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SNAPSHOT

Credit recovery in Tennessee high schools

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Credit recovery helps struggling high school students stay on course to graduate by earning credits for failed required courses. Offering these programs may help schools, districts, and states improve their graduation rates.

This OREA report examines how credit recovery is administered in districts across the state, the number of students involved, the credit recovery vendors used by districts, and more. The research for the report included a survey of 116 school districts in Tennessee, interviews with staff in seven school districts, and observations of credit recovery classes in six high schools.

OREA's report includes policy considerations and recommendations for state agencies, school districts, and schools.

Considerations and Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to require districts to collect and report data on credit recovery.

Currently, only course enrollment data is required, limiting the ability to assess program effectiveness.

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) should implement more detailed course catalog codes to produce more precise credit recovery data.

The State Board of Education (SBE) and the Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission should review the state rule requiring districts to ensure credit recovery instructional materials align with state academic standards. In many districts, OREA found credit recovery vendors determined the degree to which credit recovery course content aligned with state academic standards. It is unclear whether this practice is in compliance with SBE rule.

Districts should submit limited use waivers to the state for credit recovery courses if materials are not approved as instructional materials. Since April 2024, SBE staff have received no waiver applications.

Districts and schools should implement credit recovery best practices. Districts and schools should implement established best practices for credit recovery, including blended instruction for online credit recovery courses, grouping students by academic subject, limiting the number of online credit recovery courses taken over a student's high school career, and ensuring students assigned to credit recovery are likely to succeed in such courses.

To read the full report, visit the Comptroller's OREA website at tncot.cc/orea.