

**CREDIT RECOVERY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SUCCESS:
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THEIR CREDIT RECOVERY
EXPERIENCE IN TWO URBAN INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY
PROGRAMS**

**A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

BY

KELLY D. DURR

DISSERTATION ADVISOR: DR. FENWICK ENGLISH

**BALL STATE UNIVERSITY
MUNCIE, INDIANA**

December 2020

CREDIT RECOVERY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SUCCESS: AN ANALYSIS OF
STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THEIR CREDIT RECOVERY EXPERIENCE IN TWO
URBAN INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF
EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

KELLY D DURR

DISSERTATION ADVISOR: DR. FENWICK ENGLISH

APPROVED BY:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| Committee Chairperson | Date |
| _____ | _____ |
| Committee Member | Date |
| _____ | _____ |
| Committee Member | Date |
| _____ | _____ |
| Committee Member | Date |
| _____ | _____ |
| Dean of the Graduate School | Date |

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: Credit Recovery and High School Student Success: An Analysis of Student Perception of Their High School Credit Recovery Experience In Two Urban Indiana High School Credit Recovery Programs

STUDENT: Kelly D Durr

DEGREE: Doctor of Education in Educational Administration and Supervision

COLLEGE: Teachers

DATE: December 2020

PAGES: 98

This study investigated student perceptions of their experiences in high school credit recovery programs. Students enrolled in credit recovery programs in two Indiana high schools completed surveys about their perception of their experiences participating in a credit recovery program at their high school. For purposes of this study, student perceptions were based upon the levels of need as outlined by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs).

Quantitative analysis was conducted using the survey results. Survey results were analyzed utilizing MANOVA, ANOVA, and correlation in order to seek significance of needs or correlation between student demographics and their perceptions (based upon need). Survey respondents also answered two open-ended questions regarding their perception of their credit recovery experience. The findings indicated that all of the needs are highly correlated with one another. Findings also indicated that there is statistical significance between some student demographics and their perceptions (based upon needs). Student open-ended responses indicated

that students felt like the flexibility, support of their instructor, and atmosphere of the credit recovery program aided them in remaining in high school and ultimately graduating on time. These findings supported the research that students need to feel supported (emotionally and academically) when participating in dropout prevention programs. Given these results, further research needs to be undertaken to identify credit recovery programs which will provide students supportive adults, flexibility, and social and academic support while participating in credit recovery programs.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| List of Tables | 8 |
| List of Figures | 9 |
| DEDICATION | 10 |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | 11 |
| CHAPTER 1 | 12 |
| INTRODUCTION | 12 |
| Research Problem | 12 |
| Background..... | 14 |
| Purpose..... | 14 |
| Research Questions | 14 |
| Theoretical Framework | 15 |
| Significance of the Study | 17 |
| Delimitations | 18 |
| DEFINITION OF TERMS | 18 |
| Organization of Remaining Chapters | 20 |
| Summary | 21 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 22 |
| LITERATURE REVIEW | 22 |
| Review Method | 22 |
| Theoretical Framework | 22 |
| High School Dropouts | 25 |
| Factors Contributing to High School Dropout | 26 |
| Dropout Prevention Strategies | 30 |
| Credit Recovery | 33 |
| Types of Credit Recovery | 35 |
| Student Perceptions of Credit Recovery | 38 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Summary | 39 |
| CHAPTER 3 | 41 |
| RESEARCH METHODS | 41 |
| Instrumentation | 43 |
| Data Analysis | 44 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | 47 |
| RESULTS | 47 |
| Purpose of the Study | 47 |
| Research Questions | 47 |
| Results of the Pilot Survey | 48 |
| Participant Demographics | 48 |
| Descriptive Statistics | 49 |
| Inferential Data Analysis | 54 |
| Multivariate Tests | 58 |
| Open Ended Survey Questions | 61 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | 65 |
| CONCLUSIONS | 65 |
| Overview of the Problem | 65 |
| Purpose of the Study | 66 |
| Research Questions | 66 |
| Review of Research Methods | 67 |
| Major Findings | 67 |
| Findings Related to the Literature | 69 |
| The Adequacy of the Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs as the Theoretical Lens | 72 |
| Limitations of this Study | 73 |
| Concluding Remarks | 76 |

| | |
|-------------------------|----|
| References | 78 |
| Appendix A | 87 |
| Appendix B | 89 |
| Appendix C | 90 |
| Appendix D | 93 |
| Appendix E | 96 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Comparison Data for Adams, Rockwell, and Boulder High Schools..... | 43 |
| Table 2: Respondent Demographics | 49 |
| Table 3: Physiological Needs Frequency Table..... | 50 |
| Table 4: Safety and Security Needs Frequency Table | 51 |
| Table 5: Love/Belonging Needs | 52 |
| Table 6: Self Esteem Needs | 53 |
| Table 7: Self Actualization Needs Frequency Table | 54 |
| Table 8: Pearson Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations Associated with Maslow's Needs | 55 |
| Table 9: Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation) on Student Perception by Gender, Year of High School, Ethnicity, Type of Household..... | 57 |
| Table 10: Summary of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) | 58 |
| Table 11: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects | 59 |
| Table 12: ANOVA Gender and Student Perceptions (Needs)..... | 60 |
| Table 13: ANOVA Type of Household and Student Perceptions (Needs) | 61 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs..... | 17 |
| Figure 2: Student responses to open ended question number 29 | 62 |
| Figure 3: Student responses to open ended question number 31 | 63 |

DEDICATION

To my Sweet T. It is finally over! You can finally have all of my time again. I hope you always have big dreams, set high goals, and know that you can do anything if you work hard. I love you!

To my Dad. This is for you! At a young age, you instilled the importance of hard work and persistence in me. Without knowing it, you have given me the push to see this through and to finally finish. I hope I have made you proud and that you are hosting a toast from above.

To my Mom and D. Thank you for your support, guidance, and endless encouragement. Thank you for giving me “time” to write, for your gentle nudges to keep going, and for helping me wade through a challenging year of life.

E. You are my person. I am grateful for your never ending love and support.

To my friend and colleague, Eric Davis. You push me daily to be a better person and school administrator. Your passion for kids, education, and your daily quest for knowledge are inspiring. I am so grateful that we were able to go through this process together!

To my friends and coworkers. Thank you for your support, guidance, and listening ear. I am grateful for your kind and encouraging words as I raced to the finish.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Dr. Elam and Dr. Lazaros for serving on my committee. I am grateful for your support, dedication, and thoughtful feedback. I appreciate the time and effort that you committed to this process.

Dr. Lowery. Thank you for your guidance as I navigated the start of the EdS and EdD program. I appreciate your kindness and thoughtful support. I also appreciate your persistence in making sure I understood the “peer reviewed resources” terminology as I started Chapter Two. As part of my committee, I appreciated your feedback and suggestions throughout my coursework, comps, proposal, and writing process.

Dr. Quick, you have been a constant support from the beginning of this journey. Your guidance and thoughtful feedback throughout the first three chapters were invaluable and allowed me to get started in a positive way. I am also grateful for the guidance and administrative “lessons” that you have provided me throughout my Masters, EdS, and now EdD programs. You are a true gem!

Dr. Eouanzoui. Thank you for your patience, time, and encouragement. I will forever be grateful for your guidance and kindness during my struggles with statistics.

Lastly, a huge thank you and debt of gratitude to Dr. English. I appreciate all your guidance, support, and your push to get me to the finish line. Our Skype calls were the answer to my many questions and I am truly grateful for your time and effort.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students who fail core academic classes and begin losing credits at the beginning of high school are at great risk of eventual high school dropout (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). This includes students who are retained, students who fail classes, and students who fail to regularly attend school. Alternative education credit recovery programs are one way to address the problem of students falling behind academically. The focus of this dissertation is high school credit recovery programs and how they impact students and staff. This includes analyzing student achievement data, as well as information related to student and staff perceptions of credit recovery programs.

As a high school administrator, I have a keen interest in alternative options for high school students and ensuring that all students are able to graduate from high school. Credit recovery programs are an option that have been utilized in our high school and I am interested in learning more about the effectiveness and how it has been utilized in other high schools. Additionally, I am interested in learning more about how students and staff perceive credit recovery programs and how these perceptions potentially impact their effectiveness.

Research Problem

High school dropout has been a major source of concern throughout our country for many years. Dropping out of high school is a decision that can be detrimental to a person's future social, emotional, and physical well-being. Burrus and Roberts (2012) reported that high school dropouts earn \$9,200 less than those with a diploma and dropouts have a much greater likelihood of involvement in criminal activity. Schools across the world have focused efforts on ways to decrease and prevent the number of students who leave high school prior to graduation. While

these efforts have led to slight improvement in graduation rates, there are still areas of concern and some schools with specific demographics still have a significant number of students who drop out of school (Balfanz et al., 2014; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

Over the years, there have been many programs, initiatives, and focused efforts to address high school dropouts. Some of these programs have demonstrated success and others have failed to address the major concerns related to high school dropout (Mac Iver, 2011). There is also limited current research about some of the more modern efforts to curb high school dropout. One of these new initiatives is the utilization of credit recovery programs to allow students an alternative option to recover credits, stay on track for graduation, and ultimately complete high school on time.

Credit recovery programs can be implemented using various strategies. Some are strictly online courses, some are face-to-face instruction courses, and some are a blend of online and teacher led instruction. Since most credit recovery programs are operated via an online platform, there is flexibility to meet the various social and emotional needs that are present in the lives of some at risk high school students (Ingerham, 2012).

In analyzing dropout prevention and credit recovery programs, the purpose of this study was to investigate characteristics and predictors of high school dropout, personal and social implications for high school dropouts, and corresponding dropout prevention programs. Specifically, this study analyzed two high school credit recovery programs, the demographics of the students enrolled in the program, and student perceptions of their experiences in the credit recovery programs.

Background

Students who fail core academic classes and begin losing credits at the beginning of high school are at great risk of eventual high school dropout (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). This includes students who are retained, students who fail classes, and students who fail to regularly attend school. Alternative education credit recovery programs are one way to address the problem of students falling behind academically. Credit recovery programs allow students to take a class that they have failed in order to recover credits needed for graduation. By making up credits, students are more likely to stay on track academically and less likely to eventually drop out of high school.

There are benefits and drawbacks to each type of credit recovery learning environment. There has also been some criticism of credit recovery programs because they are sometimes perceived as lacking necessary rigor and that students are able to progress through the courses too quickly without true mastery of the content (Pettyjohn & LaFrance, 2014). Students, however, identified the flexibility of credit recovery and the ease of access as positive aspects of their participating in credit recovery programs (Pettyjohn & LaFrance, 2014).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine student perceptions about the credit recovery program in two selected Indiana high schools. This includes how student perception correlates to demographic and motivational variables.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my work are as follows:

1. What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?
2. What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

Theoretical Framework

Several theories were considered as a framework for this study. Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory, Broffebrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the Intersectionality Theory were all considered. While there were strengths and weaknesses for each one considered, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was selected as the most applicable for this study of students participating in credit recovery programs.

Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory focuses on social development and interaction among learners and their peers, instructors, family, and friends (Chew, Jones & Turner, n.d.). Intersectionality Theory focuses on the interconnectedness of social organizations. Specifically, Intersectionality Theory analyzes how race, gender, and class impact and give one an advantage or disadvantage. Broffebrenner's Ecological Systems Theory evaluates how environmental interactions affect human development and how human development is influenced by different types of environmental systems (Darling, 2007). While each of these theories had some practical application to students and credit recovery programs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was selected as the framework for this study. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was selected because this study is designed to look at the tenets of effective credit recovery programs, what motivates students in credit recovery programs, and what schools can do to ensure student needs are met in credit recovery programs. In order for students to be able to focus on learning, schools must create a culture and systems that promote student success and allow for student needs to be met at school.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was developed by Abraham Maslow and it was used to study motivation. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs indicates that a person's basic needs must be met in order for him or her to be motivated to perform and experience success. As stated by Maslow (1943), "If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background (p. 373)." Maslow's levels of physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem needs, and self actualization all have aspects that could readily apply to education. Physiological needs refer to a student's basic survival needs such as food, water, and shelter. Since these are a person's most basic needs, it would be nearly impossible for students to be productive and successful in a school setting without these needs being met. Safety and security needs refer to one's health, stability of family, having shelter, and employment. Each of these needs would also directly affect students and their ability to focus and be present in school each day. Love and belonging refers to a person's family, feelings of connectedness to those closest to them, and having friends. Self-esteem refers to one's belief in herself and her ability to be successful. Self-actualization is identified by Maslow (1943) as one's morality, purpose, and creativity. As this study discusses dropout issues, dropout prevention strategies, and the utilization of credit recovery programs as a dropout prevention strategy, many of Maslow's identified hierarchy of needs would apply to high school students and the reasons why they dropout of high school before completion. Additionally, as dropout prevention strategies are developed, it is important for educators to consider the needs of students to ensure that adequate and high quality programs are developed to meet the needs of students.

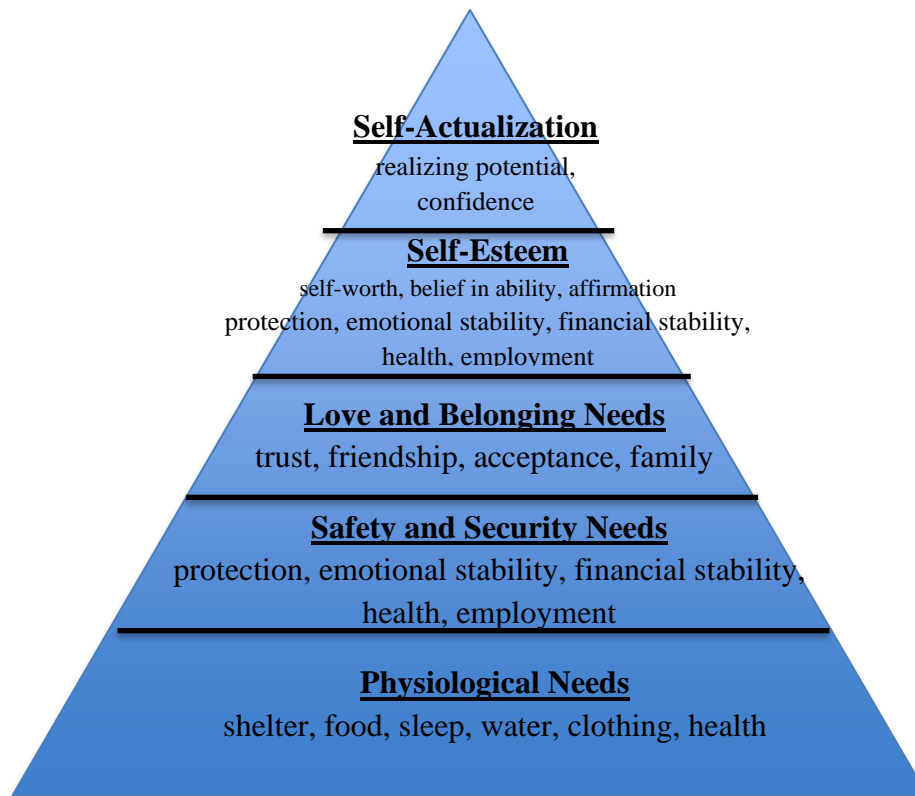


Figure 1: Adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Significance of the Study

High school dropout is a serious concern across the United States. As recent as 2014, there were still over 1,000 high schools in the United States with a graduation rate less than 60% (Litzau & Rice, 2017). For those who do not complete high school and earn a diploma, there are significant limits on the ability to lead a prosperous and productive life. Nationwide, there have been many dropout prevention strategies utilized by schools to improve the number of students who successfully complete high school. While some of these have been successful, many have not. Researchers advocate for early intervention for potential dropouts so that they can receive help and services prior to making the decision to drop out or prior to becoming so far behind academically that it is difficult to recover (Dockery, 2012; McKee & Caldarella, 2016; Bowers, Sprott & Taff, 2013).

Credit recovery programs are a modern way that many schools are providing early intervention to address dropout concerns. This study is significant because there is currently limited research on the use of credit recovery programs in United States high schools. This study will analyze the perceptions of students who participated in a credit recovery program. The research and conclusions will be used by high schools as they plan, develop, and implement credit recovery programs to address concerns related to high school dropouts.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were placed on this study:

1. The study consisted of two urban high schools in Central Indiana because it is likely that urban high schools will have higher enrollment and more students participating in credit recovery than in a rural school setting.
2. The study focused on two urban high schools in Central Indiana so it does not include the experiences of students in rural school settings.
3. The study participants included high school students who have participated in credit recovery programs while enrolled in high school.
4. The study included Central Indiana secondary schools identified as having credit recovery as a dropout prevention program.
5. The study included student feedback regarding high school credit recovery programs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were defined for use in this research study:

Dropout. Students who do not finish high school and earn a diploma within four years of starting.

Dropout prevention. Programs designed to assist students who may be at risk of dropping out of high school before completion.

Credit recovery. Credit recovery is when students retake a course that they previously did not pass. In most situations, a student in credit recovery has already taken the course with face to face instruction. Due to this, some credit recovery programs allow students to take a pre-assessment and test out some of the course content (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015).

Online learning. Online learning is taking courses via the internet (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015).

Graduation rate. The percentage of students who graduate from high school within four years of entering high school.

Blended learning. Blended learning is a combination of coursework via the internet and some face to face teacher instruction (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015). This is usually accomplished by students doing some coursework at home via the internet, but then also meeting at a school location to interact with an instructor and receive additional instruction.

Early intervention. Early intervention refers to providing support and intervention for students as soon as they demonstrate signs of need.

Career Academies. Career Academies are small learning environments with a focus on preparing students for employment and the workforce. They provide a personalized learning environment for students and many wraparound services to assist students with social, emotional, and academic concerns (Estacion, D'Souza and Bozick, 2011).

Talent Development High Schools. Talent Development High Schools are designed to target incoming high school students. Students are placed in small learning communities and receive intense academic support to assist them with the transition to high school. Talent

Development High schools also typically have a career or post secondary focus and work to prepare students for life after high school (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was developed by Abraham Maslow and it was used to study motivation. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs indicates that a person's basic needs must be met in order for him or her to be motivated to perform and experience success (Maslow, 1943).

Physiological Needs. Physiological Needs are considered the most basic needs on Maslow's Hierarch of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Basic needs would include food, water, shelter.

Safety and Security Needs. Safety and security needs are the second level of basic needs identified by Maslow (Maslow, 1943). Safety and security needs would include emotional stability, health, financial stability, and protection/safety.

Love and Belonging Needs. Love and belonging needs are the middle level of Maslow's Hierarch of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Love and belonging needs would include emotional connections, social connections, feeling needed and wanted, and trust.

Self-Esteem Needs. Self-esteem needs are the fourth level in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Self-esteem needs include independence, self-respect, and self-confidence or belief in oneself.

Self-Actualization Needs. Self-actualization needs are the last level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Self-actualization needs include self-fulfillment, accomplishments, and understanding your potential.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

The remainder of this study is organized into five chapters and a bibliography. The remaining chapters will consist of Chapters Two through Five. Chapter Two is a comprehensive

review of literature related to high school dropouts, the implications of dropping out of school, dropout prevention strategies, credit recovery programs, the achievement of students in credit recovery programs, and student and staff perceptions of credit recovery programs. Chapter Three discusses the research design and data collection methods. Chapter Four analyzes the data collected and discusses findings from the study. A summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations from the study are included in Chapter Five.

Summary

Dropping out of high school is a very serious concern for high schools and those who drop out of high school. Society is greatly impacted by those who drop out and then are faced with a lifetime of financial, social, and sometimes criminal struggles. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, and the essential research questions. There is also a rationale for this study and its significance based on the limited research that has been done on credit recovery.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two includes a review of the research literature about high school dropouts, dropout prevention strategies, and the impact of credit recovery as a dropout prevention strategy. This chapter is organized as follows: review methods, conceptual framework, literature review, and summary. These major topics will be discussed: dropout statistics, dropout predictors and implications, dropout prevention strategies, credit recovery as a dropout prevention strategy, the positives and negatives of credit recovery, and the student perspective of credit recovery as a dropout prevention strategy.

Review Method

Databases were searched for peer reviewed journal articles using the following keywords: *dropout, dropout prevention, dropout prevention programs, dropout implications, credit recovery programs, concerns about credit recovery, credit recovery statistics, and online education*. After initially searching without date parameters, the topics above were searched for journal articles dated within the last 10 years. This allowed for identification of more current research and information pertaining to the research topic. Several databases were utilized to locate research, which included: Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, Eric, ProQuest, Academic Search Premier, Web of Science, and JStor. Various keyword combinations were utilized when searching each database.

Theoretical Framework

The decision to drop out of school or participate in a program designed to aid students in graduating from high school is a complicated decision for many students. Many of these

students have faced complicated life situations and are forced to make decisions about their education that could impact them for the rest of their lives. In analyzing the research and considering the effectiveness of dropout prevention programs, it is important to look at the characteristics of the programs and what made them successful or unsuccessful. After careful consideration, the theoretical framework that I will use will be Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was developed by Abraham Maslow and was used to study motivation. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs indicates that a person's basic needs must be met in order for them to be motivated to perform and experience success. As this study discusses dropout, dropout prevention strategies, and the utilization of credit recovery programs as a dropout prevention strategy, many of Maslow's identified hierarchy of needs would apply to high school students and the reasons why they drop out of high school before completion. Additionally, as dropout prevention strategies are developed, it is important for educators to consider the needs of students to ensure that adequate and high quality programs are developed to meet the needs of students.

Physiological Needs

As stated by Maslow (1943), "If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background" (p. 373). Physiological needs refer to a student's basic survival needs such as food, water, sleep, and shelter. Since these are a person's most basic needs, it would be nearly impossible for students to be productive and successful in a school setting without these needs being met. At risk students often are lacking many basic needs and it is up to schools to develop programs, provide interventions, and put supports in place that will allow students to overcome the obstacles of not having basic needs met outside of the school setting.

Safety

Safety and security needs refer to one's health, stability of family, having shelter, and employment. Each of these needs would also directly affect students and their ability to focus and be present in school each day. As indicated by Maslow (1943), people who do not have a sense of safety feel anxious and uncertain. For students in tumultuous life situations, they often lack basic safety needs and thus are anxious and uncertain about their life and future. In order to be successful, it is imperative that dropout prevention programs strive to meet this need for students and break down barriers that would further cause a lack of security for students.

Love and Belonging

Love and belonging refers to a person's family, feelings of connectedness to those closest to them, and having friends. Students who participate in dropout prevention programs are often our schools' most vulnerable and at risk students and they, therefore, often lack a sense of belonging or a positive family structure. In order to combat this need for students, schools and dropout prevention programs must allow flexibility, create a culture of acceptance, and work to create positive relationships so that students feel included. Maslow stated (1943), "those who strive for love and belonging will take great strides to feel that they have a place in a group (p. 381).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to one's belief in herself and her ability to be successful. In his initial work, Maslow stated that, "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world" (p. 382). In order for dropout prevention programs to be successful and to meet this basic need of students, they must be inclusive and must create a culture of positive support for students.

Once students begin to feel self-confidence and feel that they are capable of finishing high school, they will be more likely to succeed.

Self-actualization

Self-actualization is identified by Maslow (1943) as one's morality, purpose, and creativity. Maslow (1943) further ascertained that self-actualization could be characterized as, "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (p. 382). In order for self-actualization needs to be met within a dropout prevention program, it is necessary for students to be encouraged to meet goals and work toward future success. As students begin to experience success, they should be further challenged to meet more lofty goals that could improve their future. At risk students have often never experienced success in any aspect of their lives. Allowing opportunities for small successes will provide hope for students and will encourage them to push forward.

High School Dropouts

Dropping out of high school is a decision that can be detrimental to a person's future social, emotional, and physical well-being. Nationwide, the high school dropout rate over the last 5-10 years has slightly decreased, but the decreases are not evident in all schools and demographic areas (Balfanz et al., 2014; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). In 2014, there were still over 1,000 high schools in the United States with a graduation rate less than 60% (Litzau & Rice, 2017). For some races and subgroups, the dropout rate is substantially higher than others. The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) reported that the dropout rate in 2015-2016 for White students was 5.2%, 6.2% for Black students, and 8.6% for Hispanic students. Across the nation, some schools known as dropout factories often have dropout rates as high as 30-40% (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, DePaoli, Ingram, Maushard, 2014; Burrus & Roberts, 2012). Many

of these dropout factories are located in big cities where there is extensive poverty, high minority populations, and few resources for students and families (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Fox, DePaoli, Ingram & Maushard, 2014).

Factors Contributing to High School Dropout

While dropout statistics have been improving in some districts over the last 10 years, the factors that predict who will dropout seem to remain the same. Most researchers indicate that there is typically a culmination of many factors that lead to a student's decision to leave school prior to high school graduation (Burus & Roberts, 2012; Cabus & DeWitte, 2016; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). Some of the factors relate to a student's social and emotional well-being while others have to do with the school environment and the student's level of engagement in the school and school activities. Overall, students who do not have social, emotional, or physical resources are less likely to successfully complete high school (Pharris-Ciurej, Hirschman & Willhoft, 2012).

In an analysis of dropouts, Janosz, M., Le Blanc, M., Boulerice, B., & Tremblay R (2000) created a typology of dropouts that included four categories of dropouts. The first category were considered quiet dropouts and were identified as students who did not exhibit behavior problems and were typically engaged in school during the middle grades, but did not experience academic success. The second category were labeled disengaged dropouts and were students identified as having some behavior incidents and an overall low commitment to school activities and academics. The third category were low achiever dropouts. Low achiever dropouts did not exhibit commitment to school, misbehaved, and earned failing grades. The final category were maladjusted dropouts and were students who performed low academically and exhibited poor behavior at school.

When considering other factors that predict a student's likelihood of dropping out, most researchers focus on the student's race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, family structure, and internal motivation (Cabus & Dewitte, 2016; Lee & Burkham, 2003; Parr & Bonitz, 2015). Specifically, Burrus and Roberts (2012) identified low income, minority, male, and older than average students more likely to dropout of high school before completion. Pharris-Ciurej, Hirschman & Willhoft (2012) concluded that students coming from lower income families are 25% less likely to graduate from high school than their higher income counterparts. Students who come from families who are not active in the school, or who do not frequently communicate with the school, are at higher risk of dropping out (Landis & Reschly, 2013; Sahin, Arseven, Kilic, 2016). Students raised in single parent homes, families who have experienced domestic violence, or students who have experienced the death of a parent are likely to have poor school attendance and eventually drop out of high school before completion (Sahin, Arseven & Kilic, 2016). Additionally, many students dropout of high school in order to tend to family and employment responsibilities (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2004). While some students drop out of school as a result of a culmination of factors, Dupéré et al. (2018), concluded that some students drop out as a result of a single stressful family or life event. As stated by Boylan and Renzulli (2017), students sometimes leave school because the circumstances in their life simply make it impossible to stay in school.

There are also school level factors that impact a student's decision to leave high school before completion. Researchers identify student attendance, school mobility, lack of credits, poor grades, lack of engagement, and lack of relationships with school staff as school level factors which predict dropout potential (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Lee & Burkham, 2003; Mac Iver, 2011; McKee & Caldarella, 2016). Students who are retained at any grade level are also at

higher risk for eventual high school dropout (Bowers, 2010). In a study of Texas high school students, researchers concluded that ninth grade students who had previously been retained were identified as being six times more likely to dropout than were ninth grade students who had not been retained (Bornsheuer, Polonyi, Andrews, Fore & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Students who do not attend school regularly, or who accumulate truancies from classes, are likely to fall behind academically which leads to a lack of credits and lack of progress towards graduation. As stated by McKee and Caldarella (2016), “Excessive absenteeism is considered one of the strongest predictors of course failure and, consequently, a predictor of high school dropout” (p. 518). Researchers Hemelt & Marcotte (2013) also argue that high school exit exams increase the likelihood that twelfth grade students will drop out if there are not alternative means for graduation if students do not pass the exit exam.

Lee and Burkham (2003) identified lack of social support as a school level factor that impacts success in high school. Students who are engaged in peer groups and develop positive relationships with students and staff are more likely to experience success and complete high school. Students who are disengaged in school often exhibit behavior concerns that could then lead to disciplinary actions. Students who are frequently disciplined often experience academic difficulty due to missed class time, out of school disciplinary consequences, and overall lack of attention to school. Without proper attention and redirection, these students become disengaged and face the risk of not completing high school. While studying the effects of engagement and high school dropout, Wang & Fredericks (2013) concluded that limited school engagement and excessive problem behaviors predicted a higher likelihood of eventual high school dropout.

When studying the relationship between school climate and school dropouts, researchers Jia, Konold & Cornell (2016) found that while school and classroom expectations were

important, they must be combined with positive teacher and student relationships in order to be considered a deterrent to school dropout. Students were responsive and engaged in settings where they felt supported by their teachers, were engaged in the learning process, and felt comfortable in their educational environment. In Jia, Konold & Cornell's (2008) study, the dropout rate was 34.8% lower in schools where students reported having high levels of support from their teachers and the school staff. Lessard, Butler-Kisber, Fortin & Marcotte (2014) concluded that students with risk factors for dropout who persevered and completed high school identified positive student and teacher relationships that made them feel important as a reason that they persevered and did not drop out.

Implications of Dropping Out of School

There are great social, emotional, and economic implications for those students who do not graduate from school. Additionally, there are costs to society for adults who do not have a high school diploma. These include lower tax revenues because many dropouts are unemployed, greater public spending on healthcare for unemployed, and higher crime rates (Tyler & Lofstrom 2009; Wood, Kipperman, Esche, Leroux & Truscott, 2017). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2017) reported that if the United States had a 90% graduation rate, federal tax revenue would increase 504 million dollars, there would be 16.1 billion dollars in health care related savings, and there would be 14,260 new jobs in the United States.

Overall, the income potential for high school dropouts is limited by their lack of education (Campbell, 2015). Burrus and Roberts (2012) reported that high school dropouts earn \$9,200 less than those with a diploma. This equates to \$375,000 less earnings over a lifetime and over one million dollars less than a college graduate (Watson & Gemin, 2008). Having an education is one of the most important factors related to the elimination of poverty (Latif,

Choundhary & Hammayun, 2015). Dropouts have great difficulty attaining quality employment and often end up receiving government assistance. High school dropouts who are able to find employment are often faced with dead end jobs with no chance for advancement (Kim, 2015). In 2001, four out of every ten high school dropouts received some kind of government assistance (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006).

High school dropouts have a high likelihood of involvement in crime and eventual incarceration (Cook & Kang, 2016). When reviewing the populations of local jails and prisons, over 25% of Federal prison inmates, 40% of State prison inmates, and over 30% of those serving probation time do not have a high school diploma (Burrus & Roberts, 2012; Harlow, 2003). In a Swedish study analyzing the relationship between crime, incarceration, and education, researchers concluded that for each additional year of education, the likelihood of criminal conviction decreased by 6.7% and the likelihood of incarceration decreased by 15.5% (Hjalmarsson, Holmlund, & Lindquist, 2015).

Dropout Prevention Strategies

Nationwide, schools are often searching for solutions to the student dropout problem. Schools are always seeking ways to create positive learning environments, create viable and productive curriculum, and to ultimately keep students in school through high school graduation. In analyzing research and best practices for dropout prevention programs, the Institute of Education Sciences (2008) established six key recommendations for dropout prevention programs. The recommendations included utilizing data to assist in identifying students who are at risk of dropping out and assigning adult mentors to students so that early intervention can take place. The recommendations also included providing academic support, enrichment, and intervention as needed for all students and implementing interventions to assist with behavior

and social difficulties. Lastly, IES (2008) recommended creating a personalized learning environment and instruction setting with rigorous and engaging instruction geared towards the needs of each individual student.

While there are a variety of programs and methods that have been utilized to address the dropout problem, very few programs have actually proven to be successful. Researchers advocate for early intervention for potential dropouts so that they can receive help and services prior to making the decision to drop out or prior to becoming so far behind academically that it is difficult to recover (Dockery, 2012; McKee & Caldarella, 2016; Bowers, Sprott & Taff, 2013). Specifically, it is important to intervene with ninth grade students as they enter high school. McKee and Caldarella (2016) identified that the strongest indication of course failure in ninth grade was failing grades in middle school. For at risk students, providing early intervention before students enter high school, or as they are starting high school, could provide them with the support and interventions needed to prevent eventual high school dropout (Barry & Reschly, 2012). In a study of dropouts and potential dropouts, researchers Wexler, Pyle & Fall (2015) concluded that using adult mentors as an early intervention strategy had positive effects on students who were identified as at risk for not finishing high school.

Many programs have not been successful because they were not tailored to meet the specific needs of individual students (Mac Iver, 2011). Students identified as at risk for high school dropout need early and intense support and intervention in order to successfully complete high school on time. Researchers Freeman and Simonsen (2015) advocated that no single intervention will curtail student dropout and that schools must implement tiered support and address overall school procedures in order to curtail student dropout prior to graduation.

Researchers from North Carolina studied dropout prevention efforts over 23 high schools and

concluded that schools had to make significant changes in the areas of behavior, academic support, mentoring, and the transition from middle school to high school in order to have an effect on student dropout (Robertson, Smith & Rinka, 2016). Career Academies, Talent Development High Schools, and alternative programs promoting high school redirection have frequently been identified as dropout prevention programs that have experienced success (MacIver 2011, Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009). Credit recovery as a dropout prevention strategy is also becoming more and more widespread across high schools in the United States.

Career Academies

Career academies have been identified by various researchers as an effective dropout prevention strategy (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; MacIver, 2011). Career academies are designed as small learning communities which provide intense individual support and guidance for students (Kemple & Willner, 2008; Estacion, D'Souza & Bozick, 2011). Career Academies are typically designed with an industry or career cluster focus where small groups of students with similar career interests take more than one class together. The teaching staff are usually arranged in teams with academic teachers and industry experts teaching together (Estacion, D'Souza & Bozick, 2011). Career academies rely heavily on industry and business partnerships to provide resources for programs, allow for workplace and internship experiences for students, and often provide mentors and support for students as needed. Students often experience success in the career academy setting because of the small environment, academic focus on areas of interest to the student, and personal connections established with their teams of teachers and the school staff.

Talent Development

Many researchers have also identified Talent Development High Schools as another effective dropout prevention strategy (Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016; Mac Iver, 2011; Wood et al, 2017). Talent Development High Schools are designed to target ninth grade students and keep them on track for on time graduation from high school. Developed by researchers at the Center for Research on Education of Students Placed At Risk at Johns Hopkins University, Talent Development High Schools isolate ninth grade students into their own wing or floor of a high school (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). They become their own small learning community and students are provided intense academic, social, and emotional support (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016). The small learning communities are typically based on career themes, the students remain together throughout their high school years, teachers receive intense and focused professional development, and families are involved in the educational process (Wood et al, 2017). In order to ease the transition to high school, students are taught study skills and receive tutoring as needed. Students are also able to start credit recovery as early as their ninth grade year as needed so that they do not fall behind (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2016).

Credit Recovery

School leaders consistently face pressure to improve graduation rates and keep students in school in order to keep funding levels up. In most states, each student enrolled in school equates to funding that the school receives so it is imperative that schools maintain enrollment and student attendance in school. With this reality, schools are always looking for ways to keep students enrolled in some form of school and ensure that they graduate on time (Hoyle & Collier, 2006). Credit recovery and online education options are becoming more and more popular as school leaders seek to expand the options available to students. Traditional online credit

recovery programs depend on student self-learning, little teacher and student interaction and a necessity for students to work quickly through coursework to get back on track for high school graduation (Tromiski-Kligshirn & Miura, 2018).

Students who fail core academic classes and begin losing credits at the beginning of high school are at great risk of eventual high school dropout (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). This includes students who are retained, students who fail classes, and students who fail to regularly attend school. Alternative education credit recovery programs are one way to address the problem of students falling behind academically. Credit recovery programs allow students to take a class that they have failed in order to recover credits needed for graduation. By making up credits, students are more likely to stay on track academically and less likely to eventually drop out. Researchers Miura and Trominski-Klingshirn (2017) analyzed information from students who participated in a credit recovery program in a large Midwestern high school. They collected data and information about what led to the students' needs to participate in credit recovery and how they perceived school counselors could assist students when they enter high school so that they don't fall behind in classes and require credit recovery. Recommendations included high school counselors communicating with middle school counselors and administrators regarding incoming students' social, emotional, and academic needs so that they can be addressed before problems arise during the freshman year (Miura & Trominski-Kligshirn, 2017).

Most credit recovery programs are online programs run by school districts or by online vendors. There are many online curriculum providers currently used by schools. Some common online commercial companies are Plato, Pearson, and Apex (Plummer, 2012). Credit recovery programs allow flexibility and can meet varying needs of high school students who are teen parents, must work, or face various social or emotional barriers. Online credit recovery

programs also allow school attendance during non-traditional classroom hours, address issues related to classroom space, and often allow students to do some school work outside of school walls (Ingerham, 2012). Credit recovery programs are usually utilized for eleventh and twelfth grade students at risk of not graduating, but can be utilized as early as ninth and tenth grade if students begin failing high school courses needed for graduation.

Researchers estimate that over 50% of school districts now have students participating in online courses (Viano, 2017). Of the students enrolled in online education, 78% of all school districts have at least some students enrolled in online education courses and 62% were students participating in credit recovery courses (Queen & Lewis, 2011). One noted online and credit recovery educational option is the Florida Virtual School. Not only do Florida schools use Florida Virtual, but other United States High Schools also utilize the Florida Virtual program and curriculum. With over 410,000 online enrollments during the 2012-2013 school year, the Florida Virtual School began a credit recovery program to aid credit deficient students (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015). With each passing year, more and more schools are utilizing credit recovery programs and many are reporting success in the outcomes. In 2016, Georgia utilized 20,700 online credit recovery classes and Los Angeles Public Schools attributed its highest graduation rate ever to the use of credit recovery courses (Noonan, 2016).

Types of Credit Recovery

In the last several years, credit recovery has become a popular source of intervention for many schools across the United States. There are various types of credit recovery programs utilized by schools. These programs, which will each be discussed in this section, are utilized as a flexible option for schools to meet the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out of high

school prior to completion. Popular types of credit recovery include: online credit recovery, blended learning credit recovery, and teacher directed credit recovery.

Online Credit Recovery

Online credit recovery has become a widely used platform for schools attempting to ensure students are able to take courses in a flexible learning environment. While it does allow flexibility, researchers believe that schools must still have strict parameters in place in order to ensure accountability, integrity of courses, and that students are receiving the full benefit of the educational experience. In a North Carolina study about online learning, researcher Shantia Kerr (2011) highlighted research on three high schools using online platforms as an educational option for students. Kerr (2011) identified several techniques as most conducive to student learning in an online environment. These included providing timely feedback to students, utilizing many sources of academic content, allowing for student choice in coursework options, utilizing rubrics when assessing some student work, requiring student ownership in management of learning goals and plans, and integrating some authentic learning experiences along with the online content (Kerr, 2011).

Researchers identify online credit recovery as an attractive option for students because it is typically self-paced and work is done independently at the convenience of the student. Self-paced and independent work options are particularly appealing to students who feel hopeless and believe that they are too far behind to catch upon required coursework (Barnett, 2016; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006). Some online programs allow students to take a pre-assessment. If students do well on the pre-assessment, they do not have to complete all of the coursework which allows them to finish courses much quicker than in a traditional class setting (Pettyjohn &

LaFrance, 2014; Oliver & Kellogg, 2015). For many students, this is very attractive as it allows them to work through the coursework and recover needed credits at a much quicker pace. This, however, is also a source of controversy as some believe that this takes away from the rigor that students would experience in a traditional classroom setting.

Blended Learning Credit Recovery

While online credit recovery options allow for great flexibility and can meet the needs of students in a variety of unique life situations, some believe that a blended learning environment is more effective in ensuring that students receive the necessary support and instructional guidance needed to be successful. In a blended learning environment, students receive some face-to-face instruction to supplement their online coursework. Students also are usually required to participate in discussion boards, instant messaging, or other modes of communication between the course instructors and students (Barnett, 2016). For example, a program in Jackson, Michigan caters to students who have been suspended or expelled from school, or students who are involved in the juvenile justice system (Desoff, 2009). In order to meet the individual needs of students and to ensure that students have an opportunity to connect with a teacher, students spend half of their time receiving face to face instruction learning basic concepts while the other half of their time is spent on an online platform with a teacher available to answer questions and provide academic support (Desoff, 2009). Similarly, Chicago Public Schools requires that credit recovery students have an adult mentor to assist them with communication with instructors, assistance with acquisition of needed educational resources, and to tutor students as needed (Plummer, 2012).

Powell, Roberts, & Patrick (2015) identified several key components of blended learning credit recovery options. These included allowing for personalized instruction for students,

including tutoring, academic support, counseling, and other supports as required by the student's individual needs. Similarly, Cohen (2017) concluded that when instructors are monitoring a student's online progress they are able to intervene earlier and provide support and redirection as needed. Powell, Roberts, & Patrick (2015) also suggested utilization of diagnostic testing to allow students to progress through curriculum more rapidly if they demonstrated proficiency. Finally, it was suggested that personalized content, activities, and offline activities be used to assist with student understanding and engagement (Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015).

Student Perceptions of Credit Recovery

In a study of student perceptions and evaluation of an online only credit recovery experience, students stated that they believe they would have had a better experience in a blended learning environment (Barnett, 2016). Students expressed a need for support and assistance from instructors, individual instruction when needed, and someone to care about them and their situation (Barnett, 2016; Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006). When analyzing an online program in Montana, researchers Velasquez, Graham & West (2013) discovered that while students preferred the online environment, they also needed interaction and feedback from their instructors in order to experience success.

In a study conducted by Pettyjohn and LaFrance (2014), at risk students identified several positives of their participation in an online credit recovery program. These included choice, flexibility of where and when they worked, and reduced distractions while working online. Students also discussed negatives such as limited communication with instructors, lack of personal motivation to complete the work independently, and technology complications (Pettyjohn and LaFrance, 2014). Pettyjohn and LaFrance (2014) suggested that, "A system of supports that is

scaffolded to meet the needs of individual learners will likely yield the greatest results and promote student independence with lifelong benefits.”

Concerns with Credit Recovery Programs

As credit recovery programs have become more and more popular across the United States, some concerns and criticisms have arisen from educators and school leaders. Credit recovery programs are intended to be an alternative option for students to graduate from high school, however, if the credit recovery program lacks rigor and academic support needed by students, the program could provide a lower quality of education (Franco & Patel, 2011; Powell, Roberts & Patrick, 2015). Some critics also argue that students move through online coursework so quickly, and without adequate supervision, so they don't receive a real benefit of learning (Pettyjohn & LaFrance, 2014). Students are sometimes allowed multiple attempts at tests and quizzes without any academic support or remediation in between attempts. In an attempt to ensure students pass courses in a timely fashion, teachers are often instructed to do whatever it takes to assist students in passing the class. In a study of some New York high schools using online credit recovery programs, staff conveyed concerns related to academic integrity, the quality of the online curriculum, and the lack of face to face interaction between instructors and students (Clements, Zweig & Pazzaglia, 2015).

Summary

This chapter summarized background information about high school dropouts, common predictors for high school dropout, and implications for dropping out of high school. Additionally, this chapter contains a review of current literature related to dropout prevention strategies, specifically focusing on credit recovery programs and their benefits and challenges. One major

idea that emerged is that there are dire personal and societal implications for students who do not complete high school. These include limited income potential due to lack of employment opportunities, higher chances for involvement with crime, and overall lower quality of life. Another major idea that emerged is that online credit recovery options are becoming more widespread in many United States high schools and that the programs take many different forms in order to effectively serve students. Some programs are strictly online, but some offer blended learning opportunities so that students can interact and receive support from an instructor. Some programs are a combination of both. There are also credit recovery programs that provide teacher led instruction and support for students.

There is currently extensive research related to high school dropouts and dropout prevention strategies, but there is limited research on the effectiveness of credit recovery programs as a dropout prevention strategy. There is also limited research from the perspectives of students who participate in credit recovery programs. The gaps in identified research are the basis for this study on credit recovery programs, their effectiveness and challenges, along with the perception of students who have participated in credit recovery programs as high school students.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Students who fail core academic classes and begin losing credits at the beginning of high school are at great risk of eventual high school dropout (Burrus & Roberts, 2012). This includes students who are retained, students who fail classes, and students who fail to regularly attend school. Alternative education credit recovery programs are one way to address the problem of students falling behind academically. The focus of this dissertation is high school credit recovery programs and how they impact students and staff. This includes analyzing student perception of credit recovery programs and how they aided the ability for at risk students to graduate from high school.

This chapter begins with a review of the research design for this study. Following the research design, there is a description of the sample utilized in this study. This includes demographic information for each of the schools identified in the study. Next, the instruments used in the study are described and information about the data collection process is explained. Following this, the data analysis and limitations of the study are explained.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine student perceptions about the credit recovery program in two selected Indiana high schools. This includes how student perception correlates to demographic and motivational variables.

Research Questions

The research question that guided my work is as follows:

1. What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

2. What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

Research Design

A quantitative research design was selected as the most appropriate manner to evaluate student perceptions of their experiences in credit recovery programs in select Indiana high schools. According to Creswell (2014), survey research “provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 201). Quantitative analysis in this study included evaluation of the following types of data: student demographic data and student perception of their experiences in credit recovery. A survey was administered to gather information about student perception of credit recovery programs, along with background information on credit recovery participants. Survey participants also responded to two open-ended questions about their credit recovery experience. at the conclusion of their survey.

Description of the Sample

This study contains data and information from two urban high schools in Indiana. The high schools will include: Adams High School and Boulder High School¹. Each of the high schools were selected because they are urban Indiana high schools and they each utilize credit recovery programs as a dropout prevention strategy. Additionally, both of the schools are using various methods of credit recovery within their programs. At each school identified, students participating in credit recovery programs were given the survey. To give background on each of the high schools in the study, Table 1 provides basic demographic information, along with graduate and dropout rates for the 2017-2018 school year.

¹ For confidentiality purposes, a pseudonym was used for each school name.

*Table 1:**Comparison Data for Adams, Rockwell, and Boulder High Schools*

| School | Adams | Boulder |
|------------------------|--|--|
| School Enrollment | 1,784 | 3,236 |
| Free and Reduced Lunch | 66% | 74% |
| Ethnic Background | 55% White 25% Black 13% Hispanic 7% Multi | 31% White 36% Black 27% Hispanic 5% Multi 1% Asian |
| Graduation Rate | 93.8% | 92.8% |
| Dropout Rate | .5% | 1% |

As demonstrated by the data in Table 1, Adams High School has a significantly lower enrollment than Boulder High School. Although Boulder High School has a higher enrollment and slightly different student demographics, it does have a similar free and reduced lunch rate to Adams High School. Both high schools participating in the study have similar graduation and dropout rates. In both schools, students were enrolled in various courses in order to work towards completion of their high school diploma.

Instrumentation

For purposes of this study, a survey was utilized to collect data and information from students participating in high school credit recovery programs. The survey addressed student perception of the environment of their credit recovery program, the support they received while enrolled in the program, their effort while participating in credit recovery, and their level of motivation. The survey also asked students for basic demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, year of school, and type of household setup.

Survey

In order to answer the identified research questions, a quantitative survey with two open ended questions was utilized. The survey utilized for this study was an anonymous online survey. The survey was developed by the researcher and tested for reliability prior to its implementation. In order to determine the reliability of the survey prior to implementation, students who did not participate in the research study were administered the survey one time. As stated by Gliem & Gliem (2003), "Cronbach's alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test." Following the survey administration, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to determine survey reliability. Based on the feedback from field testing, no adjustments and modification were made to the survey prior to final implementation.

Data Collection

At each high school, students participating in credit recovery were surveyed. All surveys were anonymous and administered via the Qualtrics online survey system. For each district participating in the study, the superintendent provided permission for their program participation in this research study. Those receiving the surveys were first directed to a consent form which outlined the specifics of the study and asked for participant consent prior to advancing to the survey questions. A reminder was sent to all survey participants two weeks after the initial survey distribution. Once the survey data was collected, it was kept confidential and stored on a password protected computer at all times.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the survey data, all survey information was downloaded into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). SPSS allowed the analysis of the data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the means,

standard deviations, and frequencies of the survey participants. This included: gender, race, family structure, and perception of credit recovery programs.

Inferential statistics (ANOVA, MANOVA, and correlations) were utilized to analyze information identified in the research questions. Specifically, the following items were studied: student perception of credit recovery rigor, student belief in motivation from credit recovery program, student perception of the support and motivation they received as a credit recovery student, and student perception of credit recovery program as a dropout prevention tool. For purposes of this study, student perceptions were categorized and analyzed using the levels of need associated with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Each survey question pertaining to student perception was labeled as relating to one of the levels of need. Pearson Correlations were utilized to analyze the relationship between the needs and to identify which needs students perceived as most important while participating in a credit recovery program. MANOVA and ANOVA were utilized to compare student perceptions to student demographics and attempt to identify significant relationships between student demographics and their levels of need.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations were identified as part of this study:

1. Some staff and students did not complete the surveys.
2. Only two schools were utilized to gather this study data.
3. My school district was utilized for this study, however, at the time this study was conducted, I did not serve as the direct supervisor of the credit recovery program.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze student perception of credit recovery programs as a dropout prevention strategy. In order to answer the identified research question, a quantitative research study was utilized. Research participants included students from two urban high schools in Indiana. A survey was utilized to gather information from study participants. Once the data was collected from the surveys, it was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. These statistics allowed the researcher to analyze for patterns, consistency, and relationships among student perceptions. Due to the nature of this research study, there were some basic limitations to the study. Chapter Four discusses the findings from the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Chapter Four begins with a reminder of the purpose of the study and the research questions. It is followed by a summary of data from the student pilot survey, a description of the demographic data of the students from the participating school districts, along with descriptive statistics of the students who participated in the study. The subsequent sections of this chapter are arranged by the research questions that guided this study and will address the inferential statistical analysis regarding each research question. The chapter concludes with a summary section highlighting the key findings within the chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine student perceptions towards the credit recovery environment in two selected schools in order to identify the credit recovery environment, student perception of the credit recovery programs, and how student motivation may influence the students' ability to complete high school.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my work are as follows:

1. What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?
2. What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

Results of the Pilot Survey

Before disseminating the surveys to the participants of this study, a pilot survey was administered to a group of people that did not participate in this study. The survey was administered via Qualtrics and the data was exported into SPSS to establish reliability using Cronbach's alpha. As noted in Chapter Three, Gliem & Gliem (2003) state, "Cronbach's alpha is a test reliability technique that requires only a single test administration to provide a unique estimate of the reliability for a given test." Cronbach's alpha results that are greater than 0.70 are considered reliable. Each survey question produced a Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.70 and the overall survey reliability was 0.90. These Cronbach alpha results established the reliability of the survey. The survey was then disseminated to participating students.

Participant Demographics

Credit recovery students from two Indiana high schools participated in this study. In total, 131 students completed the online survey. The response rate to this survey is undetermined because the survey link was provided to current students and graduates from two different schools. This section provides a description of the demographic data of the students who participated in this study. Demographic data were collected from each student in the areas of grade level, gender, ethnicity, and type of household the student lived in. Demographic data are displayed in Table 2 below. More male students completed the credit recovery survey than female students. The highest percentage of students were high school seniors, while a small percentage were high school juniors or graduates. Half of all students who completed the survey identified their ethnicity as white. The remaining percentage of students identified as Black, Hispanic, multi-racial, American Indian, or other ethnicity. Equal percentages of students stated

they lived with one parent (37%) or both parents (37%). All other survey participants stated that they resided with grandparents or another living arrangement.

Table 2:

Respondent Demographics

| | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 70 | 53% |
| Female | 50 | 38% |
| Grade | | |
| High School Junior | 20 | 15% |
| High School Senior | 91 | 70% |
| High School Graduate | 3 | 2.3% |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 65 | 50% |
| Black | 26 | 20% |
| Hispanic | 16 | 12% |
| Other | 15 | 11% |
| Household | | |
| One parent | 48 | 37% |
| Both parents | 48 | 37% |
| Grandparents | 5 | 4% |
| Other | 21 | 16% |

Descriptive Statistics

Survey questions were administered via a five-point Likert scale with ratings of *strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree*. Tables 3-7 display the frequency data of the student responses. Survey questions were grouped according to association with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in order to assess student perception based upon specific motivations.

Table 3 displays student responses based upon questions identified as associating with physiological needs. 41% (n=53) students *strongly agreed* that they were provided breakfast

when they attended credit recovery programs. Additionally, 34% (n=44) students responded that they were provided access to food resources on the weekend and on school breaks.

Table 3:

Physiological Needs Frequency Table

| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Breakfast | 53 (40.5%) | 22(16.8%) | 28(21.4%) | 3(2.3%) | 4(3.1%) |
| Clothing | 23(17.6%) | 26(19.8%) | 39(29.8%) | 11(8.4%) | 11(8.4%) |
| Meal Assistance | 21(16.0%) | 23(17.6%) | 39(29.8%) | 14(10.7%) | 12(9.2%) |
| Health Resources | 24(18.3%) | 29(22.1%) | 41(31.3%) | 9(6.9%) | 7(5.3%) |

Table 4 displays student responses based upon questions identified as associating with safety and security needs. 37% (n=48) students *strongly agreed* that the classroom setup and flexibility of the credit recovery program made them comfortable. Likewise, 45% (n=59) students *strongly agreed* that the program flexibility allowed them to work and finish school. Nearly 70% (n=91) of students surveyed *agreed* that they felt safe and secure while participating in the credit recovery program.

Table 4:

Safety and Security Needs Frequency Table

| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Classroom setup/ flexibility made me comfortable | 48(36.6%) | 33(25.2%) | 19(14.5%) | 5(3.8%) | 4(3.1%) |
| Program flexibility allowed me to work and finish school | 59(45%) | 32(24.4%) | 15(11.5%) | 3(2.3%) | 1(.8%) |
| Feel safe and secure while participating in credit rec program | 49(37.4%) | 42(32.8) | 14(10.7%) | 2(1.5%) | 2(1.5%) |

Table 5 displays student responses based upon questions identified as associating with love and belonging needs. 68% (n=89) students *agreed* that the credit recovery program encouraged them to stay in school and finish their diploma. 22% (n=29) students *strongly agreed* that the program was enjoyable and 24% (n=32) students agreed that the program was enjoyable. 65% (n=85) of survey respondents *agreed* that the encouragement from their credit recovery instructor increased their effort. 45% (n=59) of students *agreed* that they felt encouraged by their peers. 26% (n=34) students felt *neutral* when asked if they were encouraged by their peers.

Table 5:

Love/Belonging Needs

| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Encourage me to stay in school and finish diploma | 54(41.2%) | 35(26.7%) | 15(11.5%) | 4(3.1%) | 2(1.5%) |
| Program was enjoyable | 29(22.1%) | 32(24.4%) | 28(21.4%) | 12(9.2%) | 7(5.3%) |
| Encouragement from instructor increased my effort | 42(32.1%) | 43(32.8%) | 19(14.5%) | 3(2.3%) | 3(2.3%) |
| Felt encouraged by my peers | 25(19.1%) | 34(26.0%) | 34(26.0%) | 7(5.3%) | 8(6.1%) |

Table 6 displays student responses based upon questions identified as associating with self-esteem needs. 64% (n=84) of students surveyed *agreed* that the credit recovery program increased their confidence to finish high school. 56% (n=73) students *agreed* that the credit recovery program motivated them to attend school more often than in a traditional school setting. 62% (n=81) of students *agreed* that they were more motivated to work on their courses while enrolled in the credit recovery program. 66% (n=87) of surveyed students *agreed* that the ability to work independently on their coursework helped them succeed.

Table 6:

Self Esteem Needs

| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Increased my confidence to finish high school | 43(32.8%) | 41(31.3%) | 19(14.5%) | 5(3.8%) | 2(1.5%) |
| Motivated me to attend school more often than a traditional school setting | 35(26.7%) | 38(29.0%) | 26(19.8%) | 7(5.3%) | 4(3.1%) |
| More motivated to work on my courses | 39(29.8%) | 42(32.1%) | 20(15.3%) | 7(5.3%) | 2(1.5%) |
| Ability to work independently helped me succeed | 54(41.2%) | 33(25.2%) | 18(13.7%) | 3(2.3%) | 1(.8%) |

Table 7 displays student responses based upon questions identified as associating with self-actualization needs. 65% (n=85) of surveyed students *agreed* that they felt comfortable with school while participating in the credit recovery program. 42% (n=56) of students *agreed* that the credit recovery program prepared them for college and/or the workforce. 15% (n=20) students *disagreed* that the credit recovery program prepared them for college and/or the workforce. 45% (n=59) of students *agreed* that the credit recovery online instruction was difficult at times, but 47% (n=62) of students *agreed* that their learning increased while enrolled in the credit recovery program. 66% (n=87) of students *agreed* that they would recommend the credit recovery program to anyone considering dropping out of high school.

Table 7:

Self-Actualization Needs Frequency Table

| | <i>Strongly Agree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Neutral</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Strongly Disagree</i> |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Felt comfortable with school while participating in credit recovery | 43(32.8%) | 42(32.1%) | 17(13.0%) | 4(3.1%) | 4(3.1%) |
| Program prepared me for college and/or workforce | 24(18.3%) | 32(24.4%) | 34(26.0%) | 13(9.9%) | 7(5.3%) |
| Online instruction was difficult at times | 18(13.7%) | 41(31.3%) | 33(25.2%) | 12(9.2%) | 6(4.6%) |
| Learning increased with credit recovery program | 29(22.1%) | 33(25.2%) | 37(28.2%) | 7(5.3%) | 4(3.1%) |
| Would recommend credit recovery to anyone considering dropping out of high school | 54(41.2%) | 33(25.2%) | 18(13.7%) | 4(3.1%) | 1(.8%) |

Inferential Data Analysis

This study examined student perceptions of their credit recovery program. Additionally, this study analyzed student perceptions related to motivations based upon Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). This section will address each of the research questions by means of inferential statistical analysis. The data below will address the first research question, **“What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?”**

Table 8 below displays the Pearson Correlations, means, and standard deviations of student responses as categorized by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In order to answer the research question, the means were first analyzed for significance. While physiological needs have a higher mean value than all other needs ($M=2.48$), all variables were highly correlated with one another.

Correlation is a technique used to investigate the relationship between variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) is a measure of the strength of the association between variables. Correlations are considered significant when $p<0.05$ and highly significant when $p<0.01$. Table 9 below displays the correlations when comparing student perceptions (as identified by need). There is a statistically significant correlation between all needs ($p<0.01$). The strongest correlations exist between self-actualization needs and self esteem needs ($r=.832$, $p=.000$). There are also strong correlations between self-esteem needs and safety and security needs ($r=.809$, $p=.000$) and love and belonging needs and self-esteem ($r=.796$, $p=.000$). In other words, student survey responses indicated that all needs were important when analyzing their credit recovery experiences.

Table 8:

Pearson Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations Associated with Maslow's Needs

| Needs | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| Physiological Needs | 2.48 | .940 | 1.0 | | | | |
| Safety/Security Needs | 1.78 | .855 | .367 | 1 | | | |
| Love/Belonging Needs | 2.12 | .841 | .538 | .785 | 1.0 | | |
| Self-Esteem Needs | 1.96 | .831 | .412 | .813 | .825 | 1.0 | |
| Self-Actualization Needs | 2.22 | .720 | .488 | .797 | .784 | .834 | 1.0 |

The second research question, **“What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?”** investigated the difference in student perceptions based upon the independent variables of gender, ethnicity, year in school and type of household. For purposes of this research study, student perceptions were based upon the levels of need, as outlined in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (often displayed as a pyramid). In order to investigate the demographic variables that most correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs, a between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was first considered to be run on the five dependent variables associated with the needs of the respondents: physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs. Before running the MANOVA, a series of Pearson correlations were performed between the five dependent variables to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be moderately correlated with each other (Meyer, Gampst, & Guarino, 2006).

Table 9 above displays a meaningful pattern of correlations amongst most of the dependent variables, suggesting that multicollinearity may be present. It is well known that using very highly positively correlated dependent variables is wasteful. MANOVA works best with highly negatively correlated dependent variables and acceptably well with moderately correlated variables in either direction (about $|\cdot 9|$) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Additional assumptions such as (1) independent random sampling, (2) level and measurement of the variables, (3) multivariate normality, (4) absence of outlier, and (4) homogeneity of variance were satisfied.

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics on student perception by gender, year of high school, ethnicity, and type of household. As indicated by the data, the male mean values were

higher on all needs. The highest mean value was male physiological needs ($M=2.42$) and the lowest mean value was female safety and security needs ($M=1.55$). Junior students had higher mean values than seniors/grads in all needs. In looking at ethnicity, students identified as black had higher mean values in all needs with the exception of love and belonging ($M=2.12$).

Students living in one parent household had the highest mean values in physiological needs ($M=2.80$) and self-actualization needs ($M=2.25$). Students living with both parents had the highest mean values in safety/security needs ($M=1.87$) and self-esteem needs ($M=2.03$).

Table 9:

Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviation) on Student Perception by Gender, Year of High School, Ethnicity, Type of Household

| | Needs | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|------|------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|
| | Physiological | | Safety/Sec | | Love/Bel | | Self-Est | | Self-Act | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 2.41 | 1.04 | 1.55 | .943 | 1.88 | .771 | 1.80 | .790 | 2.07 | .591 |
| Male | 2.53 | .887 | 1.91 | .889 | 2.25 | .833 | 2.02 | .809 | 2.30 | .765 |
| Year of HS | | | | | | | | | | |
| Junior | 2.80 | .872 | 1.93 | .902 | 2.28 | .920 | 2.09 | .803 | 2.27 | .649 |
| Senior/Grad | 2.44 | .970 | 1.77 | .855 | 1.93 | .841 | 1.93 | .845 | 2.21 | .742 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | |
| White | 2.47 | .881 | 1.73 | .809 | 2.17 | .802 | 1.97 | .838 | 2.20 | .615 |
| Black | 2.88 | 1.17 | 1.92 | .809 | 2.12 | 1.05 | 1.99 | 1.03 | 2.34 | 1.03 |
| Hispanic | 2.21 | .859 | 1.90 | .583 | 2.04 | .853 | 1.97 | .682 | 2.26 | .512 |
| Others | 2.38 | .853 | 1.83 | .875 | 2.07 | .756 | 1.94 | .734 | 2.19 | .847 |
| Type of House | | | | | | | | | | |
| One Parent | 2.80 | .931 | 1.73 | .914 | 2.12 | .847 | 1.89 | .953 | 2.25 | .831 |
| Both Parents | 2.27 | .914 | 1.87 | .814 | 2.13 | .844 | 2.03 | .778 | 2.23 | .566 |
| Other | 2.43 | .887 | 1.79 | .767 | 2.15 | .847 | 1.98 | .724 | 2.20 | .788 |

Multivariate Tests

Since the multivariate normality assumption was not satisfied, Pillai's Trace was used to assess significance of F. The multivariate tests failed to detect any main or interaction effects between the demographics and student perception (based upon needs). Table 11 below displays the tests of between-subjects effects.

Table 10:

Summary of Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

| Effect or Variable | Value Pillai's Trace | F | Hypo df | Error df | Sig | n |
|--------------------|----------------------|------|---------|----------|------|------|
| Gender | .152 | 2.08 | 5.00 | 58.0 | .081 | .152 |
| Ethnicity | .239 | 1.04 | 15.0 | 180. | .416 | .080 |
| Household | .166 | 1.07 | 10.0 | 118. | .393 | .083 |
| Year in School | .049 | .594 | 5.00 | 58.0 | .705 | .049 |

Following analysis of the Pillai's Trace results, tests of between subjects were conducted to analyze the effect of the demographic variables on student needs. As shown in Table 12, the between subjects tests indicate no significant difference between any demographic variable and student needs.

Table 11:

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

| Effect or Variable | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig | Partial Eta Sq |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----|-------------|------|------|----------------|
| Year in School | | | | | | |
| Physiological Needs | .428 | 1 | .428 | .504 | .480 | .008 |
| Safety/Security Needs | .303 | 1 | .303 | .418 | .520 | .007 |
| Love/Belonging Needs | 1.19 | 1 | 1.19 | .000 | 1.00 | .000 |
| Self-Esteem Needs | .045 | 1 | .045 | .062 | .804 | .001 |
| Self-Actualization Needs | .030 | 1 | .030 | .058 | .811 | .001 |
| Gender | | | | | | |
| Physiological Needs | .122 | 1 | .122 | .143 | .706 | .002 |
| Safety/Security Needs | 2.38 | 1 | 2.38 | 3.28 | .075 | .050 |
| Love/Belonging Needs | .072 | 1 | .072 | .099 | .754 | .002 |
| Self-Esteem Needs | .145 | 1 | .145 | .199 | .657 | .003 |
| Self-Actualization Needs | 1.22 | 1 | 1.22 | 2.33 | .132 | .036 |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | |
| Physiological Needs | .277 | 3 | .092 | .109 | .955 | .005 |
| Safety/Security Needs | 3.87 | 3 | 1.29 | 1.78 | .161 | .079 |
| Love/Belonging Needs | .965 | 3 | .322 | .441 | .724 | .021 |
| Self-Esteem Needs | .925 | 3 | .308 | .422 | .738 | .020 |
| Self-Actualization | 1.33 | 3 | .442 | .845 | .475 | .039 |
| Type of Household | | | | | | |
| Physiological Needs | 3.99 | 2 | 1.99 | 2.35 | .104 | .070 |
| Safety/Security Needs | 2.02 | 2 | 1.01 | 1.40 | .256 | .043 |
| Love/Belonging Needs | 1.71 | 2 | .859 | 1.18 | .314 | .037 |
| Self-Esteem Needs | 1.26 | 2 | .631 | .865 | .426 | .027 |
| Self-Actualization Needs | 2.26 | 2 | 1.13 | 2.16 | .124 | .065 |

Due to the fact that all of the variables were shown to have high correlation and since the MANOVA did not produce any statistical significance between the demographic variables, individual one-way ANOVAs were conducted using each independent variable. In most of the one-way ANOVAs, the outcomes indicated no levels of significance. Significance, however,

was indicated on a few of the variables. A brief reference to the results is outlined in the following paragraphs.

The first set of one way ANOVAs, which included a comparison of the students' year in school (junior, senior or graduate) with their perceptions of credit recovery based upon needs, proved to have no statistically significant results. Next, a one way ANOVA was run using students' gender and their perceptions based upon needs. As indicated in Table 12, significance was identified between student gender and safety and security needs ($p=.040$). Additionally, significance was detected between student gender and love and belonging needs ($p=.031$).

Table 12:
ANOVA Gender and Student Perceptions (Needs)

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig |
|--------------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Physiological | .305 | 1 | .305 | .341 | .561 |
| Safety/Security | 2.99 | 1 | 2.99 | 4.34 | .040 |
| Love/Belonging | 3.13 | 1 | 3.13 | 4.77 | .031 |
| Self-Esteem | 1.17 | 1 | 1.17 | 1.81 | .181 |
| Self-Actualization | 1.30 | 1 | 1.30 | 2.63 | .108 |

The next set of one way ANOVAs, which included a comparison of student ethnicity with their perception of credit recovery based upon needs (physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, self-actualization) proved to have no statistically significant results. The final set of one way ANOVAs compared the type students' type of household (one parent, both parents, other) with their perception of credit recovery based upon needs. As shown in Table 13, four of the needs (love and belonging, safety and security, self-esteem, self-

actualization) showed no statistical significance. Physiological needs, however, were statistically significant when compared to the students' type of household ($p=.037$).

Table 13:

ANOVA Type of Household and Student Perceptions (Needs)

| | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig |
|--------------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Physiological | 5.70 | 2 | 2.85 | 3.41 | .037 |
| Safety/Security | .396 | 2 | .193 | .259 | .773 |
| Love/Belonging | .010 | 2 | .005 | .007 | .993 |
| Self-Esteem | .373 | 2 | .186 | .267 | .766 |
| Self-Actualization | .033 | 2 | .016 | .032 | .969 |

Open Ended Survey Questions

The study also gathered open ended responses to two questions regarding student perceptions of their credit recovery experiences. These open ended questions were analyzed for common themes using descriptive coding. As stated by Saldana (2016), "Descriptive coding leads primarily to a categorized inventory, tabular account, summary, or index of the data's contents." The data in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below indicate that students felt like participation in the credit recovery program helped them graduate, was easier, and allowed them the flexibility to work at their own pace. Some students also stated that the program gave them greater confidence and that they were motivated by their instructors.

For the open-ended question, "What are your thoughts on participating in the credit recovery program?," many students stated that the credit recovery program was good and that it allowed them to graduate on time. One specific comment, "I have very good thoughts on it only

because it could really save somebody from going through that bad path of dropping out of school.” highlighted the importance of credit recovery programs in allowing students an alternative to high school which prevented them from eventually dropping out before completion of high school. Students also stated that it was, “fun” and that it “made my confidence better.”

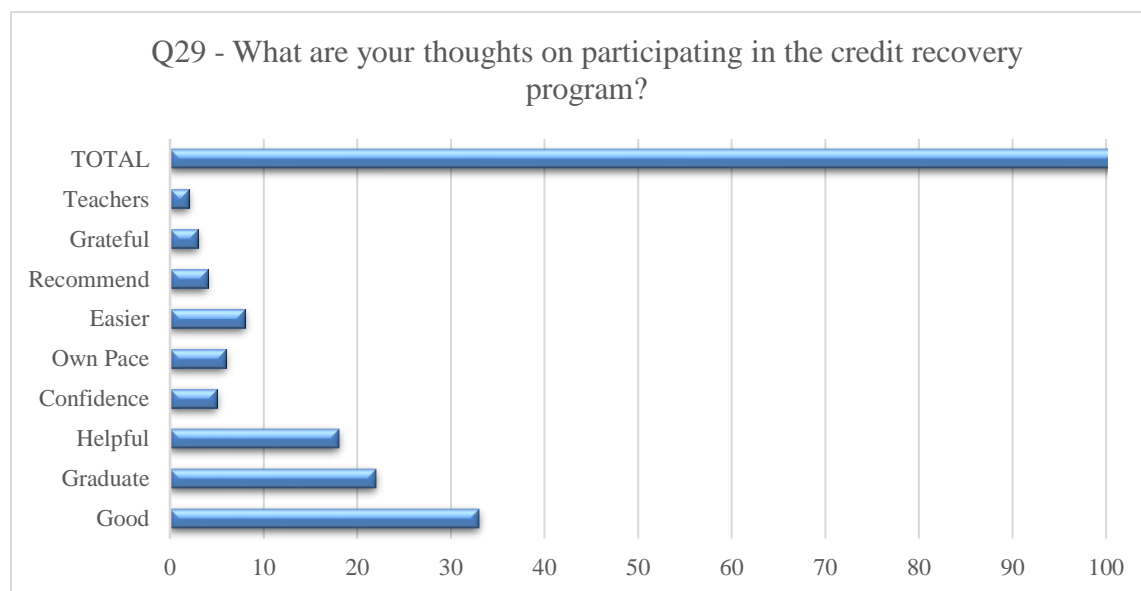


Figure 2: Student responses to open ended question number 29

For the open-ended question, “What would you consider the best thing about your participating in the credit recovery program?,” students overwhelmingly responded that the flexibility and freedom to work at their own pace were the best things about the program. One specific student stated, “It helps you get the credits that you need in a more comfortable and quicker way. It’s not as stressful.” Students also stated that they enjoyed that the program was, “like a family” and that they enjoyed, “the group of people that they would not have met otherwise.”

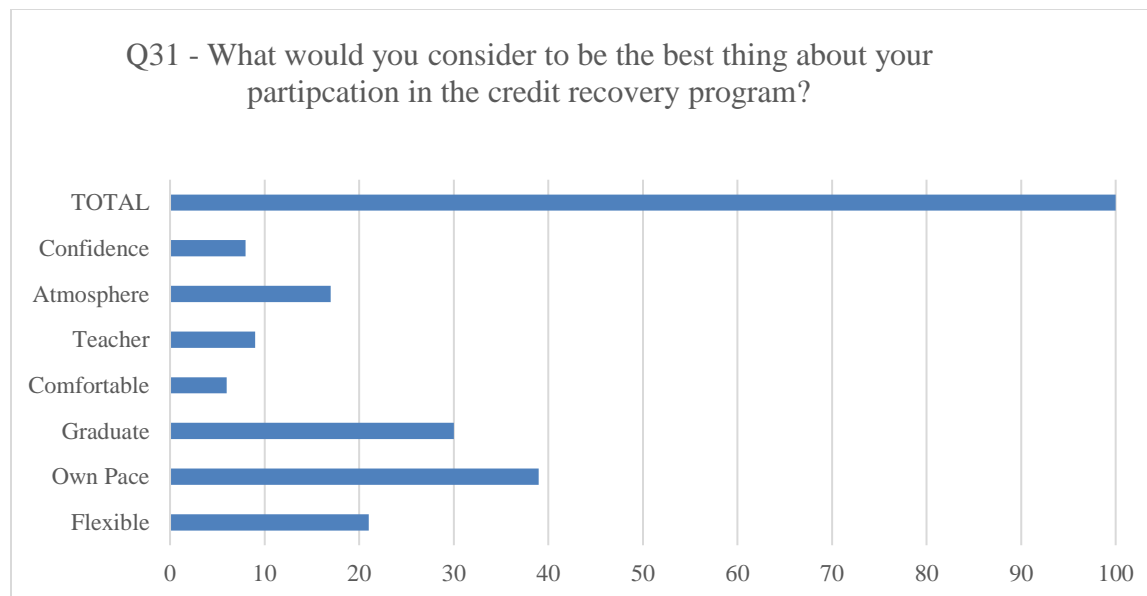


Figure 3: Student responses to open ended question number 31

Summary

The results reported in this chapter provide data to answer two research questions. The purpose of this study was to investigate student perception of their experiences in high school credit recovery programs. For purposes of this study, student perceptions were categorized using the levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The results indicate that all of the needs were highly correlated with one another. The results also initially indicated that there was no statistical significance or interaction effect between any of the needs and student demographics (gender, ethnicity, year in school, type of household). Upon further investigation using ANOVA, some statistical significance was identified between student gender and safety needs and student gender and love and belonging needs. Physiological needs were also found to be statistically significant when compared to students' type of household.

Student responses to two open-ended survey questions indicated that most students felt like participation in the credit recovery program aided them in completing high school. Students stated that the flexibility of the program, the ability for them to work at their own pace, and support provided by their peers and teacher aided them in completing high school via participation in the credit recovery program.

Chapter Five discusses the findings identified in this data, along with how they relate to the literature, implications for schools, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Five begins with an overview of the problem, the purpose of the study, and review of the research methods. The findings are then compared to the research literature in Chapter Two regarding dropout prevention and credit recovery programs. This chapter will conclude with implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks.

Overview of the Problem

High School dropout is a nationwide concern. While graduation rates have increased across the United States over the last ten years, there is still room for improvement in many high schools. As recent as 2014, there were still over 1,000 high schools across the United States with a graduation rate less than 60% (Litzau & Rice, 2017). Without a high school diploma, students are often faced with many difficulties as they progress through life. There are financial implications, higher likelihood of involvement in crime, and lack of stability in employment due to not having a high school education. Schools across the United States have worked hard to identify programs and practices to support high school students and promote on time graduation and decrease dropout.

Many high schools have started using credit recovery programs to provide early intervention and support for students who struggle in high school. As credit recovery programs have evolved, there have been challenges and successes. Additionally, program designs and levels of instructional support differ across programs. Since credit recovery programs are designed to allow students to recover credits and prevent high school dropout, students who participate in the programs often have varying social, emotional, and academic issues which

have led to them falling behind in school. While schools work to design programs to support academic success, research also states that it is important for schools to meet a variety of student needs.

In order to ensure student needs are met while participating in dropout prevention programs, specifically credit recovery programs, it was important to analyze student perceptions of their credit recovery experience. For purposes of this study, student perceptions were analyzed using the levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). These needs include: physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs. With Maslow's levels as the lense for student perceptions, this study aimed to provide practical information for educators to ensure effective design and implementation of high school credit recovery programs. With credit recovery programs that meet student academic, social, and emotional needs, schools will be able to address the needs of potential high school dropouts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine student perceptions towards the credit recovery environment in two selected schools in order to identify the credit recovery environment, student perception of the credit recovery programs, and how student motivation may influence the students' ability to complete high school.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my work are as follows:

1. What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlated with student perception of credit recovery programs?

2. What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

Review of Research Methods

This study utilized a quantitative research approach with an electronic survey as the research tool. The survey was designed by the researcher and field tested to establish reliability. Following testing, no changes were made to the survey design. Fowler (2014) states, “The purpose of the survey is to produce statistics, that is, quantitative or numerical descriptions about some aspects of the study population” (p.1). The survey was administered over a three week period to high school students enrolled in a credit recovery program in two Indiana school districts. The survey was designed to determine student perceptions of their experiences in a high school credit recovery program along with demographics of the credit recovery participants. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were given an opportunity to respond to two open-ended questions in order to gather additional information about their credit recovery experience. At the conclusion of the survey collection, the collected data were exported into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). With the assistance of Dr. Kianre Eouanzoui of Ball State University, data analyses were conducted.

Major Findings

The following are brief descriptions of the major findings supported in this research study:

- Correlation analyses indicated that all of the levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) (physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem needs, self-actualization needs) were highly correlated with one

another. This means that there was no differentiation in student perception based upon need. While this was not expected and could be due to the small sample size, it was an important finding because it allows the researcher to consider various reasons for the lack of differentiation. This is explored further in the theoretical framework follow up below.

- When looking at love and belonging needs, students' open ended survey responses indicated that participating in the credit recovery program encouraged them to stay in school and finish their diploma. Students felt that encouragement from their credit recovery instructor increased their effort and motivation to complete their courses.
- When looking at safety and security needs, students' open ended survey responses indicated that participation in the credit recovery program allowed them to work and finish school. Without participation in this program, some students would have needed to work instead of finish high school on time. Students also indicated that they felt comfortable in the credit recovery classroom environment and this aided in their success.
- When looking at self-esteem needs, students' open ended survey responses indicated that participation in the credit recovery program increased their confidence to finish high school. Students stated that they felt better about themselves during participation in credit recovery, and that they were more motivated because they felt less pressure than in a traditional classroom setting.
- Related to self-actualization needs, 66% of students surveyed stated they would recommend participation in the credit recovery program to anyone considering dropping out of high school. Only 1% of students surveyed stated that they would not recommend participation in credit recovery.

- Physiological needs had the highest mean value ($M=2.48$) among all of the needs, but student perceptions did not indicate statistical significance on any individual need. All of the needs (physiological, love and belonging, safety and security, self-esteem, self-actualization), however, were highly correlated with one another.
- MANOVA results indicated that there were no interaction effects or statistical significance between any demographic variables and student needs. Further testing using ANOVA indicated there was some significance ($p=.040$) between gender and safety and security needs, gender and love and belonging ($p=.031$), and physiological needs and type of students' household ($p=.037$).
- Love and belonging and safety needs are important to students. When responding to the open ended survey questions, students indicated that the environment and atmosphere of the credit recovery program made students feel more comfortable with school while participating in the credit recovery program. Students also identified flexibility has a strong benefit of their participation in credit recovery programs. Students stated that the flexibility allowed them to work at their own pace, work at different times of the day, and allowed them to have a job and complete school at the same time.

Findings Related to the Literature

In this section the findings as they relate to the literature will be discussed. While there is currently not a wide base of research surrounding credit recovery, some of the literature identified strengthens my findings and provides additional information about student participation in credit recovery programs. The results of this study, in relation to literature, are presented by addressing each research question.

Research Question 1: What are the most statistically significant motivational variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

This study indicated that all of the needs were significantly correlated with one another. In his initial writings about the hierarchy of needs, Maslow indicated that people who do not have a sense of safety feel anxious and uncertain (Maslow, 1943). Students who participate in credit recovery programs have typically experienced struggles in life and in school which have forced them into a credit recovery program in order to seek on time graduation from high school. These students must have a credit recovery environment that allows them to feel safe, secure, and confident in their abilities to complete their courses. In 2008, the Institute of Education Sciences (2008) established six key recommendations for high school dropout prevention programs. Among these recommendations, IES (2008) recommended school create a personalized learning environment geared towards the needs of each individual student. The inferential data, along with the student responses to the two open-ended questions, confirmed that students feel that the ability to work at their pace, and with additional support, aided them in completing high school via the credit recovery program.

Furrer and Skinner (2003) stated, “Feeling special and important to key social partners is hypothesized to trigger energized behavior, such as effort, persistence, and participation; to promote positive emotions, such as interest and enthusiasm; and to dampen negative emotions, such as anxiety and boredom.” Student response data from this study indicated that students felt better about themselves while participating in the credit recovery program. The increase in confidence and belief in themselves triggered increased effort and motivation to complete high school via participation in the credit recovery program. One student commented, “I am not as stressed out and exhausted from school unlike before. I actually gained the confidences to

believe in myself and that I can graduate when I was hesitating before it was possible.” Students also stated that being in credit recovery allowed them to graduate, which then helped them get a job.

Lee and Burkham (2003) identified social support as a school level factor that impacts student success in high school. While the inferential statistics showed that students perceived all needs to be important, student comments stated that social support was an important factor in their success while participating in credit recovery programs. Students commented on support from their peers and the support and motivation provided by their instructors as instrumental factors in their success completing the credit recovery program to earn a high school diploma.

Pettyjohn and LaFrance (2014) identified the following as perceived positives of students who have participated in credit recovery programs; choice, flexibility of where and when they worked, and reduced distractions while working online. Students participating in this study echoed those perceptions. Students commented that they liked to work at their own pace, on their own time, and that they enjoyed the atmosphere of the credit recovery program.

Research Question #2: What are the most statistically significant demographic variables that correlate with student perception of credit recovery programs?

Most research surrounding high school dropouts focusses on specific factors that predict a students’ likelihood of dropping out of high school prior to graduation. Burrus and Roberts (2012) identified low income, minority, male and older than average students as the most likely high school dropouts. While slight significance was identified between gender and student perception, this study did not identify any significance between student ethnicity and their perception of their credit recovery experience or student year in school and their perception of

their credit recovery experience. This could be attributed to the small sample size and the similar demographic settings of the two schools utilized for this study.

This study concluded that some significance exists between student physiological needs of students and the type of household that they reside in (one parent, two parents, other). Maslow (1943) suggests that physiological needs, which can include shelter, sleep, food, and love, are the most fundamental needs. Students who do not have appropriate shelter and cannot have their basic needs met will likely struggle greatly to meet their full potential and be successful. This would include the ability to attend and be successful in school. Students in this study did identify that receiving breakfast at school (57.3%), clothing assistance (37.4%), meal assistance during breaks and holidays (33.6%), and access to health resources (40.4%) while participating in the credit recovery program aided them in experiencing success.

The Adequacy of the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the Theoretical Lens

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was selected as the theoretical lens for this study in order to consider student motivation and needs while analyzing student perception of their credit recovery experience. The study results did not yield a significant differentiation in student perception based upon the levels of need. Researchers Smith, Gregory & Pugh (1981) also conducted research about alternative schools utilizing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the basis for assessing student needs. While the focus of their study was not credit recovery programs, the study (1981) did conclude that, "the type of program or instructional format does not seem to make a difference in meeting human needs" (p. 564). The research indicated that the only common characteristic that emerged was the presence of student choice in their schooling (1981). This would be similar to the data that emerged in this study about credit recovery as an alternative education option. While the needs were not identified as being significant, students

indicated that the flexibility and freedom they experienced in the credit recovery program aided them in graduating from high school on time.

There could, however, be some reasons why significance of needs were not detected in this study. First, the similarity of the students who participated in this study should be considered. Students in both districts utilized for this study have similar demographics, economic needs, and the programs are utilized for the same purpose. The lack of differentiation could also be attributed to the small sample size. Future researchers should seek a more diverse sample and should seek a larger overall sample for study in order to have a broader base of survey participants. Another consideration for the lack of differentiation in needs could be attributed to the number of question asked relating to each need. Many of the questions were similar in structure and contained common content. Perhaps adding questions under each area of need would allow greater chance of true assessment of student perception based upon the levels of need.

Overall, the data from this study did not validate the use of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) as a viable theoretical framework. The data also did not disprove the hierarchy as a viable framework. The survey data did, however, validate that the needs are important to students and that schools should continue to seek program designs which are flexible and varied in order to meet student needs.

Limitations of this Study

There were several limitations with this study. First, only two schools in Central Indiana were utilized for this study. One of the schools utilized for this study was my school, though I do not directly supervise the program. Within the two schools utilized for this study, some

students did not complete the survey or did not complete the survey in its entirety. This limitation resulted in a small sample size and unequal cell size when analyzing the demographic variables. Additionally, the data indicated a lack of significance with relation to demographics and student perceptions. This could be attributed to a limitation of survey scope and the similarity in type of students who participated in credit recovery programs utilized for this study. Although not initially a limitation of this study, the finding that Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs did not differentiate student perceptions also turned out to be a limitation.

Implications for Action

School leaders are consistently looking for ways to meet the varying needs of their students and families. Researchers suggest that schools create a system of scaffolded supports that will allow the varying needs of students to be met (Pettyjohn & LaFrance, 2014). When initiating a credit recovery program to aid in preventing dropout and promoting graduation, school leaders should seek to develop a well-rounded program that addresses not only academic needs, but also student social-emotional needs. Programs should have flexibility for students, but also instructional support. Students participating in credit recovery programs have traditionally not experienced success in a traditional school environment, so programs should be an alternative setting and should offer flexible work hours and days.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are offered for future research:

1. As indicated in the second research question, very little statistical significance was detected between student demographics and their perceptions (based upon

needs) of their credit recovery experience. This researcher would recommend similar research utilizing a larger sample from various educational settings (rural, urban, and suburban) in order to gather more information. A larger sample, with varying demographics, would potentially allow future researchers to gather various different perspectives and would allow larger cell sizes when analyzing demographics.

2. To provide further understanding of student perceptions of their credit recovery experience, this researcher recommends that qualitative research be conducted to include interviews with credit recovery students. While this study did gather information via two open-ended questions, additional information from students would provide valuable information for educational leaders as they design and plan credit recovery programs.
3. To provide further understanding of successes and challenges of credit recovery programs, this researcher recommends that staff perceptions of student experiences be included in a research study of credit recovery programs. This would allow greater insight by using an adult's perspective of what aided students in being successful while participating in a credit recovery program.
4. Credit recovery programs look very different in different schools. This researcher recommends that further research surrounding credit recovery programs seek information about the program set-up, role of the instructor, and level of flexibility allowed to students. This would aid educational

leaders in better understanding student perceptions of their experiences in credit recovery programs.

5. While this study did not produce significant results utilizing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the theoretical lens, this researcher recommends that Maslow continued to be tested as a lens for analyzing student needs related to creation of educational options. This would allow schools to ensure that the needs of students are being considered when creating and implementing a high school credit recovery program.

Concluding Remarks

School leaders have an obligation to ensure student needs are met while in school and that every student has an opportunity to graduate from high school. While schools work to meet student needs, the traditional school environment is not always a viable option for all students. Credit recovery and online education programs are becoming more and more popular as school leaders seek to meet the varying needs of students and ensure on time high school graduation for students. As evidence about dropout prevention indicates, students who drop out of high school do so for various reasons. Many of these, however, can be addressed by taking student needs into consideration and creating programs that are flexible, provide various levels of support for students, and allow students to recover and earn credits at a faster pace than a traditional classroom environment.

Credit recovery appears to pose a positive alternative to the issue of high school dropouts. With flexibility and various programs designs, credit recovery allows schools a way to meet the varying needs of today's high school students. While this study did not establish an unequivocal endorsement of it as an antidote to high school dropout, it nonetheless produced some evidence

of its success and its appeal to high school students who might have never graduated. If for no other reason, it should continue to be considered as one approach that has promise of improving high school graduation.

References

- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2017). *The graduation effect: Every student's potential to impact a community*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://impact.all4ed.org/#potential/income/indiana/all-students/>
- Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J. M., Fox, J. H., DePaoli, J. L., Ingram, E. S., & Maushard, M. (2014). *Building a grad nation: progress and challenge in ending the high school dropout epidemic. Annual Update 2014*. Civic Enterprises.
- Barnett, K. K. (2016). The at-risk student's journey with online course credit: Looking at perceptions of care. *Journal of Online Learning Research*, 2(4), 367–398. Retrieved from <https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/172568/>
- Barry, M., & Reschly, A.L. (2012). Logitudinal predictors of high school completion. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 27(2), 74-84.
- Bornsheuer, J. N., Polonyi, M. A., Andrews, M., Fore, B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2011). The relationship between ninth-grade retention and on-time graduation in a southeast Texas high school. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, 16(2), 9–16.
- Bowers, A. J. (2010). Grades and graduation: A longitudinal risk perspective to identify student dropouts. *Journal of Educational Research*, 103(3), 191–207.
- Bowers, A. J., Sprott, R., & Taff, S. A. (2012). Do we know who will drop out? A Review of the predictors of dropping out of high school: Precision, sensitivity, and specificity. *The High School Journal*, 96(2), 77–100.
- Boylan, R. L., & Renzulli, L. (2017). Routes and reasons out, paths back: The influence of push and pull reasons for leaving school on students' school re engagement. *Youth & Society*, 49(1), 46–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X14522078>

- Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Civic Enterprises.
- Burrus, J. & Roberts, R. (2012). Dropping out of high school: Prevalence, risk factors, and remediation strategies. *R & D Connections*, 18(9). Retrieved from https://www.ets.org/research/policy_research_reports/publications/periodical/2012/jeav
- Cabus, S., & DeWitte, K. (2016). Why do students leave education early? Theory and evidence on high school dropout rates. *Journal of Forecasting*, 35(8), 690-702.
doi:10.1002/for.2394
- Campbell, C. (2015). The socioeconomic consequences of dropping out of high school: Evidence from an analysis of siblings. *Social Science Research*, 51, 108–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.12.011>
- Chew, E., Jones, N., Turner, D. (n.d.). Critical review of the blended learning models based on Maslow's and Vygotsky's educational theory. *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching*.
- Clements, M., Pazzaglia, A. M., & Zweig, J. (2015). *Online course use in New York high schools: Results from a survey in the greater capital region. REL 2015-074. Stated Briefly*. Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands.
- Cohen, A. (2017). Analysis of student activity in web-supported courses as a tool for predicting dropout. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 65(5), 1285–1304.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-017-9524-3>
- Cook, P. J., & Kang, S. (2016). Birthdays, schooling, and crime: Regression-discontinuity analysis of school performance, delinquency, dropout, and crime initiation. *American*

- Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 8(1), 33–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20140323>
- Creswell, John W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Darling, Nancy. (2007). Ecological systems theory: The person in the center of the circles. *Research in Human Development*, 4(3-4), 203-217.
- Dessoff, A. (2009). Reaching graduation with credit recovery. *District Administration*, 45(9), 43–48.
- Dockery, D. J. (2012). School dropout indicators, trends, and interventions for school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 10(12).
- Dupéré, V., Leventhal, T., Dion, E., Crosnoe, R., Archambault, I., & Janosz, M. (2015). Stressors and turning points in high school and dropout: A stress process, life course framework. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(4), 591–629.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314559845>
- Ecker-Lyster, M., & Niileksela, C. (2016). Keeping students on track to graduate: A synthesis of school dropout trends, prevention, and intervention initiatives. *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, 19(2), 24–31.
- Estacion, A., D'Souza, S., & Bozick, R. (2011). *Characteristics of career academies in 12 Florida school districts. Issues & Answers. REL 2011-No. 106*. Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast at SERVE Center.
- Fowler, Floyd J. (2014). *Survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- 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), 15–27.

- Freeman, J., & Simonsen, B. (2015). Examining the impact of policy and practice interventions on high School dropout and school completion rates: A systematic review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(2), 205–248.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314554431>
- Furrer, C. & Skinner, E. (2013). Sense of Relatedness as a Factor in Children’s Academic Engagement and Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 95(1), 148-162).
- Gliem, J., & Gliem, R. (2003). Calculating, Interpreting, and Reporting Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Coefficient for Likert-Type Scales. *Midwest Research to PRACTICE Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education*. 82-88.
- Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and correctional populations. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=814>
- Hemelt, S. W., & Marcotte, D. E. (2013). High school exit exams and dropout in an era of increased accountability. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, 32(2), 323–349.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21688>
- Hoyle, J. R., & Collier, V. (2006). Urban CEO superintendents’ alternative strategies in reducing school dropouts. *Education and Urban Society*, 39(1), 69–90.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124506291983>
- Hjalmarsson, R., Holmlund, H., & Lindquist, M. J. (2015). The effect of education on criminal convictions and incarceration: Causal evidence from micro-data. *The Economic Journal*, 125(587), 1290-1326. doi:10.1111/eoj.12204
- Ingerham, L. (2012). Interactivity in the online learning environment. A study of users of the North Carolina Virtual Public School. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 13(2), 65–75.

- Janosz, M., Le Blanc, M., Boulerice, B., & Tremblay R. (2000). Predicting different types of school dropouts: A typological approach with two longitudinal samples. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*, 171-190.
- Jia, Y., Konold, T. R., & Cornell, D. (2016). Authoritative school climate and high school dropout rates. *School Psychology Quarterly, 31*(2), 289–303.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000139>
- Kemple, J., & Willner, C. (2008). Career Academies: Long-term impacts on labor market outcomes, educational attainment, and transitions to adulthood. New York: MDRC.
- Kerr, S. (2011). High school online: Pedagogy, preferences, and practices of three online teachers high school online. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 39*(3), 221–244.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/ET.39.3.b>
- Kim, K.-N. (2015). Occupational constraints and opportunities faced by school dropouts. *Education and Urban Society, 47*(4), 391–411.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124513497505>
- Landis, R., & Reschly, A. (2013). Underachievement and dropout through the lens of student engagement. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted, 36*(2), 220-249.
- Latif, A, Choudhary, A. & Hammayun, A. (2015). Economic effects of student dropouts: A comparative study. *Journal of Global Economics, 3*(2), 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.4172/2375-4389.1000137>
- Lee, V. E., & Burkam, D. T. (2003). Dropping Out of High School: The Role of School Organization and Structure. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(2), 353–393.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312040002353>

- Lessard, A., Butler-Kisber, L., Fortin, L., & Marcotte, D. (2014). Analyzing the discourse of dropouts and resilient students. *Journal of Educational Research, 107*(2), 103–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2012.753857>
- Litzau, C., & Rice, N. (2017). Effective aspects of re engagement and recovery programs in southeastern Wisconsin high schools. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 20*(1), 36–43.
- Mac Iver, M. A. (2011). The challenge of improving urban high school graduation outcomes: Findings from a randomized study of dropout prevention efforts. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 16*(3), 167–184.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2011.584497>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Mckee, T., & Caldarella, P. (2016). Middle School predictors of high school performance: A case study of dropout risk indicators. *Education, 136*(4), 515–529.
- Meyers, L.S., Gamst, G., & Guarino, A. (2006). *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.
- Noonan, J. (2016, November 21). Online credit recovery that boosts graduation rates by failing students. *Thomas Fordham Institute*. Retrieved from
<https://edexcellence.net/articles/online-credit-recovery-that-boosts-graduation-rates-by-failing-students>
- 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.

- Parr, A. K., & Bonitz, V. S. (2015). Role of family background, student Behaviors, and school-related beliefs in predicting high school dropout. *Journal of Educational Research*, *108*(6), 504–514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2014.917256>
- Pettyjohn, T., & LaFrance, J. (2014). Online credit recovery: Benefits and challenges. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, *1*(1), 204–219.
- Pharris-Ciurej, N., Hirschman, C., & Willhoft, J. (2012). The 9th grade shock and the high school dropout crisis. *Social Science Research*, *41*(3), 709–730.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.11.014>
- Plummer, L. (2012) Credit recovery programs combine the best of online and in-class instruction. Retrieved July 8, 2018, from
<https://thejournal.com/articles/2012/03/08/online-credit-recovery.aspx>
- Powell, A., Roberts, V., & Patrick, S. (2015). *Using online learning for credit recovery: Getting back on track to graduation. Promising practices in blended and online learning series*. International Association for K-12 Online Learning.
- Queen, B., and Lewis, L. (2011). Distance education courses for public elementary and secondary school students: 2009–10 (NCES 2012-008). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Robertson, J. S., Smith, R. W., & Rinka, J. (2016). How did successful high schools improve their graduation rates? *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, *19*(1), 10–18.
- Sahin, S., Arseven, Z., & Kiliç, A. (2016). Causes of student absenteeism and school dropouts. *International Journal of Instruction*, *9*(1), 195–210.
- Saldana, Johnny. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Smith, G., Gregory, T., & Pugh, R., (1981). Meeting student needs: Evidence for the Superiority of Alternative Schools. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 62(8), 561-564.
- Tabachnick, B. G. & Fidell, L. S. (2007). Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Tromski-Klingshirn, D., & Miura, Y. (2017). School counselors' role in dropout prevention and credit recovery. *Journal of School Counseling*, 15(4).
- Tyler, J. H., & Lofstrom, M. (2009). Finishing high school: alternative pathways and dropout recovery. *The Future of Children*, 19(1), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.0.0019>
- Velasquez, A., Graham, C. R., & West, R. E. (2013). An investigation of practices and tools that enabled technology-mediated caring in an online high school. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 14(5).
<https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i5.1465>
- Viano, S. L. (2018). At-Risk high school students recovering course credits online: What We Know and Need to Know. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 32(1), 16–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2018.1412554>
- Wang, M.-T., & Fredricks, J. A. (2013). The reciprocal links between school engagement, youth problem behaviors, and school dropout during adolescence. *Child Development*, 85(2), 722–737. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12138>
- Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2008.). Using online learning for at-risk students and credit recovery, *North American Council for Online Learning*. 18.
- Wexler, J., Pyle, N., & Fall, A. M. (2015). Dropout prevention intervention with secondary students: A pilot study of project GOAL. *Preventing School Failure*, 59(3), 142–152.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2013.876957>

Wood, L., Kiperman, S., Esch, R. C., Leroux, A. J., & Truscott, S. D. (2017). Predicting dropout using student- and school-level factors: An ecological perspective. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 32(1), 35-49. doi:10.1037/spq0000152

What Works Clearinghouse. (2015) *Career Academies*. Institute of Education Sciences (IES).
United States Department of Education.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form for Students

Study Purpose and Rationale: The purpose of the study is to determine student perceptions towards the credit recovery environment in three selected schools in order to identify the credit recovery environment, the academic strength of the credit recovery programs, and how student motivation may influence the students' ability to complete high school.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be 18+ years of age and you must have participated in a high school credit recovery program.

Participation Procedures and Duration: You have the right to participate or not. If you agree to participate in the study, the principal investigator, Kelly D. Durr, will send you a link to the online survey for you to complete. The survey questions use a Likert scale. There are also three open-ended questions for you to provide additional information. The survey will take no more than 20 minutes. Your name will not be connected to your survey in anyway. Your survey data will be automatically sent to the primary investigator.

Data Confidentiality: Your survey responses will be anonymous. You will not be putting your name on the survey.

Storage of Data: Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office for three years and then will be shredded. Only the principal evaluator will have access to the data. Online data will be stored on a password protected computer. Only the principal evaluator will have access to the computer.

Risks or Discomforts: There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

Benefits and/or Compensation: There are not anticipated benefits or compensation for participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

IRB Contact Information: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765)285-5070, or orihelp@bsu.edu.

Study Title: CREDIT RECOVERY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDY SUCCESS: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE URBAN INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS

Principal Investigator: Kelly D Durr, Ball State University Student, kdcope@bsu.edu, (765)425-2289(cell).

Consent:

Do you agree to participate in this survey?

- I agree to participate in this survey.
- I decline to participate in this survey.

Principal Researcher:
Kelly D. Durr, Doctoral Student
Telephone: (765)425-2289
Email: kdcope@bsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor:
Dr. Fenwick English
Department of Educational Leadership
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
(765)285-285-3287
Email: fwenglish@bsu.edu

Appendix B

Email Recruitment Letter for Students

CREDIT RECOVERY AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SUCCESS: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE URBAN INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS

I am finishing my requirements for my Ball State doctoral program. I need your help with my survey. The information from the survey will help identify how you perceive your experiences in your high school credit recovery program. The survey will include questions about your academic experiences, along with your feelings about the classroom, type of instructor, and other school factors that were a part of the credit recovery program. Your honest input will contribute not only to improving credit recovery programs at Anderson High School, but also in other high schools across the state and nation.

All participants must be 18 years old or over to participate in this study. Participants have the right to participate or not. If you agree to participate in the study, the principal investigator, Kelly D. Durr, will send you a link to the online survey for you to complete the online survey via Qualtrics. For this survey, you will be asked to complete an online survey consisting of 24 items relating to your high school credit recovery experience. You will answer the questions using a Likert type scale that ranges from 1 to 5. There are also three open ended question which will allow you to provide additional information. The survey will take no more than 20 minutes. Your name will not be connected to your survey in anyway. Your survey data will be automatically sent to the primary investigator.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Dr. Fenwick English (fwenglish@bsu.edu).

Thank you!

Kelly D. Durr

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Leadership

Ball State University

Teachers College 925, Muncie, IN 47306

Telephone: (765) 285-3287

Email: kdurr@acsc.net

Cell Phone: 765-425-2289

Appendix C

Student Perspective Survey

This survey is to be taken by identified students enrolled in a high school credit recovery program.

Demographics

1. I am a high school _____ (Students will choose junior or senior.)
2. I am female/male. (Students will choose one.)
3. Ethnicity: White Black Hispanic Multi-Racial
 American Indian Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
4. I live with: One parent Both parents Grandparents Other

This survey has been designed to investigate student experiences and perceptions of participation in high school credit recovery programs. **There are no right or wrong answers.** Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Likert Scale

5 - Strongly Agree 4 - Agree 3 - Neutral 2 - Disagree 1 - Strongly Disagree

Physiological Needs

1. The credit recovery program provided me the ability to have breakfast and lunch each day I attended school.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
2. When I needed assistance, the credit recovery program provided me access to clothing resources.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
3. When I needed assistance, the credit recovery program provided me access to food resources to take home on weekends and school breaks.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
4. If needed, the credit recovery program provided me access to basic health resources.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Safety and Security Needs

5. The classroom setup and flexibility helped me feel comfortable while learning.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
6. The credit recovery program allowed me flexibility to work and finish school.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
7. I feel safe and secure while participating in the credit recovery program.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
8. The implementation of the credit recovery online program encouraged me to stay in school and work towards my high school diploma.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Love and Belonging Needs

9. Learning with the credit recovery online instruction program was enjoyable.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
10. The encouragement and support of my instructor increased my effort to earn more credits.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
11. I felt encouraged by my peers while participating in the credit recovery program.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Self Esteem Needs

12. The credit recovery program has increased by confidence that I can complete high school.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
13. The implementation of the credit recovery online program motivated me to attend school on a more consistent basis than when I was taught by a teacher who utilized traditional classroom teaching method.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
14. I felt more motivated to work on my courses while enrolled in the credit recovery program.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
15. The ability to work independently and at my own pace helped me succeed.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
16. The implementation of the credit recovery program increased my effort to earn more credits.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
17. I felt comfortable with school while participating in the credit recovery program.

1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Self-Actualization Needs

18. The credit recovery program prepared me for college and/or the workplace.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
19. The credit recovery online instruction was difficult for me at times.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
20. My learning increased more with the credit recovery online program than when I was taught utilizing the direct instruction method.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
21. I would recommend the credit recovery online instruction program to anyone who is thinking of dropping out of school.
1-Strongly disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree
22. Do you have any other thoughts about your participation in the credit recovery program?
23. Would you recommend a credit recovery program to someone who was considering dropping out of high school before graduation

Appendix D

Open-Ended Question 29 – Student Responses

| |
|---|
| I think it's a helpful thing to be enrolled in. |
| 10/10 would recommend |
| It's easy sometime and hard. |
| Made my confidence better |
| It helped me through school and get me caught up with my classes and credits in order for me to pass. |
| It is a very good program, especially for students that can only learn in their own pace. |
| I am very grateful for credit recovery but it is borderline too much work for the average student. You do more than you would in a traditional classroom. |
| Fun |
| It helped me pass high school. |
| It is good if needed. |
| I like the program because it allows me to work at my own pace. |
| It is going to help me a lot to pass high school. |
| My thoughts on credit recovery are good cause you get the chance to recover a class online and not in class. |
| It is very helpful. |
| It gives me the ability to recover my failed classes and graduate. |
| This is the best program ever. |
| You should. |
| I have very good thoughts on it only because it could really save somebody from going through that bad path of dropping out of school. |
| I'm happy that I got a chance to get this type of opportunity. |
| I don't understand. |
| It is very easy if you actually pay attention to the work. |
| I love being in the credit recovery. |
| Good. I can finish my classes whenever. |
| The teachers are understanding and helpful at times. |
| Neutral |
| Fun learning experience. |
| Makes it easier |
| It's okay |
| It helps me get my work done faster. |
| It's recommend to people who struggle in school. |
| A little of an adjustment than traditional school. |
| Nice |
| It's good if you need to make up a lot of credits before graduation and you still care. |
| It is a very helpful program. |
| I like it. It is easy to use and very easy to understand the directions. |
| I think credit recovery is important for public schools. |
| It helps me a lot. |

| |
|---|
| It's fine. |
| It helps me with my credits. |
| I believe that I would rather participate in a more hands-on experience. |
| Just pass your class. Plato is so much more work. |
| It is very helpful. |
| It's boring at times, but it's good. |
| I think it's needed. |
| It's very helpful. |
| I loved it. |
| I think that it's not a bad idea if students are having trouble in class, maybe they will find it easier than credit recovery program. |
| I like the idea of being able to have a second chance to make up for things that were missed due to circumstance or the like. |
| None |
| It helped me when I was struggling in my other class. |
| It helped me graduate. |
| I was a good choice for me and it helped me finish school off. It is a great program. |
| It's nice doing credit recovery. |
| Good but gets boring. |
| It helped me greatly to recover a majority of my credits. |
| I would recommend it to anybody. |
| Finishing |
| At first I did not like it but as the days went by I began to like it and understood this was a good way to earn my credits. |
| It's good. |
| I'm glad I came |
| The days are easy and the course work in moderate. |
| It gives me a chance to graduate when I didn't think I could do it. |
| I like it. They help me out a lot. |
| I've enjoyed it and I feel like more people need to give it a try to see if it too will help them. |
| It's really good. It's very helpful. |
| Yes |
| It is good. |
| It's a great place for kids who struggle in regular school. |
| It's okay. |
| It's a good idea if you messed around like I did your first year of high school to give you back your credits and to graduate with your class. |
| It was nice. I got to make up credits and had some friends in the class. |
| Pretty cool. Helped me graduate. |
| Helping me graduate so it's pretty nice. |
| It was a good idea for me to come in the credit recovery class. Sometimes it was hard but overall I had a lot of fun and learned a lot of stuff sometimes the teachers don't even teach me. |
| I want to be successful in life. |
| I personally love the credit recovery program. I'm able to work at my own pace. Teachers here are really relaxing and relatable with most of the students. Along with that and much |

| |
|--|
| more I could say, I just overall enjoy the program and how helpful and motivating it is and can. |
| My thoughts on participating in the credit recovery program are that it is a very good idea to those who want a chance to start over or pick up where you started. |
| It's good. |
| None |
| No |
| It helps continue your school at a faster rate. |
| Good |
| It is a good opportunity for students that get behind or just don't do well in a traditional setting. |
| It provides an incredible opportunity for students who may not fit in a "normal" school setting. |
| I believe that it is a very effective program. |
| I was thankful for the opportunity. |
| I think participating in the credit recovery program is a great way to gain credits in a controlled environment. |
| I was thankful for the opportunity. |
| It is a good thing for many students who have not been successful in regular classrooms. |
| My first thoughts when I participated in the credit recovery program. I thought to myself this might be the way for me to graduate and get my classes caught up. |
| It's awesome |
| It made me wish I paid more attention in class and not wasted my time. |
| Hated it. |
| It provided me the opportunity to graduate. |
| I enjoy working on my credits at my pace. |
| I think the credit recovery program is a great program that is going to help me graduate. I am so thankful that my school offers this for students like me. |
| It is a way to earn credits without retaking the entire class. |

Appendix E

Open-Ended Question 31 – Student Responses

| |
|--|
| The best thing I'd consider about the program is the flexibility and easy understanding it can be. |
| The teachers are always there to help me. |
| I got most of my credit. |
| Feeling successful. |
| You work at your own pace while getting a credit in a much shorter time period. |
| I can get on and learn at my own pace. Not worried about being in a classroom getting left behind |
| Giving me the opportunity to graduate. |
| Everything |
| Passing |
| Flexibility |
| Working at my own pace. |
| To do all your work in the class that you are in. |
| Best thing about credit recovery is the fact that you can recover classes. |
| It makes graduating easier. |
| Getting my credits. |
| Graduating |
| You can get your diploma. |
| It helps you get the credits that you need in a more comfortable and quicker way. It's not as stressful. |
| That you get credits anytime. |
| The fact it can save you from not graduating. |
| I would say how I got my credits sooo fast I got them. |
| Do your own work. |
| Get the work done. Don't slack. |
| I can work at my own pace. |
| Takes less time to complete classes. |
| Fun |
| Getting my work done faster than I thought. |
| That I could do all the work on my own pace. |
| Working on my own time. |
| Fast |
| I take the time when I should be doing it to do absolutely nothing. It's a nice break during the school day. |
| The ability to go at my own pace. |
| It teaches me to learn the subject and I am also getting the credit so I am able to graduate on time with all my credits needed. |
| I can do the classes at my own pace and still graduate without having to sit through the class again. |
| You have a whole class period to get things done. |
| I might graduate. |
| The learning |
| The group of people I worked with that I wouldn't have met otherwise. |
| Getting back my credit. |

| |
|---|
| Working on my stuff alone. |
| Having the ability to make up credits. |
| All my work gets done and it's easier. |
| The independent work. |
| I got my credits in the end. |
| The best thing about participating in the credit recovery class is that I can work at my own speed. |
| Not having a teacher breathing down my neck, explain the subject in ways I don't understand and trying to pressure me to do more. Instead, I work as fast as I see fit. |
| None |
| Being able to take your time and you don't feel rushed. |
| Getting credits. |
| Being able to come to school at a later time and manage to finish my credits |
| Learning new things and credit recovering. |
| Working at your own speed. |
| I'd consider the best is being able to work at your own pace. |
| My teacher. He's the GOAT. |
| Doing the work. |
| The best thing I would consider about this would be you can actually learn on your own pace. |
| Better than the actual school. |
| That it is half days. |
| Getting my work done ten times faster. |
| Yes |
| All the motivation and help they give myself and others. It really motivates you and lifts up your spirit. |
| How fast I was able to get my work done and get more credits. |
| Like a family. |
| Yes |
| Mrs. Harless |
| It gave me the chance to graduate and gave me great job opportunities the teacher is one of the most supportive people I have ever met and made my time in gap worth it. |
| You can work at your own pace. |
| I can do all my classes at my pace and not have to worry about being hounded by teachers. |
| Recovering my failed credits. |
| The help the teacher gives. |
| The silence |
| Coming to class and not having a teacher on your back every minute. |
| Getting credits fast and getting to know more than what I'm used to. |
| Everything |
| That I am not as stressed out and exhausted from school unlike before. Also, yeah that I actually gained the confidences to believe in myself and that I can graduate when I was hesitating before if so it was possible. |
| The teacher helped me through my whole process and encouraging me to do my best. Following by helping me and working with me on difficult tasks. Time managing is wonderful like I said you have a good amount of time to get a lot done before your day is over. |
| Got me back on track. |
| It's easy. |
| The increased pace and work load. |
| Pacing |

| |
|---|
| It helps students graduate that might not have if it were not for the alternative program. |
| Giving students who could not make it somewhere else another opportunity to be successful and get on the right track. |
| The best thing about the credit recovery program is that less students are dropping out. |
| I was able to finish high school. |
| Being able to earn credits at a faster pace. |
| I could graduate on time and get caught up on the classes that I need to graduate. |
| Can work on classes anytime. |
| I made it through six classes in three months. |
| Don't have to learn anytime but still get a diploma in like three hours. |
| The flexibility and being able to work at my own pace. |
| The freedom to work at my own pace. |
| The best thing about this program is that I am actually going to graduate when I should and know that I can go and get a job once I have graduated. |
| Working at my own pace. |