread interest in alternative approaches to helping both grade-level and overage and under-credited students graduate from high school. Following are some new approaches to credit recovery taken by a selection of our nation’s school systems:

Georgia Department of Education Through a collaboration between the GDOE's Office of School Improvement and the Georgia Virtual School, teacher-facilitated credit recovery courses are offered to students online. Currently over 5,000 students are participating in these online programs, offered in several settings: after school, summer school, intersession, and through independent study. The GDOE provides all local and district settings with guidance and support in implementing their online credit recovery initiative.

Los Angeles Unified School District In Los Angeles, any young person who has been out of school for 45 days or longer can request an enrollment conference with an outreach consultant from the district's Alternative Education and Work Center (AEWC). An AEWC consultant assesses the student's interests and high school credits, and together they map out a plan tailored to meet that student's needs. The student attends a study center to receive instruction in basic academic skills in high school subjects and in employment skills. Flexible scheduling through independent study allows students to hold a job while enrolled in school. In order to graduate, students take the same progress and exit exams they would at any California high school.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Pittsburgh's Credit Recovery Program is made up of high school students who did not succeed in traditional school settings and who voluntarily apply to transfer to the Pittsburgh Student Achievement Center. In addition to daytime courses, the program offers off-school-site programs, including the Evening School,

Bridges to Success Program, and Cooperative Work Experience Programs. The progress of students in the Credit Recovery Program is closely monitored, and those who are having difficulty meeting expectations are assisted in a variety of ways.

New York City Public Schools In 2005 the NYC Department of Education (NYCDOE) established the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) to address the critical high school dropout rate and the high number of in-school overage, under-credited students at risk of dropping out. The OMPG identified and has since implemented four viable options for addressing these twin problems:

- **Transfer Schools** accept students who have been enrolled in high school for at least one year and who are performing below grade level; these schools provide engaging and academically rigorous curriculum and explicit post-secondary planning.
- **Young Adult Borough Centers** are small learning environments, housed in host high schools, that focus on supporting students 17 ½ years old or older to earn a diploma.
- **Learning to Work** is a program partnering with community-based organizations to help students develop the skills needed for employment while gaining their high school diploma or GED.
- **GED Prep Programs** prepare students to pass their GED.

Classroom, Inc. Convenes Panel of High School Principals

Like educators nationwide, we at Classroom, Inc. are alarmed at the high rate of secondary school dropouts, and are invested in seeing that credit recovery programs are substantial and rigorous—that they not only enable students to earn needed credits, but also motivate them. To that end, we have put together an advisory panel of high school principals from NYC and Philadelphia. With the valuable input from these principals, we are determining how Classroom, Inc. can best serve high school students at risk for dropping out.



From left to right: Sylvia Barsion (VP of Educational Programs, CI); Eileen Maicon (Kensington HS, Philadelphia); Phil Weinberg (HS of Telecommunication Arts, Brooklyn); Vanda Belusic-Vollor (South Brooklyn HS); Winston McCarthy (North Queens Community HS); Liliana Polo (West Brooklyn HS); Katrina Kelley (Manager of Implementation, CI); Jane Canner (President of CI); Ira Weston (Paul Robeson HS, Brooklyn); Derrick Griffith (CUNY Prep Transitional HS, Bronx); Not pictured: Steve Satin (Norman Thomas HS, Manhattan)

Why Classroom, Inc. Is a Logical Fit

We Have What It Takes Classroom, Inc. uses the same interdisciplinary, standards-based and challenging approach in its credit recovery program as it does in all its programs. Teachers are partners with us in customizing the program, which is offered for the number of hours required (54 hours in NYC for a one-credit course), up to a maximum of 150 hours.

Our computer-simulated workplaces provide students who are not used to succeeding

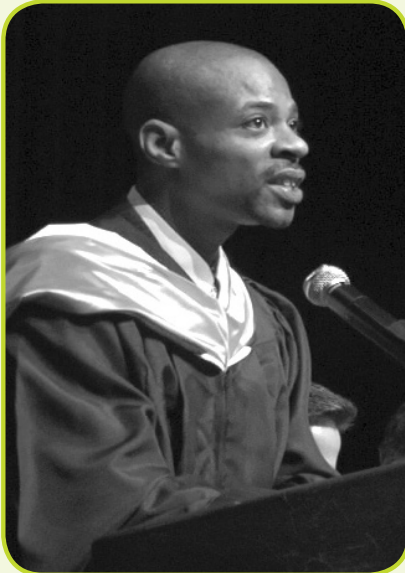
in school with a lively way to re-engage in their learning. In their career roles, they are treated as young professionals.

We've Already Done It The sidebar feature on Page One illustrates our success in helping students gain the credits they need to graduate. We recently received further data from our biggest Summer 2007 NYC credit recovery implementation, a high school in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. The results speak for themselves:

Summer 2006, Using Another Program	Summer 2007, Using Classroom, Inc.
26% of enrolled students earned credits	81% of enrolled students earned credits
62 students earned credits	255 students earned credits
43% of students dropped out of c.r. class	9% of students dropped out of c.r. class

We help students stay on track to graduate.

Classroom, Inc. Produces Results at CUNY Prep



Derrick Griffith, Founding Director and Principal of CUNY Prep Transitional High School in NYC, is dedicated to addressing the needs of former dropouts aged 16-18 who are preparing to re-enter high school or attain a GED and go on to successful college careers.

A proponent of NYCDOE's Multiple Pathways to Graduation, Mr. Griffith is likewise enthusiastic about Classroom, Inc.'s curriculum for CUNY Prep's unique student population. In describing the success of our program, Mr. Griffith said that it engages students, "empowers them to participate," and, perhaps most important, allows them to "drive the nature of their own progress."

 Classroom inc

ClassNotes is a collaboration between Classroom, Inc.'s staff and its sites.

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Classroom, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming and improving learning for underserved middle and high school students.

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