



California AfterSchool Network

CONNECT. CONVENE. INSPIRE.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN  
HIGH SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

# Credit Recovery (CR)

## Solutions Offered In After School Programs

*BlairLEARNs – Pasadena Unified School District*



*Written by:*

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Los Angeles County Office of Education  
After School Technical Assistance Unit

*Lead Strategically. Work Collaboratively. Act Intentionally.*

A Publication of the California AfterSchool Network

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# Credit Recovery (CR)

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BlairLEARNs – Pasadena Unified School District

Written By: Michelle R. Perrenoud



Credit Recovery (CR) Solutions Offered  
in After School Programs – Case Study

**Foreword:** It is a challenge to implement a new program within a school, especially if the program is offered after the instructional day. A new school program requires strategic leadership, collaborative work, intentional action, and lots of positive energy! Once the site coordinator has approached the school site principal with the concept of credit recovery and request to include this component in the after school program, the site coordinator must be patient, available with information, and supportive as the principal and leadership team discuss and decide if including credit recovery after school will be agreeable.

## About the Program

### BlairLEARNs

Blair International Baccalaureate (IB) Magnet School is located in Pasadena, California, and is one of four comprehensive high schools, and one alternative school in the Pasadena Unified School District. For the past four academic years, Blair IB Magnet School has been operating the BlairLEARNs (Leading Educational Achievement – Revitalizing Neighborhoods) after school program. The school is a 7th -12th grade campus. The total student enrollment at the school is 1,150 (900 high school students and 250 middle school students). The school's student demographic set includes: 55% Hispanic, 23% African American, 15% White, 3% Asian, 2% Filipino, .5% Pacific Islander, .5% American Indian, and 1% Other/No Response. Blair IB Magnet School provides an environment where a shared commitment (by staff, students, parents, and community) to learning, cooperation, tolerance, and self-discipline enables students to become lifelong learners and responsible participants in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

The BlairLEARNs high school after school program serves 717 unduplicated participants annually with an average daily attendance of 175. The program operates daily after school and offers activities before school, on weekends, and evenings as scheduled. BlairLEARNs is the expanded day after school program at Blair Magnet IB School. BlairLEARNs serves both Middle School students, 7th – 8th grades, and High School students, 9th – 12th grades. Both programs are funded by the California Department of Education (CDE).

The High School program's primary funding is through a 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) ASSETS grant award of \$250,000. Direct services dollars available for program implementation total \$202,000 and additional funding sources include: in-kind resources of \$15,000 and \$32,000 of state uncapped SSIS grant dollars awarded to the high school to serve students at risk of retention and non-graduation, round out the operating budget.

## **BlairLEARNS PROGRAM MODEL**

The BlairLEARNS after school program provides academic assistance along with promoting academic achievement by offering an expanded day for students who would like homework, tutoring, sports, and enrichment classes. The program is designed to fit the needs of students who may have additional academic needs or who might be seeking an extracurricular school activity in which to participate.

The program's goal is to forge a vital link between instructional day activities and after school activities while each student is on campus. Program partners have found a unique way to continue the learning process through innovative after school activities: including enrichment clubs, engaging tutoring, and opportunities for personal growth. At BlairLEARNS, each student is given the opportunity to strive for the best in their future by developing personal, social, leadership, and academic skills necessary for their success.

The BlairLEARNS after school program offers academic classes, enrichment classes, student services, summer school classes, family literacy classes, community classes, special events, and activities at no cost. BlairLEARNS classes are taught by Credentialed Teachers (hired directly by the BlairLEARNS program), as well as by Community Partners. The program is administered by Site Coordinator, Bill Fennessy, who works under the immediate direction of PasadenaLEARNS' Program Director, Dr. Denise Collier and Blair Magnet IB School Principal, Rich Boccia.

The after school program site coordinator's office is located in the school's main office. The site coordinator is a full-time, eight-hour position, allowing half of the work day to be spent on campus working with instructional day staff and the other half working in program. In addition to being the BlairLEARNS Site Coordinator, Bill Fennessy is also very involved in the school's administrative infrastructure. He has been the chairman of the School Site Council, past Athletic Director, and is currently a member of the school's Administrative Team, the school's Leadership Team, and is a Board Member of the Association of Pasadena School Administrators. Bill also attends meetings and activities outside of his regular work hours, such as Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and English Language Advisory Council (ELAC) meetings. The Site Coordinator's positive relationship with the School Principal, along with active involvement in the entire school community and especially the instructional day, are grounding elements key to the program's accomplishments.

The BlairLEARNS program is currently focused on the following: High School and Middle School Credit Recovery Classes, Athletic Academic Assistance (all athletes participate in season), Targeted 9th Grade Student Intervention Programming, Performing Arts Programming, and the start-up of a new Digital Media Program.

## **CONNECTING WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS BEFORE THEY DROP OUT**

### **CONCERNS OVER NATIONWIDE DROPOUT**

With nearly one-third of public high school students failing to graduate annually, leaders, educators, and youth development experts nationwide are concerned about reversing the surge of high school dropouts. The high school dropout problem is a crisis for the United States. New data demarcating the steep economic impact that dropping out of school can have for individuals and their education, on the nation's economy, and respective social costs as a whole are alarming. But whether it's for reasons of economic competitiveness or simply as a moral imperative, giving students alternative paths to graduation is a top priority.

### **GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A SECOND-CHANCE**

You may be wondering, "WHY offer a credit recovery program at all, let alone in an after school program?" Don't worry, you are not alone. The ANSWER: Credit Recovery is at the heart of reducing the 9th grade dropout crisis facing our nation and it provides more young people the opportunity to succeed. Large numbers of high school students become credit deficient in 9th and 10th grades and upon realization that high school graduation has not only slipped away but is out of reach, drop out because they cannot keep up. Additionally, they do not have any alternative to catch up, get back on, and stay on track.



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There are several reasons students get off track with their credits toward graduation. Many students miss classes due to personal illness, mobile living conditions (theirs or their families), and insufficient participation and skill development in the lower grades. Most students fail classes due to: difficulty reading, comprehending text, and performing basic mathematics computations; personality conflicts with teachers; lack of personal motivation; disciplinary problems; poor follow through; health challenges; and attendance issues.

Students who attend Credit Recovery clearly understand that their primary academic goal is to receive a high school diploma. The tutoring and homework element of the program at BlairLEARNs is designed to give all students (especially freshman) the support to keep them from falling behind. Through targeted intervention the program can prevent those students who may be potentially sliding away. The credit recovery program is designed to give those who are on the verge of dropping out of school a “second-chance” to work towards receiving a high school diploma. The program is designed to provide a path for both credit recovery and maintenance of current course loads.

### THE ABC & Ds OF THE DROPOUT CRISIS

Saving students from dropping out is essential. It is the last step in the cycle of classroom failure. It is imperative that we pay attention to the ABC & Ds of the Dropout Crisis:

- **A**ttendance: 6th to 10th graders who miss 10, 20, or more days of school are sending increasingly loud distress signals (America’s Promise Alliance).
- **B**ehavior: middle and high school students who get suspended need support to stay on track, and so do those who misbehave or lack the effort (America’s Promise Alliance).
- **C**ourse Performance: middle and high school students who receive an “F” particularly in Math or English, or two or more “Fs” in any course are falling off the graduation path. “Ds” and very low GPAs are also cause for concern (America’s Promise Alliance).
- **D**isengagement Signs in the classroom: students who dropped out cited lack of motivation, boredom, an unchallenging atmosphere, and overall lack of engagement in school as a reason for drop out (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

It is core to Credit Recovery that we counter why kids are dropping out.

- We need to pay attention to transition times when kids are moving into high school.
- Drop out is also closely related to how schools operate, how rigorous they are, and whether or not students see that school has real-world relevance. It is imperative that school is relevant (to their lives and future), engaging (in the school work they do and the teachers by whom they are instructed), and rigorous (appropriately challenging and with high expectations).

#### On Graduating

Captured September 2008 during a site visit in which California State Assemblyman, Tom Torlakson and California Department of Education Director of Learning Support, Gordon Jackson were Guests of Honor

*“All kids can get there. We believe all kids can get there. But as a high school principal I know not all my kids start in the same place: ninety percent minority; sixty percent poverty; facing multiple personal challenges; my kids need more time and support than others. By offering BlairLEARNs After School Program and the Credit Recovery component, in addition to the regular school day, we give them more quality time here at Blair to make it.”*

– Rich Boccia, Principal

Blair IB Magnet School  
Pasadena Unified School District  
Pasadena, California

- Credit Recovery teachers and After School staff must be caring and clear about setting a culture and tone in the program that demands success from students. Clear boundaries and expectations are essential and well respected by young people who work hard to make their grades.

Innovative after school programs, like BlairLEARNs, are pioneering effective and creative strategies to break the pattern of high school dropout by engaging at-risk learners and helping them to recover their lost credits needed for their promotion and graduation. Forward-thinking districts, administrators, and teachers partnering with after school programs to collaborate in offering Credit Recovery as a part of the extended day are visionary in their leadership and solutions to meeting this critical need.

## WHY CREDIT RECOVERY OFFERED AFTER SCHOOL ON CAMPUS MAKES SENSE

Offering Credit Recovery after school on campus makes sense for many reasons.

- The most clear and generally overlooked reason is students are less likely to be distracted by other “alternative and more attractive” choices while in route to credit recovery classes held off-site and require travel from one place to another.

Additionally:

- Students are familiar with the school setting, rules, expectations, relationships and connections with instructional day staff and after school program staff. It is easier for them to navigate this environment.
- The High School Counselor can monitor the student’s progress and easily tie it back to the instructional day.
- Transportation is challenging for students and their parents. Attending Credit Recovery classes after school is a cost effective solution.

*“Without Credit Recovery offered After School I don’t think I would have made it to graduation. The vision I had of myself graduating seemed beyond reach. At Blair and because of my participation in Blair-LEARNs After School it became my reality!”*

**– Student Graduate**

## BlairLEARNs CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM

### DATA IS KEY TO IDENTIFY, DETERMINE, AND MEET THE NEEDS

The after school site coordinator works collaboratively with the principal and counselors to utilize school data to identify, determine, and meet the need for credit recovery classes as an offering after school. By working closely with the principal and counselors, the after school site coordinator intentionally plans to incorporate the credit recovery program into the after school program and maximizes meeting the needs of students at risk. To do this, he works closely and collaboratively with the school to gain access to important information (i.e., transcript analysis data) and to be supportive of the school in making their decision to team up and join forces with the after school program to offer a credit recovery program as a component of the after school program.

Through transcript analysis, the school principal and counselors are able to determine the school’s need for the credit recovery program by looking at the projected graduation rate, starting with the incoming senior class. The reason for starting with the senior class is to ensure as many senior students graduate on time as possible. Additional information is gained by doing transcript analysis for the junior and sophomore classes. Until freshman students begin to fail classes, a transcript analysis will not provide adequate data determining respective needs. Ninth graders benefit greatly through timely intervention, including homework assistance and tutoring.

With data in hand, the principal and counselors are able to identify who needs credit recovery, how many units, and what types of units are deficient for each student at risk of not graduating on time (for the incoming senior class) and promotion (for incoming sophomore and junior classes). With this information, the number of subjects to be offered, types, and levels are determined. The master schedule is drafted and the number of teachers and amount of classroom space is determined based on the newly identified needs.

The after school site coordinator, in partnership with the school principal and counselors, set the master schedule with the data and criterion required to support the overarching needs of the credit recovery program to be offered as a component of the after school program. With the understanding that 60 hours of learning time is required per credit recovery opportunity, the length of the program and classes offered is determined. Additionally, the number of hours per day, days per week, and total weeks required are set.

## BEGINNING STEPS

There are six overarching steps at the core to beginning a successful Credit Recovery Program.

- Step 1** District / Principal Support: Academic leaders are ultimately responsible.
- Step 2** Counseling Department must do 'Transcript Analysis': Start with seniors and work backwards. The transcript analysis will determine the subjects to be offered, size of classes, and number of classes needed to be offered.
- Step 3** Teacher Recruitment: Consult your Principal as teachers must be credentialed in subject (NCLB) and the Principal/AP must authorize the curriculum. Teachers need to be well respected by students.
- Step 4** Set weekly schedule and determine the credit recovery master schedule based on identified needs including curriculum tiers, number of classes, daily hours of instruction, weeks needed for projected completion, and the number of teachers needed to teach classes no larger than twenty students per class.
- Step 5** Student Recruitment: Students meet with counselors one-on-one. Counselors provide students with a parent letter to be taken home, as well as send the letter via postal service to the parents. A parent orientation is offered and student enrollment taken.
- Step 6** Start Classes!

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE: IT'S MORE THAN A PREVENTION STRATEGY

"We are not giving away units to bring up graduation rates. Students must learn!" comments Bill Fennessy. Credit Recovery is a concrete path allowing students a way back to succeeding in school. Offering Credit Recovery solutions after school only challenges the setting in which classes traditionally take place, not the process, requirements, or curriculum. In the BlairLEARNs program students must complete the 60 hours of "seat time", meet the content standards, and demonstrate competencies to pass and earn each credit. Fennessy states, "It is Summer School offered After School. Think about it...we are challenging the traditional time slots kids get their schooling. Based on identified needs and working to meet those needs we are allowing more time

*"The school's academic leaders are ultimately responsible for the Credit Recovery Program. We each have specific roles and responsibilities that require partnership and collaboration with the other in order to prepare, lead, and implement a successful Credit Recovery Program After School. Together we work as a team."*

**- Bill Fennessy, BlairLEARNs  
Site Coordinator**



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and adding to the time slots kids can get their schooling while at the same time being more responsive and user-friendly to our client (the students).”

### **WEEKLY SCHEDULING**

- Students can take two different classes weekly by scheduling class sections on Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday.

### **SCHOOL-YEAR SCHEDULING: TWO MODELS**

- **Semester Module**
  - Starts at 6th week of each semester
  - Sessions can last 15 weeks
  - Students can earn up to 20 credits in one year
  - Best Start-Up Model
- **Seasonal Model**
  - Starts on the 1st full week of school (Summer Prep)
  - Sessions last 13 weeks
  - Students can earn up to 30 credits in one year
  - Takes into consideration Athletic Season

### **ATTENDANCE TRACKING**

- Daily Classroom Attendance Sign In/Sign Out Sheets
- Excel Attendance Tracking System

### **MASTER CALENDAR STRATEGIES**

- Each semester Credit Recovery is offered it is important to change the master schedule and program offerings to meet the current identified needs
- Entire subject clusters are targeted by semester
- It is best to frontload student schedules for programs that start in September based on the previous year's grades.

### **BlairLEARNS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM: CREDIT RECOVERY GUIDELINES**

Students must agree to the rules and policies as set forth by the program and wish to enroll to earn units towards promotion. They must sign a contract denoting that if they violate any of the following guidelines they will be dropped from the course.

### **CONTRACT GUIDELINES**

- Students may take two courses per semester to potentially earn a total of twenty units over two semesters.
- The course meets for twelve weeks, two days per week, for two-and-half hours each day.
- Students are required to attend all classes. They may be officially excused from class for not more than three class periods if they have been pre-approved for an absence by the instructor with written documentation from their parent.

- Students are required to arrive on time to all classes. Three tardies will equal one absence. Once a student has accumulated three absences from class, whether approved or not, they will be dropped from the class.
- All students are required to follow the uniform dress code policy or they will be excused for the day. All students are expected to meet appropriate behavior standards which are measured as satisfactory citizenship on the progress report. Students will be immediately dropped for displaying inappropriate behavior.

## KNOW THE MINIMUM GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND "A - G" COLLEGE SUBJECT REQUIREMENTS

It is imperative that all after school program staff know and understand what the Minimum Graduation Requirements are for students. It is additionally important staff know the "A - G" College Subject Requirements. Staff must be able to fully explain the relevance and importance of each of these requirements to students and parents.

Following are Minimum Graduation Requirements for the State of California high school students:

REQUIREMENTS	UNITS
<b>English - 4 years</b> English 1 English 2 English 3 English 4	<b>40</b>
<b>History / Social Science - 3 years</b> World History US History Government / Economics	<b>30</b>
<b>Mathematics - 3 years</b> Algebra 1 Geometry Math electives	<b>30</b>
<b>Science - 3 years</b> Biology Chemistry or Physics Science elective	<b>30</b>
<b>Physical Education - 2 years</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Foreign Language - 1 year</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Visual &amp; Performing Arts - 1 year</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Electives</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>220 Units</b>
<b>High School Exit Exam</b>	<b>CAHSE</b>
English Language Arts	Score 350 or higher
Mathematics	Score 350 or higher

Having high expectations for all students, including credit recovery students, is important while they are on the path to promotion, graduation, and post-secondary education. Helping young people identify a present path and strategy with options for current and future achievement will result in high impact results, including advanced options and means for their future.



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Additional minimum “A – G” Subject Requirements for admission into a college or university are listed below.

<b>Mathematics</b>	3 years (4 years is recommended). Including Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry, some which may be taken in middle school. A minimum of 2 years of math during high school is acceptable providing Algebra II is completed.  Note: “C” or better necessary to go beyond Geometry.
<b>College Preparatory Elective</b>	1 year of any college preparatory elective.
<b>Visual &amp; Performing Arts</b>	1 year of dance, drama, or theatre, music, graphic or visual art
<b>ROP Classes</b>	Provide graduation credit and career focus.
<b>Advanced Placement Classes and Concurrent Enrollment in local community college classes (series #1 – 99)</b>	Provides additional competitive edge for admission.
<b>NOTE</b>	“C” is the minimum grade required in all Core Subjects for admission to UC campuses.

## BlairLEARNS CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM – DATA POINTS

### FREQUENT PARTICIPANTS & PROGRAM ATTENDANCE DATA

- Among high school participants, there was an 11% increase in the number of frequent participants from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007 (from 28% to 39%).
- The average number of days of program attendance increased 13% (from 26% to 29%) among frequent participants from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007.

### 2006 – 2007 CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST (CST) DATA

- On CST English-Language Arts (ELA), 50% frequent participants scored proficient or advanced compared to the 24% of non-participants.
- 67% of 9th grade frequent participants scored proficient or advanced on CST ELA compared to 21% of non-participants.
- 11% of 9th grade frequent participants scored proficient or advanced on CST Mathematics compared to 1% of non-participants.
- 10% of 11th grade frequent participants scored proficient or advanced on CST Mathematics compared to 0% of non-participants.
- 39% of 9th grade frequent participants increased at least one proficiency level on CST ELA from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007. This is compared to the 24% increase among non-participants.
- 22% of 10th grade frequent participants increased at least one proficiency level on CST ELA from 2005–2006 to 2006–2007. This is compared to the 10% increase among non-participants.

## HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM – GRADUATION DATA

BlairLEARNS' most notable accomplishment has been the 28% increase in on time High School graduations as a result of the innovative High School Credit Recovery Classes component offered by the program over the past four years. In each of the following years noted seniors that graduated on time took Credit Recovery Classes:

### Year 1: 2004 – 2005

58 of 193 seniors (30% of the class)

### Year 2: 2005 – 2006

22 of 156 seniors (13% of the class)

### Year 3: 2006 – 2007

29 of 92 seniors (32% of the class)

### Year 4: 2007 – 2008

64 of 152 seniors (40% of the class)

*These figures ONLY represent seniors graduating on time. Students that graduated later or from other schools with other units earned in the program were not able to be tracked.*

## HIGH SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM – STUDENT ATTENDANCE DATA

### Year 1: 2004 – 2005

502 Unduplicated Students

13,093 Units of Service

72 Students Average daily Attendance

*(Numbers represent a partial year of program implementation)*

### Year 2: 2005 – 2006

521 Unduplicated Students

26,490 Units of Service

147 Students Average daily Attendance

### Year 3: 2006 – 2007

676 Unduplicated Students

33,872 Units of Service

188 Students Average daily Attendance

### Year 4: 2007 – 2008

717 Unduplicated Students

54 Unduplicated Students attending from Westridge School (feeder)

4 Unduplicated Students attending from Pasadena High School (feeder)

*(Units of Service information is unavailable at this time)*

#### Note:

- Unduplicated Students attended at least one day of the program in the fiscal year
- Units of Service is the equivalent of one student attending one day in the fiscal year

*These figures come from the attendance database and are representative of 180 Regular days of Service. Supplemental Days of Service are not included.*

*“My job is to create more opportunities for students to succeed. Success is built on past successes. What if a student never had a success? Worse yet, what if they had a success and no one were there to tell them. That’s the power of After School”*

**– Bill Fennessy, BlairLEARNS Site Coordinator**



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## About the Featured Practice

### A WORKING DEFINITION OF CREDIT RECOVERY FOR AFTER SCHOOL

An Internet search revealed numerous credit recovery program offerings, but it was difficult to find a definition of credit recovery. Nevertheless, a definition of credit recovery programs can be ascertained by examining each program offering, its description and applied implementation.

I offer this as a place to start if you are considering offering a credit recovery program as a part of your high school after school program:

#### **Cred'it Re-cov'er-y**

A course-specific, skill-based, learning opportunity offered to recover credit after school, in partnership with school administration, for students who previously failed during the instructional day to master content and or skills required to receive course credit, earn promotion, or graduate.

### RESEARCH, RESOURCES, AND EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

There is a lack of adequate research and resources available specifically addressing Credit Recovery for high school aged youth in the after school field and movement. There are many programs, approaches, and a great deal of general information about credit recovery options available online, however there is a lack of information on after school programs offering these opportunities as a component of their program. While implementation of credit recovery programs is on the rise in secondary schools and out-of-school-time programs (including after school), there is very little research into credit recovery programs and their impact or characteristics that make them effective in any of the sectors offering these services.

### CHALLENGES

To be successful as a program within the school, there must be support for the concept of after school contributing to student achievement and for a chosen model's ability to assist students in credit recovery. Credit Recovery should be a component of the school's overarching success goals. The implementation and operation of the program requires collaboration of the administration, principal, teachers, students, parents, and guardians, in addition to the after school program site coordinator and staff. The culture of the program needs to be welcoming, accepting, hopeful, and flexible, yet firm and rigorous.

**There is a consistent theme that most challenges line up under:** *Aligning the after school program site coordinator's desire to include Credit Recovery as a component of the after school program and the vision for the program with the needs and desires of the school site administration and school's overall goals.*

#### **On After School Programs and Credit Recovery offered After School**

Beyond Expectations – The Power of High School Afterschool (DVD) by Temescal Associates

– **Rich Boccia, Principal, Blair IB Magnet School, Pasadena Unified School District**

*“At first the school principal might think this is more work for them to do. More organization, more time with people, more kids on my campus. It's three o'clock, go home people, I have work to do.” He further offered, “But at the end of the day once you have front loaded this and you have gotten the right people and program in place, it takes a lot off my shoulders – a lot off my plate, because now my kids are getting more support that they need, that normally they would not get in the past.”*

## PRINCIPAL AND SITE COORDINATOR SHARE PROGRAM LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Together the school principal and the after school site coordinator work as a team modeling the way. Each has specific roles and responsibilities that require partnership and collaboration with the other in order to prepare for and implement a successful program.

**School Principal:** When considering the Credit Recovery Program, it is best to think of the leadership and planning for the program and its quality and design as the Principal's role and responsibility. The Principal holds the key to unlocking and opening the door for credit recovery to take place in the after school program.

**Site Coordinator:** The role and responsibility of the Site Coordinator is best applied in the implementation and management phases of the credit recovery component in the after school program.

There is no doubt the key to success at Blair is the relationship between the site coordinator and principal.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

Following are ten recommendations and successful strategies that will assist you in planning to offer and implement your high school after school credit recovery program.

- 1. The Essential Priority - School Administrative Leadership: School District, School Principal, and School Teachers support and leadership is a must.** Academic leaders are ultimately responsible for the credit recovery program, including: Admission, Instruction, Content and Curriculum, and Grades. This means: determining the instructional methodology used, providing professional development for teachers and facilitators involved in the program, authorizing state-approved courses and texts and respective rigor for modules and curriculum offered, determining student eligibility, and establishing specific procedures for evaluation of student progress and determining grades, and awarding of credit.
- 2. Connect with the School Counseling Department – their partnership and support is critical:** In order to target young people based on needs, Counselors must do the Transcript Analysis to see which students are in immediate need of services and are at greatest risk for not graduating, being promoting, or may be considering dropping out. This may be a challenge at first, but by working with the Schools' Administrative Leadership Team this should happen collaboratively and in a timely manner. Have the Principal work on getting this information for you.

**Note:** Start by looking at the incoming senior class to see how far off students are from graduating on time. Students deficient in four classes or twenty units can make those up over a period of one year (two semesters). Based on the courses most needed, high needs subject areas can be planned for.

### National Expert Sums It Up Nicely

Sam Piha, one of the nation's leading thought partners and experts on High School Afterschool stated recently in The Forum for Youth Investment (2009, April) Out-of-School-Time Policy Commentary #14: After School Grows Up: Helping Teens Prepare for the Future

*"It requires attention and leadership from the school administrator for the after school programs not to be marginalized. If the principal works with counselors to open up access to student performance data, meets with coaches to get them on board with training, sets aside school-day funds for blended programming, and allows access to the library, the gym, other facilities – that's key. Those doors cannot be opened without the school administrator actively on board. Programs that have strong support and participation of the school administration are thriving."*



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- 3. Student Recruitment and Education is essential:** Counselors meet with students one-on-one to talk about the necessity of joining this program. They assist them in learning and understanding the A-G and Elective Requirements and units necessary for their promotion and graduation, explain the program requirements, answer questions, and send students home with a letter for their parents. Counselors also send a letter to the parents via postal mail as well. Counselors connect with students once everything is ready for their start.
- 4. Parent/Guardian Education and Consent is paramount.** Be sure to involve parents and guardians in the planning and implementation process. Assist them in learning and understanding the A-G and Elective Requirements and units necessary for their student to graduate. Be sure to get their signature as a sign of their commitment to support and hold accountable their students' participation and commitment to the successful completion of the program.
- 5. Teacher Recruitment and direct involvement of the core teachers and their classrooms are key to the success of the program.** Highly qualified and effective teachers exert a strong influence on student success and, for this reason, remain a top priority for inclusion in teaching in high school credit recovery programs. Be sure to consult with the Principal. Hire teachers with the recommendation and permission of the Principal. Teachers must be credentialed in subjects (NCLB).

**Note:** Teachers who comprehend their subjects and understand strategies to reach all high school students are integral to keeping students in school. Retired teachers are a great resource to draw from. They often have 30+ years of class room management experience, teaching experience, and resources. Multi-subject credential teachers are also great individuals to draw from, especially when considering offering multi-subject classes for credit recovery. Young teachers with passion are also a needed resource.

- 6. Full-time Site Coordinator/Director is critical and essential.** Having permanent staff is the most critical factor for creating the after school program's culture. It is imperative this position is full-time and be considered a team member of the instructional day leadership team. The person in this position will need to work closely with the Principal, AP, and with other instructional day staff half of the day and with program staff and students the other half.

**Note:** In this respective situation, where Credit Recovery is offered as an anchoring component of the After School Program, this individual may be well served by having a teaching credential or be an experienced teacher with several years of teaching at the high school level. He/she would also be best served by having an awareness and understanding youth development philosophy and the art and practice of working with youth, as well as know and value the work done in after school programs and appreciate working with paraprofessionals in addition to credentialed teachers.

- 7. Be Intentional about extended learning time: set a master schedule, offer several courses at the same time, manage a reasonable class size, and start strategically.**

#### **Master Schedule**

The design of the master schedule is integral to offering several courses during and over the same period of time.

#### **Offer Several Courses At The Same Time**

Often, English is the most needed subject because more units are required for graduation. Offer two clusters weekly: Monday/Wednesday (M/W) and Tuesday/Thursdays (T/TH), no Friday classes. Offer English M/W and T/TH. Offer Science M/W and Math T/TH. Sprinkle Social Science and Other needed classes in as needed. Non-lab Sciences can be offered with English if the teacher has a multi-subject credential.



### Reasonable Class Size

Fifteen students per day is affordable. Consider over-enrolling to twenty students to account for attrition. Do not enroll more than forty students. Thirty students maximum is manageable. Remember these students need extended learning time and more personal attention.

### Start Strategically

Start the first day of your credit recovery program at the beginning of the sixth week. This will allow for you, the counselors, and teachers time to be organized and ready. Be sure to allow fourteen to fifteen weeks for students to complete the course of study. A minimum of twelve weeks will be needed for students to accomplish the goal 100% without considering a potential set back. Normally, it will take these students approximately fifteen weeks to accomplish their work, rigor, and the time requirements.

**Note:** Students behind in their work at the end of the semester can stay in Credit Recovery at the discretion of the staff, but must be showing reasonable progress.

**8. Set and stand by clear rules and policies for the program:** Students must agree to the rules and policies set forth by the program to participate. It is important to keep the boundaries and expectations as set forth and agreed to by the program. Discipline is important. Students respond best when they know what the rules and expectations are, in addition to consequences that result.

**Note:** Teachers start the program on time every day, closing the door to students who are late, and removing students who do not behave.

**9. Track Important Data:** Be sure to track attendance, collect grades awarded, and submit the data for processing into transcripts in a timely manner. Gathering additional information on attendance rates, the dropout rate, graduation rate, college matriculation rate, engagement, or attitude toward school may also prove valuable.

**10. Be Strategic... Location, Location, Location:** There are no additional transportation issues or costs. Walking out of class from 6th period and into a credit recovery class offered 7th period that is offered on campus has immediate value-added benefits. Students are already on-site, know the facility, do not get as easily distracted on their way to classes, and make it on time. They know and have relationships and connections with the teachers and program staff.

### INTENTIONAL EFFORTS FOCUSED ON INCREASING DROPOUT PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS WHILE PROVIDING A RANGE OF SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS

Attempts are being made across the nation to develop programs that work to close the achievement gap, improve student achievement, and increase graduation rates. With various stakeholders facing this critical challenge from different perspectives and bringing a mix of opportunities as solutions, it clearly follows that no single institution, program, or approach serves as the convening authority. As reported in an article titled Credit Recovery: A Lifeline for Students, “One thing we are sure of, there is no doubt that all students are capable of learning. What has become evident is that not all students learn at the same rate or in the same way.

Some students require additional time or support to be successful, yet the traditional classroom instruction has limits for being able to provide additional time and support for those students who need it. To better attend to students’ learning, high schools should provide a range of support or a pyramid of intervention (Dufour, 2004) for students who are not successful.” Offering Credit Recovery in After School Programs indeed aligns with integrating with the instructional day and providing support to students in their pursuit of academic achievement.

Because administrative leadership at schools and districts can now identify those students falling behind and predict early on which students are most likely to drop out, they can also intervene to prevent it from happening. We know students most likely to drop out are those who have had attendance, discipline, and academic challenges in the past, possibly from the beginnings of their school time. As reported by National High School Center on Drop Out Prevention, many studies show a consensus around four key predictors of Drop Out: Excessive absenteeism; Failure to promote to the next grade level; Failure of core academic courses in secondary school; and Disengagement in the classroom.

Much is still not known about the dropout prevention strategies and interventions that make a positive difference. However, interventions that have the capacity to be oriented around individual student needs, and that work in tandem with school-wide interventions able to adjust around grade-level needs, hold promise as an effective combination for combating the nation's dropout problem (National High School Center at the American Institute for Research, 2007). Offering Credit Recovery programs certainly fit the bill.

## For Consideration

There are many challenges surrounding the topic of credit recovery. There are many stakeholders with varying and competing perspectives and opinions on Credit Recovery and After School Programs, and the issues that overlay one another and crossover from one area to another. Just focusing on the consideration of offering credit recovery in an after school setting, the following is worth mention.

- Credit Recovery programs are offered in a variety of ways: during the school day, after school, evening schools, summer schools, and even weekend schools. Some programs meet at schools within the district and others at their own locations, such as shopping centers and after school program sites. Community Colleges and Adult Schools also offer programs. Some programs only accept 11th and 12th grade students, while others offer programs for middle school students, high school students, and older aged youth. Many programs offer credit recovery for core subjects only, while others offer credit recovery for electives too. Others grant credit for community service, life and work experience, travel study, passing exams, or correspondence. There are also several approaches to offering credit recovery programs, including these as most common: computer learning systems, web-based online systems, and augmented direct teacher instruction. Some can only be accessed on site during program hours and others can be accessed from anywhere at any time.

## In Conclusion

What you have read is a high level account of the inner workings of the BlairLEARNS Credit Recovery Program. What appears to be an overnight success has actually taken nearly five years of hard work. With much planning, success, and failure a consistent theme appeared, lending itself to becoming more than just a signature practice for the program, but also a promising practice in the field. The increasing recognition of the importance of credit recovery solutions offered in after school programs helping young people to stay in school and succeed lends itself to both promise and challenge in the after school field. By ensuring all youth have access to a quality after school program focused on youth development, personal leadership, and academic achievement BlairLEARNS is strategically working to meet the challenge of decreasing drop out and increasing graduation rates.

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### About the Author

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### Join the Network Older Youth Committee

The Older Youth Committee is committed to amplifying the needs of older youth by supporting innovative best practices among middle and high school after school practitioners. Committee membership is free, open to all, and subject to your availability and inspiration. Committee meetings happen every two months via toll free conference call. Meet with other high school practitioners, program directors, and statewide leadership and learn how to more effectively serve high school youth. [www.afterschoolnetwork.org](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org)

### Attend the Step Up High School Summit



Every November the Network hosts the Step Up High School After School Summit in San Diego. Program administrators, high school after school practitioners and high school principals are encouraged to attend. The Summit will focus on successful strategies for high school after school programs.

[www.afterschoolnetwork.org/step-up](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/step-up)

### Add your program to the Network High School Program Directory

The High School Directory is a way for high school after school programs to locate other programs to network, share promising practices with programs of similar interest areas. Add your program to the directory and locate other programs with similar focus areas or geography. [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/hs\\_directory](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/hs_directory)



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