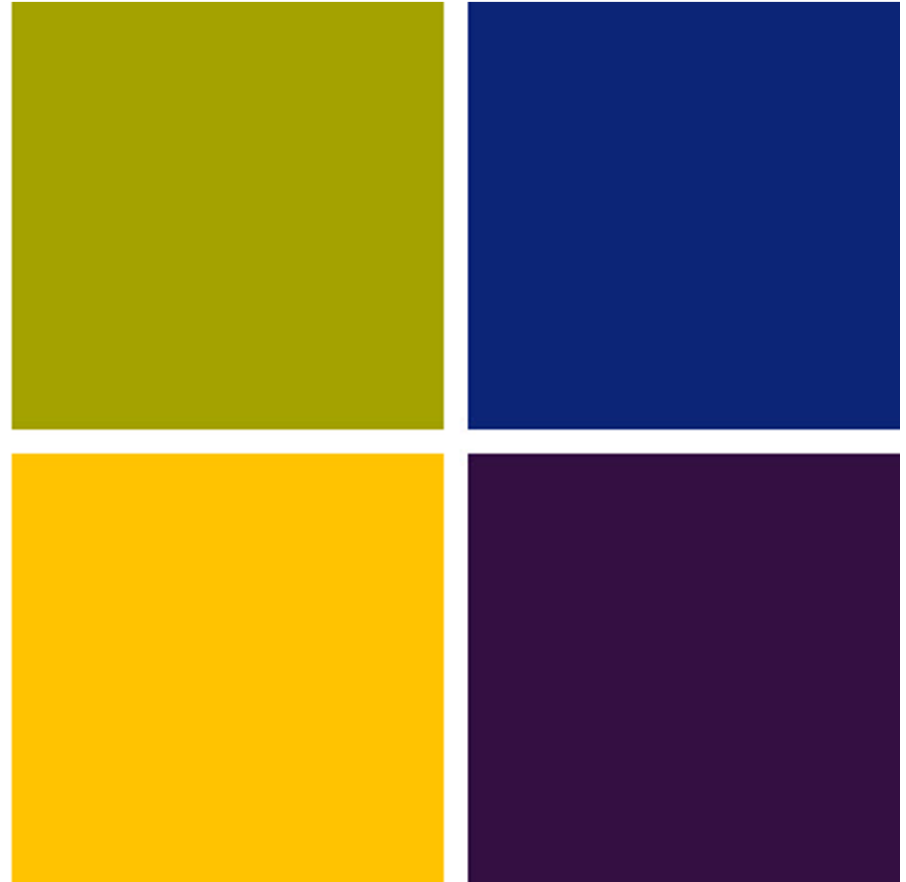




# Online Credit and Learning Recovery in Massachusetts & North Carolina



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**NEW YORK**  
**COMPREHENSIVE**  
**C E N T E R**



## The Comprehensive Center Network

By insisting on high achievement for all students, regardless of geography or life circumstance, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has made the need for high quality technical assistance paramount for state education leaders. We are part of 16 regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education activated to support education leaders in our states as they strive to meet the goals of ESEA and improve achievement outcomes for all students.

## The Regional P-12 Virtual Education Initiative

The NE/NYCCs are addressing P-12 Virtual Education opportunities and challenges in a three-pronged manner:

- examining policies, initiatives, and practices within and outside the region to provide a context around the current state of virtual education
- recently convened a regional summit to both facilitate and disseminate this information and to understand education leaders' highest priority information and policy needs and concerns around this topic
- hosting a series of webinars for leaders to discuss strategies for expanding access to quality educational opportunities for diverse learners in their own states and in the region



## About this webinar

The goal of this webinar is to gain an understanding of two models of state-supported online credit recovery and how the findings and lessons learned might apply to other states and districts

### Today we will:

- Learn about the North Carolina Virtual Public School online system for making up credits, the evaluation they put in place, and their future plans for more just-in-time online resources for struggling students
- Hear about how Massachusetts districts are taking advantage of Title IID grants programs to address student needs with customized online courses and credit recovery modules



## Tracy Savell Weeks

*Chief Academic Officer,  
North Carolina Virtual  
Public School*



Tracy oversees and manages curriculum and instruction for NCVPS including nearly 800 instructional staff members and over 100 courses to students in all 115 school districts in North Carolina. She has been a member of the NC Virtual Public School Advisory Board and serves as an Adjunct Professor at NC State University. Dr. Weeks is a member of the State Virtual Schools Leadership Alliance, iNACOL, and the NC Distance Learning Association.



## Jenny Caldwell Curtin

*State Coordinator of High School Graduation Initiatives at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.*



Jenny administers several state efforts related to supporting students that are most likely to drop out of high school, including the state funded Alternative Education grant program and the federally funded Online Courses and Modules for At-Risk Students grant program. Jenny is also project director for a comprehensive federal project, the High School Graduation Initiative ("MassGrad"). She has extensive experience providing training and resources to school districts and organizations on a range of topics related to increasing the number of students that graduate from high school.

# An Analysis of the Unique Needs and Outcomes of Credit Recovery Students in a Virtual School

Kevin Oliver, Assistant Professor, NC State University

Tracy Weeks, Chief Academic Officer, NCVPS

Michelle Lourcey, Curriculum & Instruction Division Director, NCVPS



North Carolina  
Virtual Public School

**NC STATE UNIVERSITY**

# Overview of NCVPS and Credit Recovery Program



# Why NCVPS Credit Recovery?

- needed in response to costly vendor programs that were not meeting the academic needs of students, such as:
  - mastery of all NC Standards
  - preparation for retaking end of course exams
  - preparation for the next level of instruction
  - providing students an opportunity to gain success in a different learning environment with a NC certified teacher

# Credit Recovery Model

- full course for credit, aligned to state standards
- no purchased content--courses developed by teams of six certified classroom teachers with support of literacy coach and content specialist
- courses are self-paced, based on mastery learning
- student can work from home, school, or both
- synchronous teaching by a certified teacher
- sections limited to 20 students (30 for traditional courses)

# Mastery Learning Model

- students pre-assess at the beginning of each unit
- students can exempt all or most of unit with an 80% on pre-assessment (mastery level)
- all units follow a common flow:
  - presentation of concept followed by practice and formative assessment
  - mastery assignments at Bloom's higher levels (need 80% to advance, if less--students redirected to materials for remediation)
  - post-assessment

# Continuous Communication

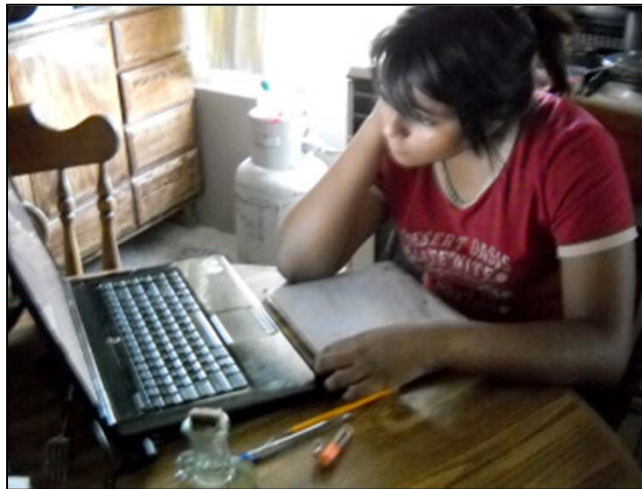
- weekly synchronous contact between teacher and student
- bi-weekly mastery charts to students/parents/school contacts
- bi-weekly status reports to schools
- students receive teaching through announcements, through feedback on assignments (gradebook, Blackboard messaging), and through Pronto, Wimba and phone calls as needed



## Mastery Rates Achieved

- **Summer Pilot 2008**      **50%**
- **Fall 2008**                      **30%**
- **Spring 2009**                      **53%**
- **Summer 2009**                      **61%**
- **Fall 2009**                          **65%**
- **Spring 2010**                      **62%**
- **Summer 2010**                      **67%**

# Overview of an Evaluation Looking Specifically at the Credit Recovery Program





# Evaluation Partners

- NCVPS solicited external evaluations from researchers at North Carolina State University's College of Education, beginning with their first semester in summer '07
- micro project evaluation – needs of teacher course developers (pilot project to develop elementary/middle courses), and course-specific evaluation (Success 101, high school transition)
- macro program evaluation – surveys of teachers, students, and distance learning advisors, tracking stakeholder perceptions and progress toward NCVPS strategic goals

# Summer '09 Evaluation

- given the increase in CR enrollments in summer, summer was the best time to compare perceptions of CR courses against perceptions of other courses
- in summer '09, 862 students and 162 teachers responded to online surveys about NCVPS courses as shown:

<b>Course Groups</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>
credit recovery	n=193 (22.4%)	n=36 (28.1%)
general studies	n=399 (46.3%)	n=67 (52.3%)
honors	n=248 (28.8%)	n=25 (19.5%)
AP	n=22 (2.5%)	n=0 (0%)
total	n=862	n=128

# Surveys

- surveys for students/teachers developed in consult with NCVPS staff addressing factors such as: student preparation and barriers to success, course content, teacher facilitation, advising support, and student success and advocacy for virtual schooling
- CR students received a unique survey branch with open-ended questions such as: reasons for taking CR, what online classes offered above failed classes
- CR students/teachers were also asked if a list of 17 strategies recommended by CR literature would influence their success (Menzer & Hampel, 2009; Roblyer, 2006; Watson & Gemin, 2008)

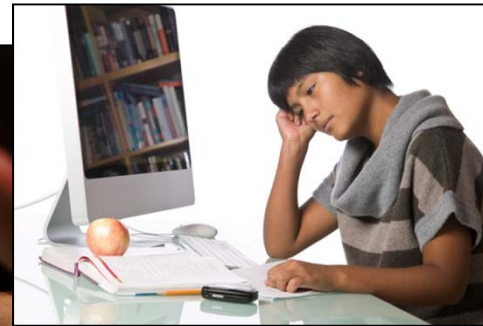
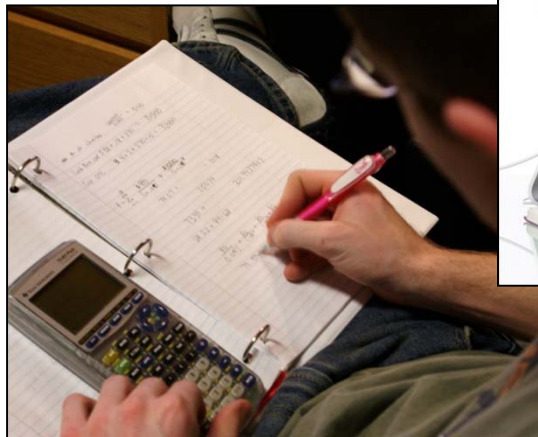
# Credit Recovery Students

- 67.8% female, 48.6% white/33.8% African-American
- reported no difference in online course experience, but significantly lower grades than either general studies or honors students,  $F(2, 655) = 15.48, p < .001, \eta^2 = .045$
- reported taking CR courses for different reasons:
  - 23.8% reported failing the first time
  - 48.2% reported needing course credit to move to next level or graduate
  - smaller groups of students did not fail prior attempts, but took summer CR courses because they could not enroll in prior school year, they withdrew for medical/discipline issues, or their schedules were full in the coming year

# Credit Recovery Teachers

- 83.9% female, 90.3% white/6.5% African-American
- reported significantly less experience teaching online (mean of 1.35 prior courses) compared to honors (5) and general studies (3.4) teachers,  
 $F(2, 106) = 14.75, p < .001, \eta^2 = .218$
- NCVPS teachers are required to complete a class in online teaching before they apply to teach for the school
- CR teachers receive further training specific to credit recovery once they are placed in the teacher pool
- checks on CR teacher quality: required bi-weekly documents, required synchronous contact log, spot checks on sections, formal teacher evaluations

# Evaluation Findings



# Summary of Findings

- most CR students reported having necessary technology and computer skills for online courses despite some teachers' concerns to the contrary
- CR students more likely to report receiving orientation and ongoing support from a site-based advisor
- CR students/teachers report courses provide for more time on task and help to address self-discipline issues
- CR students/teachers report courses provide for more one-on-one help and different teaching strategies to reach more students

# Summary of Findings

- CR students generally pleased with teaching strategies despite lack of collaborative, project-based work, and lack of work with 21st century tools like blogs/wikis
- CR students/teachers advocate for current structure of course using self-paced modules, and are less enthusiastic about using a blended approach with site-based elements
- CR students report learning more online and learning more 21<sup>st</sup> century skills than other course groups, but they may have had more room for improvement
- strong advocacy--more than 3/4 of CR students/teachers would recommend future students take CR courses

# Future of NCVPS Credit Recovery Program



# Lessons Learned

- know who you are as a program first and be willing to stand behind what is best for students
- pressure to meet the needs of the LEAs must be weighed with what is best for the integrity of the program and for student learning
- the easiest way may not always be the best way
- "No's" can often be changed with data, conversations, and persistence
- resistant school systems often come around after a “test drive”



## Next 5 Years

- **expand online credit recovery course offerings to include courses from World Language and Career and Technical Education**
- **develop a remediation program for rising ninth graders in math and language arts**
- **expand our Modular Learning program to catch students who are struggling f2f before they need credit recovery (Algebra I, Algebra II, English I, Physical Science)**
- **expand partnerships in course development for the special needs population**

# Questions?



## References:

Menzer, J. D., & Hampel, R. L. (2009). Lost at the last minute. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(9), 660-664.

Roblyer, M. D. (2006). Virtually successful: Defeating the dropout problem through online school programs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(1), 31-36.

Watson, J., & Gemin, B. (2008). Using online learning for at-risk students and credit recovery. *Promising Practices in Online Learning Series*. Vienna, Virginia: International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL).

# Massachusetts Online Courses & Modules for At-Risk Students Project

Jenny Caldwell Curtin

*State Coordinator of High School Graduation Initiatives at the Massachusetts  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

8/19/2011



# OVERVIEW

- Competitive grant project funded by ARRA Title II-D funds
- Partially informed by the U.S. Department of Education's report [Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning](#)
- 14 grant sites currently completing the development of online and hybrid courses and modules for grades 8-12 in a variety of content areas

# OVERVIEW

- Grant recipients specifically targeting students most at-risk for not graduating
- Courses/modules developed to align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks & Massachusetts recommended high school program of studies (MassCore)

# OVERVIEW

- Courses and modules co-owned by the MA ESE
- Will be available to districts statewide free-of-cost
- Expected final products:
  - 46 courses (e.g., algebra I, biology, American lit)
  - 63 modules (e.g., human anatomy, the Cold War, poetry, renewable energy)
  - 5 other products (e.g., professional development courses, a guide for administrators)

# OVERVIEW

- All grant recipients required to spend at least 25% of their funds on professional development (PD)
  - Grantee PD strategies reflect a wide range of approaches in the amount of training provided, topics covered, methodology, and provider expertise
  - Over 300 teachers and other staff participated in PD activities
  - About 15% had taught an online course before; 13% had developed an online course previously

# QUESTIONS?



# WHAT WE LEARNED

- Overall, teachers value the opportunity to become online instructors and course designers
- Several grantees view these teachers as an asset because they can:
  - engage other teachers (e.g., help them migrate face-to-face class content online)
  - help the school design better programmatic strategies for dealing with student challenges (e.g., attendance, over-age students)

## WHAT WE LEARNED

- While there are a range of good programs for preparing virtual instructors in Mass. and nationally, *this project put a spotlight on the need for increased differentiation, depth, and guided practice in training offerings*
- Teachers reported wanting more *targeted* online pedagogy training

# WHAT WE LEARNED

- Teachers see broader applications for their new skill set – including:
  - flexible options for failing students or students with special needs
  - better support for traditional face-to-face classes
  - the possibility of extending online/hybrid learning opportunities to lower grades

# WHAT WE LEARNED

- There is variation across projects in the level of administrative ‘buy-in’ for the use of online courses and modules
  - Some projects doing a great job positioning their work as part of a larger conversation about how to support struggling and failing students (or all students)
  - Other projects, even the opportunity of online courses, were marginalized or viewed as beneficial for only a limited number of students

# POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- The *project triggered several important policy issues and discussions* among many of the sites, including:
  - How to handle learning time requirements and attendance when using online or hybrid courses
  - How courses or modules, especially those that are used for credit recovery, translate into credits and grades for students (i.e., what is included on a student's transcript)

# POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- The *project triggered several important policy issues and discussions* among many of the sites, including (cont):
  - If courses/modules can or should be designed to allow students to successfully complete based on *competency or proficiency*, rather than more traditional course-pacing and grading constraints
  - How to schedule and compensate teachers who teach online/hybrid courses

# NEXT STEPS

- Wrapping up current project
- Sharing access information to courses & modules
- Keeping the momentum moving forward:
  - Possible development of new professional development opportunities
  - Possible development of structures to vet the courses/modules
  - Informing policy discussions

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- U.S. Department of Education's report *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning*  
<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>
- Contact Jenny: [jcurtin@doe.mass.edu](mailto:jcurtin@doe.mass.edu)



## Next in the series

Visit us at our next webinar:

### **Early Learners & Online Learning**

**September 26, 2011, 3:00-4:00pm ET**

Schools and districts are looking online to provide all students, even our earliest learners, with resources and courses to enhance and enrich their educational experience. This webinar will introduce the use of online learning with early learners and share web-based and off-line resources available to assist early learners in their online learning.

To register:

<http://registrations.rmces.com>

Event/Form ID: NYEL (not case sensitive).



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