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TRADITIONAL ONLINE CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS
OPPOSED TO ACCELERATED ONLINE CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAMS
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

Frances Maxwell-Baxter

A DISSERTATION

submitted to Lynn University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

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Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

Ross College of Education

Lynn University

Abstract

FRANCES MAXWELL-BAXTER: Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs
Opposed to Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs for High School Students

This Action Research Design examines three problems that at-risk twelfth graders face every day when they are left to decide how to graduate within 9 weeks. These struggling twelfth graders are in the hands and at the mercy of their certified secondary school counselors. The lack of time, coupled with technology not being current, the lack of effectiveness in raising graduation rates faster, and the need for metacognitive learning theory are all problems at-risk twelfth graders face in trying to graduate on time with their cohort.

The research design and method were from a Qualitative Action Research Design. The research instrument was Survey Monkey, utilizing an online survey using Google Forms qualitative software (Google.com). Sixty-six certified secondary school counselors in Florida participated. The data from the online survey comprised 14 questions (eight Likert scale questions and six open-ended questions). The first question was the Informed Consent (if the counselors disagreed to take the online survey, they were kicked out automatically, and the survey ended).

The data analysis used descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, and percentage) to analyze the online survey questions. The open-ended questions were examined by organizing them into codes to generate three themes, and the themes were used to find the answer of the overarching research questions.

The survey results concluded that certified secondary school counselors believe that both Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program courses

effectively deliver content, allowing students to progress at their own pace in recovering their lost credits. The survey results also concluded that Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs helped at-risk twelfth graders raise their grade point average. The survey demonstrated that the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program worked best for students who needed to recover credits for four or fewer courses they failed. The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program improved students' ability to recover lost credits quicker, especially if the student failed five or more courses.

The metacognitive learning theory results brought awareness to the certified secondary school counselors and helped them to understand the importance in implementing this learning theory to at-risk twelfth graders' learning processes. The results showed that when the metacognitive learning theory was added to the curriculum for at-risk twelfth graders embarking on taking online credit recovery programs, the learning theory enhanced their learning abilities and equipped them with strategies and skills to achieve success in recovering their lost credits and graduating.

The descriptive data analysis of the research concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean, median, and mode values while the standard deviation values were lower than the range.

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Dedication

I dedicated this dissertation to God, who gave me the stamina and strength to be a lifelong learner and endure the process. God imparted courage, perseverance, and grace to me, helping me in my journey. God has allowed me to be a woman who has served diverse groups of people throughout my professional and educational life journey in the social services, mental health, and counseling fields, empowering various groups of people, encouraging them, and building them up to achieve their goals through so many life challenges.

I also dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Martha Latz, a compassionate supervisor, mentor, and friend who found it not robbery to walk alongside me in my journey to help me, a single woman who never imagined obtaining a Doctoral degree in the EdD educational leadership program at Lynn University. Dr. Latz always encouraged and cheered me on by reminding me that I could do this and had the skills to do it. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to many professors, supervisors, mentors, and friends from Lynn University and Palm Beach Atlantic University who imparted their wisdom and expertise to me.

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Chapter I: Introduction

In the United States, 87% of public high school students graduated with their cohort, the average adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), Tallahassee, Florida, reports that Floridians' high school graduation rates in the 2021-2022 school years were 87.3%. There was an increase of 0.4% from the 2018-2019 pre-pandemic school years (FLDOE, 2023).

According to Wisevoter (2023), the high school graduation rates in the United States varied significantly from state to state. The national average for high school graduation stands at around 84%, but there were states with higher or lower figures. Wisevoter (2023) stated that the senior year for high school students is the most rigorous and matters the most. Senior high school students' grades were the most important in the first semester of their twelfth grade (Wisevoter, 2023).

The public high school graduation rates per the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the school year 2019–20 stated that the United States ACGR for public high school students was 87%, the highest graduation rate has been since the rate was first measured in 2010–11 (79%). Asian/Pacific Islander students had the highest ACGR (93%), followed by White (90%), Hispanic (83%), Black (81%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (75%) students (NCES, 2024).

What is ThinkImpact?

ThinkImpact was a statistical site that provided educational statistics on the United States. ThinkImpact stated that in 2019, there were 15.1 million students in the United States. 10% were enrolled in private high schools, and 3,209,510 students graduated in 2020. The gender parity for United States high schools is 0.99. There

are 26,727 high schools in the United States and 1.8 million teachers. The graduation rate was at an all-time high of 85.3%, and the dropout rate was at an all-time low of 6%. 47% of students were White, 27% were Hispanic, 15% were Black, and 11% were other races (ThinkImpact, 2022).

ThinkImpact also stated that it was estimated that 3,650,000 students graduated from high school in 2020. As of 2021, the national graduation rate was currently 85.3%, an all-time high, and 52% of states' graduation rates increased. The racial breakdown was that 79% of Black, 81% of Hispanic, and 89.7% of Caucasian students graduated on time. Black students' graduation rates have increased by 12% but were still 6.3 points below the national average. Hispanic students' graduation rates have increased by 10% but were still 4.3 points below the national average, and the graduation rate for students with disabilities remains at 67.1%. Statistics revealed that the United States has an average of 98,755 public schools, 13,477 middle schools, 2,500 junior high schools, and 23,900 secondary schools (ThinkImpact, 2022).

According to the United States Statistics, the question was what is the effectiveness of an online credit recovery program in improving the graduation rates of students at risk of school failure? Students who needed more credits to advance to twelfth grade and did not use credit recovery had an 8 percent probability of graduating. However, students who did not have enough credits to advance to twelfth grade and used credit recovery increased their chances of graduating to 23% (NCES).

What do at-risk and credit recovery mean? The Glossary of Education Reform defines at-risk as "exposure to harm or danger" (Great Schools Partnership, *At-Risk*, 2013, para. 1). The term at-risk describes students as having a higher probability of

failing academically or dropping out. The definition of at-risk “applies to students facing circumstances that jeopardize their ability to graduate and grade retention” (Great Schools Partnership, *At-risk*, 2023, para. 1). The United States Department of Education (2018) defines “credit recovery” as a strategy that encourages at-risk students to redo previously failed courses. Recovering lost credits is a requirement from the United States Department of Education for high school students to graduate. The students must complete all failed coursework to meet the Florida Department of Education guidelines (United States Department of Education, 2018).

The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) is an online credit recovery program that all at-risk twelfth-grade students add to their current course roster for that semester. The TOCRP is an additional program that supplements at-risk twelfth graders with the opportunity to recover lost credits to get back on track with their 4-year standardized graduation curriculum by placing at-risk twelfth graders below the 2.0-grade point average in this program. The TOCRP is a program that ranges from 18 to 36 weeks for at-risk students to recover their lost credits. The TOCRP is proctored during school hours by a teacher certified in the TOCRP (Edgenuity, 2023).

The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR) is an accelerated online credit recovery program which allows students to recover lost credits within 9 weeks and obtain the necessary credit to get back on track with their 4-year standardized graduation curriculum. The AOCR allows at-risk twelfth-grade students to focus on obtaining their lost credits while creating a flexible schedule where the courses are implemented into students’ current course roster for that semester. No additional courses

are added to students' current roster schedule (Apex Learning, 2021; Apex, 2020a; Apex, 2017a).

The AOCRCP rapidly assisted at-risk twelfth graders with recovering lost credits within 9 weeks so they could graduate with their cohorts. The AOCRCP allowed at-risk twelfth graders to graduate at the AOCRCP High School or return to their home school to graduate with their cohorts. The AOCRCP has the exact 4-year standard graduation curriculum requirements aligned with the Florida Department of Education standards (FLDOE).

The AOCRCP allowed at-risk twelfth graders to attend classes in the morning or afternoon. The 3-hour classes permitted a more flexible schedule for pregnant students, working students, or students who are caregivers for their siblings. The AOCRCP was a 24-hour program giving at-risk twelfth graders access to their educational learning via the internet all day, versus only during school hours (Apex Learning, 2021; Apex Learning, 2020a; Apex Learning, 2017a).

The AOCRCP afforded the students the ability to test out of subjects after mastering materials in that subject, which allowed students to quickly bring an "F" grade up to a "D" or "C" grade. This AOCRCP has developed a program engine designed to bring unity among the certified secondary school counselors and the at-risk twelfth graders whom they sent to the AOCRCP to recover their lost credits, raise their grade point average above 2.0, and get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum to graduate (Apex Learning, 2021; Apex Learning, 2020a; Apex Learning, 2017a).

Background

The problem was the time factor issue that at-risk twelfth graders faced every day when they were left to decide how to graduate within 9 weeks. These struggling twelfth graders were in the hands and at the mercy of their certified secondary school counselors (Galindo, 2017; Vaiana, 2017). The lack of time, coupled with technology not being current and the lack of effectiveness in raising graduation rates faster, and the need for metacognitive learning theory are all problems at-risk twelfth graders face in trying to graduate on time with their cohort (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

Time was crucial for at-risk twelfth graders trying to graduate in 9 weeks with their cohorts. Placing at-risk twelfth graders in the accelerated online credit recovery program sooner than the last 9 weeks of school gave them a better chance of being successful in raising their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate on time with their cohorts (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

One of the research questions was trying to understand why certified secondary school counselors were waiting until the last 9 weeks of a school semester to send struggling at-risk twelfth graders to the accelerated online credit recovery program to try to recover their lost credits (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

There was a need for certified secondary school counselors to place struggling at-risk twelfth graders with low-grade point averages (under 2.0) into accelerated online credit recovery programs quicker. They need to recover lost credits in a 9-week timeframe and get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum. Being in an accelerated program sooner made the difference in their graduating or not.

Another problem was struggling twelfth-grade high school students being terrified by the thought of not graduating due to their low-grade point averages under 2.0, needing to recover lost credits in a 9-week timeframe, and getting back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017). This study also addressed the problem of time constraints and the need for the metacognition learning theory that it takes for at-risk twelfth graders to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohort (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

This study addressed the problem of certified secondary school counselors waiting to send at-risk twelfth graders to the accelerated online credit recovery program within the last 9 weeks of school. As certified secondary school counselors began to realize the time factor problem involved in placing at-risk twelfth graders struggling with grade point averages under 2.0 who needed to recover lost credits in a 9-week timeframe and get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum, then the hope was that secondary school counselors enrolled at-risk twelfth graders into the accelerated online credit recovery program sooner, in turn, which made the difference in them graduating or not. Time was crucial for at-risk twelfth graders trying to graduate in 9 weeks with their cohorts. Placing them in the accelerated online credit recovery program sooner gave them a chance to be successful in raising their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate on time with their cohorts (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

At-risk twelfth graders were left to make hard decisions about their academic lives, which terrified them. They needed help to recover their lost credits in 9 weeks,

raise their grade point averages above 2.0, align their 4-year standard graduation curriculum, and manage the time factor needed to meet the requirements to graduate (Vaiana, 2017). The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) does not address the time factors in raising graduation rates for at-risk twelfth graders. As introduced by Vaiana (2017), the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR) addresses the time factor as an additional way to raise graduation rates for at-risk twelfth graders faster (Vaiana, 2017). The students using the TOCRP needed a minimum of 18 weeks to a maximum of 36 weeks to recover lost credits. In contrast, the AOCR allowed at-risk twelfth graders enough time to make up lost credits within 9 weeks to graduate.

The process to regain lost credits utilizing the TOCRP was the current way certified secondary school counselors identified at-risk twelfth graders who were pressed for time with 9 weeks to graduate by reviewing the students' 4-year standardized graduation curriculum every 9 weeks to make sure the student was not below the 2.0-grade point average (Ford, 2019). Llewellyn's (2019) literature stated that online credit recovery programs for at-risk twelfth graders should be personalized (Llewellyn, 2019). The certified secondary school counselors then set alerts to track the student's progress for the next 9 weeks. After 18 weeks, the certified secondary school counselors followed up with the students to introduce them to the TOCRP to raise their grade point averages. Ford (2019) stated that certified secondary school counselors determine if students succeed or fail when implementing online credit recovery programs at their high schools (Ford, 2019).

According to Ford (2019), action research has a conventional understanding that the student is the center of all their learning; however, it is clear that certified secondary school counselors are the foundational components for at-risk twelfth graders' success (Ford, 2019). The TOCRP was how certified secondary school counselors helped at-risk twelfth graders pressed with a limited time window of 9 weeks to graduate, bring their grade point averages above 2.0, recover lost credits, and graduate on time with their cohorts by placing them in the TOCRP (Llewellyn, 2019). Over time, these students became frustrated due to the requirements and timeframe of 18 weeks to 36 weeks to raise their grade point averages. Some students chose to drop out (Meacham, 2021).

The results of being in an online credit recovery program using bandwidth and not using high-speed internet technology were an issue for at-risk twelfth graders trying to graduate within 9 weeks. Bandwidth technology was slower and needed to afford at-risk twelfth graders with 9 weeks the ability to make up lost credits and graduate quickly. Most public high schools use bandwidth with the TOCRP, which takes 18 to 36 weeks for at-risk twelfth graders to raise their grade point average above 2.0, recover their lost credits, and graduate (Edgenuity, 2023; Ford, 2019). The various authors' research studies demonstrated how utilizing online credit recovery program models and appropriate timeframe increased graduation rates (Apex Learning, 2020a; Coppett, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). The purpose and motivation of the researchers' study was to assist the certified school counselors in choosing the appropriate online credit recovery program with the appropriate timeline for at-risk twelfth graders to obtain lost credits to graduate (Apex Learning, 2020; Coppett, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

As demonstrated by Coppett (2020), the AOCRCP with higher-speed internet technology gave at-risk twelfth graders a chance to raise their grade point averages to graduate within 9 weeks (Coppett, 2020). Dorchester High Schools, two South Carolina High Schools, also suggested using the AOCRCP for at-risk twelfth graders to recover their lost credits more quickly versus waiting for the last 9 weeks of graduation to place them in the AOCRCP (Apex Learning, 2020a). Moshman (2018) and Padmanabha (2020a, 2020b) discussed how at-risk twelfth graders' online credit recovery experiences were enhanced when metacognitive learning theory was incorporated into the classroom for at-risk students working with the accelerated online credit recovery program (Apex Learning, 2020a; Coppett, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The Washington High School principal also agreed to introduce at-risk twelfth graders to the AOCRCP with higher-speed internet technology that addressed at-risk twelfth graders' concerns and constraints around graduation within 9 weeks (Apex Learning, 2020a).

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to understand the Florida-certified secondary school counselors' perceptions of their current credit recovery programs and seek to improve them, increasing on-time graduation rates (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017). The significance of the study was finding effective ways to elevate graduation rates for at-risk twelfth graders who were pressed with a 9-week time frame to graduate. The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program was where students and educators interact strictly online, on a camera and a computer (Edgenuity, 2023). The TOCRP utilized teachers to facilitate various student tests. Within 18 to 36 weeks of an academic

year, the students hope to recover the needed credits to graduate. The TOCRP helped students who need more credits and time to graduate during an academic school year of 18 to 36 weeks (Edgenuity, 2023; Llewellyn, 2019).

However, the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) in Florida was the primary source for high school students to recover lost credits (Edgenuity, 2023). Llewellyn (2019) suggested real-time data collection, which allowed certified secondary school counselors sufficient time to quickly place at-risk twelfth graders in the TOCRP. Putting at-risk twelfth graders in the TOCRP faster can be a way to prevent students from dropping out and keep them on their 4-year standardized graduation curriculum. Llewellyn stated that the TOCRP should be a preliminary step to keep graduation rates high (Edgenuity, 2023; Llewellyn, 2019). The TOCRP aimed to help students who need more credits and time to graduate with their cohorts, even if it took the students 18 to 36 weeks an academic year, to recover their lost credits required to graduate (Edgenuity, 2023; Llewellyn, 2019).

According to Llewellyn (2019), making online credit recovery programs a meaningful experience for at-risk students and assisting them in interacting and attaining successful graduation rates was the aim of the literature. Comparing the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program to other online credit recovery programs, the TOCRP graduates to nontraditional Online Credit Recovery Program graduates, described how far education has evolved. Technology in the twenty-first century is growing, and online credit recovery programs use high-speed Internet networks, computers, tablets, and laptops to access the Internet (Edgenuity, 2023; Llewellyn, 2019).

The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCRCP) was an online virtual high school (Apex Learning, 2021; Apex Learning, 2020a; Apex Learning, 2017a). It was a nontraditional school setting with flexible schedules for at-risk twelfth graders to select from morning or afternoon sessions. The AOCRCP schedules included attending classes for 3 hours in a morning session or 3 hours in an afternoon session, Monday through Friday. The AOCRCP provided certified secondary school counselors help to keep at-risk twelfth graders on track with their 4-year standardized graduation curriculum as well as motivated to recover their lost credits, bring their grade point averages above 2.0, and graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021).

Certified secondary school counselors received the teacher's weekly progress reports for the students; this kept at-risk twelfth graders focused on the task of recovering lost credits to graduate. The AOCRCP utilized higher-speed internet technology that accelerated students' ability to recover lost credits rapidly to graduate within 9 weeks (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021).

The AOCRCP used higher-speed internet technology that kept at-risk twelfth graders who had 9 weeks to recover lost credits to graduate engaged and motivated to succeed in graduating (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Llewellyn (2019) stated that online credit recovery programs should be personalized to every at-risk student's needs and that using higher-speed internet technology does personalize every student's need to recover lost credits by uniquely individualizing each student's curriculum to fit their situation (Llewellyn, 2019). The AOCRCP understood that one size

does not fit all or include every student or their status (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Llewellyn, 2019).

Currently, many certified secondary school counselors understand the difference between the TOCRP as opposed to the AOCR for at-risk twelfth graders to recover their lost credits and graduate (Oliver, 2021). Public high school systems had outgrown historical ways of only using the TOCRP to help at-risk twelfth graders who fail due to their deficiencies in accumulating the necessary credits in the 18-to-36-week timeframe to graduate. The TOCRP allowed students to repeat failed classes if they did not pass their courses in the following school year or be retained (Oliver, 2021). Public high school systems were now choosing the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program to help at-risk twelfth graders recover their lost credits and graduate within 9 weeks. However, the fact remained that the secondary school counselor had to place at-risk twelfth graders in these accelerated programs before the last 9 weeks of a school semester for success (Oliver, 2021).

Despite the many criticisms about online credit recovery programs and the limited research, the literature showed that online credit recovery programs were still the best way to help at-risk students obtain lost credits, graduate, and not become statistical dropouts. Slade's (2020) study cited the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (2017). It stated that effective online credit recovery programs showed evidence of solid motivation that empowered struggling at-risk high school students to boost their graduation rates. Furthermore, it prepares students for college and other careers (Slade, 2020). In addition, Slade's literature introduced the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program as an

excellent online credit recovery program that supports students in obtaining their diplomas on time (Slade, 2020). Hard academic decisions were made by certified secondary school counselors knowledgeable of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (Slade, 2020). The researcher's motivation was to assist certified secondary school counselors with finding the appropriate online credit recovery program to help twelfth graders recover their lost credits to graduate.

Rationale

The significant rationale was for all Florida public high schools and certified secondary school counselors to have access to available rapid credit recovery programs, a severe issue in Florida public high schools that certified secondary school counselors tried to address. The Florida public high schools and the certified secondary school counselors were responsible for stepping in and offering available rapid credit recovery programs and alternative ways for at-risk twelfth graders to graduate from high school.

Additionally, it was important to assist certified secondary school counselors to be aware of the lack of time, technology that was not current or effective in raising graduation rates faster, and in addition, bringing awareness to the metacognitive learning theory to be put into practice by the certified secondary school counselors in the state of Florida to assist at-risk students (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program accelerated twelfth-grade at-risk students' graduation rates, allowing them to obtain a diploma within 9 weeks (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The key in this study was for certified secondary school counselors to understand the 9-week time factor and place at-risk twelfth graders into accelerated programs sooner than the last 9 weeks of school for them to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts as they raise their grade point averages above 2.0 and get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Theoretical Framework

The goal was for certified secondary school counselors to utilize the metacognitive learning theory to teach students how to think about their learning, giving at-risk twelfth graders a life skill they can use forever. The primary theory used in this study was the metacognitive learning theory (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Out of the metacognitive theory, there were two thought processes termed “metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive control process” (Moshman, 2018, pp. 2-3). These terms were used for skill-building, problem-solving, and critical thinking. “Metacognitive knowledge” is when at-risk students understand how to solve problems (Moshman, 2018, pp. 2-3). The “metacognitive control process,” according to Moshman’s (2018) study, stated that at-risk students were given an awareness of their thoughts and learning styles. The “metacognitive knowledge and the metacognitive controlling process” helped students monitor their learning and thinking, allowing them to comprehend for better performance when embarking on online credit recovery programs. The metacognitive theory for learning assists all students with online learning (Moshman, 2018).

According to Padmanabha (2020a, 2020b), the metacognitive learning theory helps at-risk twelfth graders with a 9-week time frame to graduate to consider their

thinking and learning (Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Padmanabha (2020a) said the word “metacognitive” was an under-utilized theory in the twenty-first century (p. 1). Teaching at-risk twelfth graders how to think about how they learn was one key to advancing at-risk twelfth graders’ graduation rates. Daily, at-risk twelfth graders struggle to make hard decisions about recovering their lost credits in the 9 weeks they have to graduate. Padmanabha’s (2020a) study stated that “metacognitive was extremely important, still, habitually an ignored element of 21st-century education, which aimed to teach pupils how to learn” (p. 1).

When certified secondary school counselors empower the at-risk twelfth graders with the metacognitive learning theory, they better understand how they think and learn; this allows them to look forward to graduating and going to college or other career paths. Metacognition was the primary theory for this study, and it used “metacognitive knowledge and the metacognitive controlling process” (Padmanabha, 2020a, p. 1). The theoretical framework was the metacognitive theory. For this project, the metacognitive approach for the certified secondary school counselors included critical research analysis, the online survey data, and the literature that was utilized to inform the study (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The metacognitive learning theory informed the researcher by including knowledge and control processes. The inclusion allowed the certified secondary school counselors to bring awareness to at-risk twelfth graders and help them understand how they think, learn, and problem-solve (Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program used higher-speed internet technology, and the

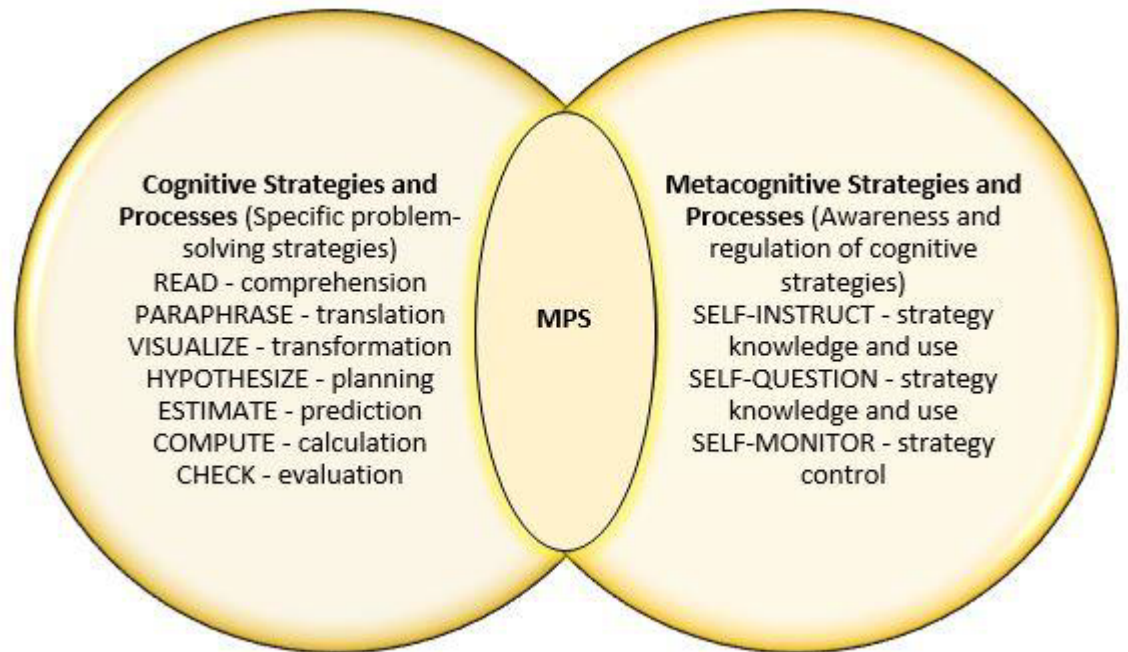
metacognitive learning theory appeared to support the AOCRCP naturally and promote graduation success (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

At-risk twelfth graders need to continually develop a healthy thinking process. The metacognitive learning theory was a part of the certified secondary school counselors coaching at-risk twelfth graders about their thinking and learning (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). At-risk twelfth graders were sometimes taught various learning styles, such as audio, visual, or kinesthetic learning, and some students learned better using a combination of these techniques. At-risk twelfth graders tackled the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program by thinking about how they specifically learn in an online setting. Teaching students to think about how they failed past coursework now that they have to repeat or be retained in the same grade level was a way to implement the metacognitive learning theory (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

Linking the metacognitive learning theory to how at-risk twelfth graders perceive the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program assisted them in making better choices. At-risk students can make more intelligent choices when enrolling in the AOCRCP. At-risk twelfth graders can go through their coursework with a different mindset, make up their lost credits faster within 9 weeks, take exams knowing their learning styles, and use their background knowledge to complete the failed coursework and recover lost credits to graduate (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The metacognitive strategy processes gave at-risk twelfth graders' awareness to regulate their thought process, and the cognitive strategy processes gave at-risk twelfth graders the skills they need to solve problems, as seen in Figure 1 (Montague, 1997).

Figure 1
Cognition/Metacognition Strategies and Process



Note. The cognition and metacognitive strategies and processes. From “Mathematical problem solving: Metacognitive,” by M. Montague (1997). In *Every Student a Learner* [Blog].<https://everystudentlearner.wordpress.com/>

The literature addressed the time factor required for at-risk twelfth graders to recover lost credits and graduate. There were different meanings of “time” in the literature. The consensus of time from the literature was the academic school year. The actual time of this study was 9 weeks for students to recover lost credits and graduate. That was placing marginalized, at-risk students into the Accelerated Online Credit

Recovery Program, allowing them to meet the 9-week time restriction to recover their lost credits and graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017a; Apex Learning, 2020a; Apex Learning, 2021, Coppett, 2020). The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program in the literature utilized time as an academic school year requiring a longer time frame of 18 to 36 weeks, more than the 9 weeks needed for credit recovery (Edgenuity, 2023).

The 9-week time factors addressed left twelfth graders to make hard decisions about their academic lives. The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program explicitly addressed the 9-week time factor and was an additional way to support raising graduation rates for at-risk twelfth graders (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021). This study addressed the 9-week time factor, which gives at-risk twelfth graders a higher probability of succeeding academically and not dropping out. At-risk twelfth graders also met the United States Department of Education guidelines in completing their required lost credits to graduate successfully (United States Department of Education, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to answer the research questions, allowing a better understanding of the problem so that viable solutions were developed. The problems were the lack of time, ineffective technology that was not current, and the metacognitive learning theory not being implemented by the certified secondary school counselors throughout the state of Florida choosing The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to address the time factor at-risk twelfth graders have to recover their lost credits in 9 weeks and

graduate. Addressing the time factors that at-risk twelfth graders face daily to graduate within 9 weeks was vital. Utilizing internet technology was another significant component of whether at-risk twelfth graders would successfully recover their lost credits and graduate on time with their cohorts because they can accomplish their goals without faster internet speed (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021; Edgenuity, 2023).

Implementing the metacognitive learning theory, which allowed at-risk students to be aware of how they think and learn, was also essential (Apex Learning, 2020a; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Finally, choosing the online credit recovery program that afforded at-risk twelfth graders 9 weeks to graduate was paramount (Apex Learning, 2017a, 2017b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021; Edgenuity, 2023; Llewellyn, 2019). The key in this study was for certified secondary school counselors to acknowledge the 9-week time factors that at-risk twelfth graders faced daily to graduate on time with their cohorts. The research questions were aligned with this study's data and literature collection.

This study examined various online credit recovery programs, but the specific focus of this study was The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017). The study participants were certified secondary school counselors who work with Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs. This qualitative action research study obtained email addresses from the Florida Department of Education Research and Assessment Department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE, 2023).

As certified secondary school counselors began to realize that placing at-risk twelfth graders in the appropriate online credit recovery program was crucial in whether they graduated or not, counselors were better able to assist at-risk twelfth graders struggling with low-grade point averages under 2.0 and with the need to recover lost credits in a 9-week timeframe to get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum. When placed in the appropriate program, at-risk twelfth graders had a chance of being successful in raising their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

Research Questions

The study aimed to assess certified secondary school counselors' perceptions and experiences toward The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program respectively.

1. What are the perspectives of certified secondary school counselors knowledgeable of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?
2. What factors affect the timeframe in which certified secondary school counselors send at-risk twelfth students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts?
3. To what extent do certified secondary school counselors understand metacognitive learning theory and its effects on at-risk twelfth students

enrolled in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to graduate on time with their cohorts?

Assumptions

There were always assumptions about online credit recovery programs. Qualitative Action Research (Mertler, 2019) was attainable and measurable when certified secondary school counselors participated in this study, and the certified secondary school counselors worked with at-risk twelfth graders who had 9 weeks to recover lost credits to graduate. Another assumption was that credit recovery programs were indeed helpful in assisting at-risk twelfth graders to recover missing credits and graduate (Slade, 2020). Another assumption was that some credit recovery programs were more successful than others. The final assumption was that certified secondary school counselors helped at-risk twelfth graders take ownership of their learning (Slade, 2020).

The methodology assumption was Kurt Lewin's term coined in 1930, "action research," which gave the researcher the necessary tools to implement this theory effectively by utilizing the four-step process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting with the certified secondary school counselors throughout the state of Florida perceptions of implementing the appropriate online credit recovery program for at-risk twelfth graders to graduate successfully (Mertler, 2019). The terminology utilized in this study is listed below.

The definitions of terms entailed giving the readers an understanding of the mechanism of the study. The illustrations provided directions on how the terms were utilized and clarified the reader's familiarity with the terms.

Definitions of Terms

Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCRCP): Offers students the opportunity to recover a credit in a flexible and efficient manner. These courses are specifically designed to help students get back on track and master material they may have struggled with in the past (Apex Learning, 2021).

Apex Learning: An online virtual school and it is a nontraditional school setting with flexible schedules for at-risk twelfth-grade high school students to choose attending the school from three hours in the morning or three hours in the afternoon. Live teachers are in the classrooms and coaches are provided for students to keep them on track and motivated to recover lost credits, bring their grade point averages above 2.0, and graduate on time. Apex Learning utilizes higher speed internet technology. Apex Learning is an accelerated internet technology program for online platforms. Apex Learning provides students with individual opportunities to focus on exactly what they need to master recovery of lost credits (Apex Learning, 2021).

At-risk: *The Glossary of Education Reform* defines “at-risk” as “exposure to harm or danger.” The term at-risk describes students as having a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out. At-risk “applies to students facing circumstances that jeopardize their ability to graduate and grade retention” (Great Schools Partnership, *At-risk*, 2013, para. 1).

Certified School Counselor: A certified school counselor provides leadership in the school through the implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program aligned with the district and school’s mission to promote academic,

social/emotional, and college/career development, while ensuring equity (Google.com, n.d.).

Credit Recovery: The United States Department of Education defines “credit recovery” as a strategy that encourages at-risk students to redo previously failed courses.

Recovering lost credits is a requirement from the United States Department of Education for high school students to graduate. The students must successfully complete all failed coursework to meet their guidelines (United States Department of Education, 2018).

Edgenuity Online Credit Recovery Program (EOCRP): An eLearning tool that provides engaging online and blended learning education solutions for students while enabling schools and districts to meet their academic goals (Edgenuity, 2023).

Education: noun 1: The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. 2: the act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession. 3: a degree, level, or kind of schooling: a university education. 4: the result produced by instruction, training, or study: to show one’s education. 5: the science or art of teaching; pedagogic (Dictionary.com, n.d.-a).

Grade Point Average: An indication of a student’s academic achievement at a college or university, calculated as the total number of grade points received over a given period divided by the total number of credits awarded. A grade point average is a number representing the average value of the accumulated final grades earned in courses over time. More commonly called a GPA; a student’s grade point average is calculated by adding up all accumulated final grades and dividing that figure by the number of grades awarded (Great Schools Partnership, *At-risk*, 2013).

Graduation.1: “An act of graduating in 4 years with cohorts; the state of being graduated. 2: the ceremony of conferring degrees or diplomas, as at a college or school. 3: arrangement in degrees, levels, or ranks.” (Dictionary.com, n.d.-b).

Leader: 1: A person or thing that leads. 2: a guiding or directing head, as of an army, movement, or political group (Dictionary.com, n.d.-c).

Leadership: 1: The position or function of a leader, a person who guides or directs a group: He managed to maintain his leadership of the party despite heavy opposition. 2: ability to lead: As early as sixth grade she displayed remarkable leadership potential. 3: an act or instance of leading; guidance; direction: They prospered under his strong leadership. 4: the leaders of a group: The union leadership agreed to arbitrate (Dictionary.com, n.d.-d).

Metacognitive: 1: having to do with metacognition, high-level thinking that enables understanding: The students are disengaged from the curriculum, and they have not gained a metacognitive understanding of the material (Dictionary.com, n.d.-f)

Metacognition: Psychology. 1. higher-order thinking that enables understanding, analysis, and control of one’s cognitive processes, especially when engaged in learning (Dictionary.com, n.d.-e).

Qualitative Research: “Qualitative research can be defined as the study of the nature of phenomena and is especially appropriate for answering questions of why something is (not) observed, assessing complex multi-component interventions, and focusing on intervention improvement” (Busetto et al. 2020, p. 1).

Retention: 1: The act of retaining. 2. The state of being retained. 3. The power to retain; capacity for retaining. 4. The act or power of remembering things; memory

(Dictionary.com, n.d.-g).

Student Retention: 1. “The practice of not promoting students up a grade level in school (e.g., students repeat a grade level) and is based on the belief that children learn more academically by repeating a grade (Fait, 1982)” (St. Croix River Education District, p. 1).

2: Student retention is a carefully laid process to ensure student(s) success till graduation.

To see a huge number of students drop out of their higher education is definitely a sorry state for students, institutions, and to the family that supports them (Google.com, n.d.).

School Counselors: Masters level trained and licensed educators equipped with the skills, knowledge, and expertise to support and develop students’ academic, career, and social/emotional development (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Teacher-Leader: In schools, the term teacher-leader is commonly applied to teachers who have taken on leadership roles and additional professional responsibilities. The teacher-leader concept is closely related to voice and shared leadership (the distribution of leadership roles and decision-making responsibilities beyond the administrative team in a district or school (Great Schools Partnership, *Teacher-Leader*, 2013).

Teachers: *Plural* noun educators 1: a person who teaches, especially in a school; a person that educates, especially a teacher, principal, or other person involved in planning or directing education. 2: one that teaches especially: one whose occupation is to instruct or an educationist (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Teaching: 1: the act or profession of a person who teaches. 2: something that is taught. 3: Often teachings. Doctrines or precepts: the teachings of Lao-tzu (Dictionary.com, n.d.-h).

Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP): Defined by high schools is a credit recovery strategy that encourages at-risk students to re-take a previously failed course required to graduate and earn credit if the student successfully completes the course requirements (Apex Learning, 2021).

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter was organized in the following order. Chapter I of this study introduced the background information about the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR). The chapter stated the problems, including the lack of time, technology needed to be more current and effective in raising graduation rates faster, and the need for the metacognitive learning theory. Chapter I examined various online credit recovery programs, but the specific focus of this chapter was TOCRP as opposed to the AOCR. The chapter described the qualitative action research design utilizing an online survey from certified secondary school counselors. The study participants were certified secondary school counselors who worked with Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs for at-risk twelfth graders. This qualitative action research study obtained email addresses from the Florida Department of Education Research and Assessment Department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE). Finally, chapter I included the theoretical framework and the research questions.

Chapter II reviewed the literature about online credit recovery programs and the history of online credit recovery programs. Chapter II presented the literature overview of online credit recovery programs. The chapter also discussed how necessary it is for

certified secondary school counselors place at-risk twelfth graders in appropriate online credit recovery programs in a timeframe sooner than the last 9 weeks of school to promote successful graduation. Finally, the chapter explained the theoretical framework of the researcher's study, discussed the benefits and effectiveness of online credit recovery programs, and made the argument for more research.

Chapter III described the methodology used in this study. The chapter comprised the research design, researcher setting, the participants, data collection, and analysis methods. Chapter II also included how the researcher addressed trustworthiness and the study's limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. Chapter IV presented the data analysis of the research questions and a summary of the results. Finally, Chapter V analyzed the study's findings related to existing literature and demonstrated how it contributed to the education field. This chapter also discussed the study's conclusions and recommendations regarding the implications for practice and future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Struggling at-risk twelfth graders are looking to their certified secondary school counselors to help them stay on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate on time with their cohort (Galindo, 2017; Vaiana, 2017). The challenge was the accrual of lost credits and bringing their grade point average above 2.0. Whether at-risk twelfth graders were successful depended on what online credit recovery program they embarked on, such as the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, Edgenuity, as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning (Edgenuity, 2023, & Apex Learning, 2020a).

Online credit recovery programs were a means for at-risk twelfth graders to begin the process of accrual of their lost credits. According to the United States Department of Education Common Core of Data and the National Center for Education Statistics, questions were being asked about online credit recovery programs (Viano, 2018a, 2018b). Do online credit recovery programs help high school students graduate, and are online credit recovery programs effective? The NCES states that at-risk twelfth graders enrolled in online credit recovery programs have a 23% chance to graduate versus an 8% chance for students not enrolled in an online credit recovery program (Viano, 2018a, 2018b).

The purpose of the literature was to demonstrate a need for at-risk twelfth graders struggling below a 2.0 grade point average to be placed in an online credit recovery program, allowing them to raise their grade point average above 2.0, accrue lost credits within 9 weeks, and return on target with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate on time with their cohort in a faster timeframe (Galindo, 2017; Vaiana, 2017).

This study reviewed the statement of the problem, the research questions, the history of online credit recovery programs, the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, Edgenuity, as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning; ongoing criticisms; the efficacy of the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning, in three high schools; and the summary of the chapter.

Statement of the Problem

At-risk twelfth graders faced a crucial time factor when they were below a 2.0-grade point average and had 9 weeks to get back on track. Technology was another problem and needed to be updated to effectively assist at-risk twelfth graders in raising their graduation rates more rapidly. Internet technology was significant in determining whether at-risk twelfth graders would successfully accrue their lost credits more quickly to graduate on time with their cohorts (Galindo, 2017; Vaiana, 2017). The lack of metacognitive learning theory was another problem at-risk twelfth graders faced when trying to accrue lost credits to bring their grade point averages above 2.0 to be aligned with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate on time with their cohort. The metacognitive learning theory allows at-risk students to know how they think and learn (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Finally, choosing the right online credit recovery program was paramount.

Time was vital for at-risk twelfth graders, who had 9 weeks to accrue lost credits and wanted to graduate with their cohorts. At-risk twelfth graders were happy that certified secondary school counselors were there to guide them through a step-by-step process in which they could accrue their lost credits. Placing at-risk twelfth graders in the

proper online credit recovery program met the students' needs. The fact that at-risk twelfth graders tried to embrace their issues with low graduation rates demonstrated how they sought help (Apex Learning, 2020a).

“At-risk” was defined as exposure to harm or danger, according to The Glossary of Education Reform. At-risk students are said to have a higher probability of not academically meeting the requirement governed by the United States Department of Education to graduate but are in jeopardy of being retained if they do not accrue their lost credits (Great Schools Partnership, *At-risk*, 2013).

The “credit recovery” definition encouraged at-risk students to redo courses they failed in previous years. The United States Department of Education requires every high school student to meet the necessary 4-year standard graduation plan to complete all failed coursework to meet their guidelines (Apex Learning, 2021).

Understanding why certified secondary school counselors were waiting until the fourth semester (last 9 weeks of a school semester) to send struggling at-risk twelfth graders to the accelerated online credit recovery program to accrue their lost credits was one of the research questions (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017).

Graduation Rates

An estimated 16,892,000 students were enrolled in high school in 2021. Fifteen million four hundred ninety-two thousand students were enrolled in public high schools. 1990 marked the lowest high school enrollment in United States history, with only 11,341,000 students in attendance. 2023 is projected to have one of the highest enrollments, with 17,288,000 students in public and private schools (ThinkImpact, 2022).

According to Wisevoter (2023), Florida was the seventh state with the highest high school graduation rate, with 90% of students graduating (Wisevoter, 2023). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) stated that as of 2021, the national graduation rate was currently 85.3%, an all-time high. 52% of states' graduation rates increased. 79% of Black students, 81% of Hispanic students, and 89.7% of Caucasian students graduated on time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024).

What is Credit Recovery?

Credit recovery was the opportunity for students to get back on track for on-time graduation. Students earned the high school credits they failed to get when they initially had the chance. In some cases, this meant making up for courses that they failed. In other situations, it referred to the opportunity to take classes now that a students' school would not offer again (American High School Academy, 2023).

Credit recovery was engaging and motivating students to learn. 72% of students in credit recovery have attendance issues, so motivation was the key. Apex Learning students participate in their learning, not just passively receiving instruction. As a result, students were engaged and developed a deeper understanding of the material (Apex Learning, 2021).

Public high schools define credit recovery as a tactic for at-risk students to re-take prior failed courses while earning credits toward their high school diploma to graduate. Credit recovery was vital because it motivated at-risk students, letting them know how they think and learn to recover lost credits, get back on track for their 4-year graduation curriculum, and graduate with their cohort.

The High School Strategy defined credit recovery as encouraging at-risk students to retake a previously failed course required for high school graduation and earning credit if the student completes the course requirements. The strategy was designed to provide a pathway for high school students with a history of course failure and help them avoid falling further behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Credit recovery courses are available online or in alternative settings and can be scheduled at different times to suit the student's needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

History of Online Credit Recovery Programs

Galindo (2017) explained that online learning began as a non-traditional format dating back to the twentieth century. Distance education developed into online learning using indirect and independent learning formats. The teachers and students were never face-to-face, creating an independent learning style that students had to learn. The study finds that online curricula, such as “Accelerated Christian Education, Compass Learning, and Seven Star,” all utilize online curriculums (Galindo, 2017).

Online learning in the United States is increasing. Galindo (2017) further cites Cavanaugh (2009), who stated that “online schools and programs and [their] successfulness was compared to attending traditional schooling” (Cavanaugh, 2019, as cited in Galindo, 2017, p. 35). The literature compared academic achievement to traditional instruction and saw that online programs help at-risk students succeed in graduating (Galindo, 2017).

Viano (2018), referencing the United States Department of Education, Common Core of Data, and the National Center for Education Statistics, stated that online credit recovery graduation rates have achieved the highest records (Viano, 2018a, 2018b).

Online learning continued to rise in the twenty-first century. Technology was advancing in many accelerated online credit recovery programs with high-speed internet services, attracting high school students with subpar graduation rates and helping them graduate faster and obtain a diploma (Galindo, 2017; Llewellyn, 2019).

Cavanaugh et al. (2004) stated that distance education was a form of instruction where students need teachers physically present. Online platforms continuously evolved with faster technology, demonstrating how far education has come. Traditional online credit recovery programs' technology used bandwidth and accelerated online credit recovery programs used online technology platforms, such as high-speed internet networks, computers, tablets, and laptops. Cavanaugh et al. (2004) continued to explain what distance education meant and the various forms distance education have taken.

Galindo's 2017 study observed the Compass Learning Odyssey online curriculum, qualitative viewpoints of students and parents explicitly using online learning curriculums, and students' thoughts on digital learning settings when utilized as the primary source of education.

Credit Recovery and Technology

Coppett (2020), citing DePaoli et al. (2018), agreed that technology was increasing, and every generation's graduation rate was expected to exceed the former generation. Coppett (2020) asked, due to the rapid growth of graduation rates in past years, "How and why did online credit recovery programs become an integral component to the narrative of increased graduation rates?" (pp. 1-2). The literature demonstrated the importance of moving from the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program's face-to-face methods into the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to assist at-risk high

school students in achieving graduation (Coppett, 2020). Time factors should not be an issue; however, they were an issue when assisting struggling at-risk students to graduate on time with their cohorts. Although the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program does not discredit the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, it further enhances online learning platforms for at-risk students.

Coppett's 2020 study aimed to increase graduation rates and lessen dropout rates, using various motivation factors: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation require different regulation methods. This study observed motivation variables for high school students taking online credit recovery courses to accrue lost credits to graduate. The goal was to assist struggling at-risk students in graduating successfully while feeling good about achieving a high school diploma (Coppett, 2020).

Credit Recovery and Dropout Rates

Colunio's 2019 study observed at-risk students and school dropouts. The study showed how at-risk youth contributed to dropout rates in high schools. The study tried to understand the perceptions of certified secondary school counselors. It examined three sections of the literature: problems of high school dropouts, conceptual framework, and challenges of student retention. Colunio's (2019) study cited Blount (2012), Tromski-Klingshim & Miura (2017), Thompson (2010), and Logan (2011), who all contributed to this study.

Colunio's (2019) study cited Robinson (2014), which showed the importance of lessening dropout rates for at-risk students. Robinson's (2014) study also reflected on how it was the certified secondary school counselors' job to help at-risk high school students improve their academics so that they are less likely to drop out or be retained in

high school (Colunio, 2019). Certified secondary school counselors should know that at-risk students tend to disengage in learning and drop out when bullied, bored, overwhelmed, frustrated, or lost at school (Colunio, 2019).

Colunio (2019) continued to cite Robinson's (2014) study, which placed at-risk students into a credit recovery program to see if the graduation rates would change. According to Robinson (2014), students drop out due to needing more motivation, finances, and preparation (Colunio, 2019). Robinson's (2014) study illustrated how school environments impacted student retention. Placing at-risk students in a smaller traditional high school or an alternative high school setting with online classes and teacher support helped with the dropout and retention rates. Smaller conventional high schools and online alternative school settings could help students regain focus and motivation to finish their education. Smaller classroom settings could also increase at-risk students' social skills and engagement. When certified secondary school counselors were more attentive to the at-risk population, they prevented students from dropping out or being retained in high school (Colunio, 2019). Colunio (2019) agreed with Robinson (2014) that students who had dropped out of public high schools had a better school environment when placed in an alternative school setting. Students in an alternative school setting (using computer-based learning with teacher support) were able to renew their educational interests, increase focus, and improve their retention rate (Colunio, 2019).

Colunio's (2019) study was impacted by Robinson's (2014) study. Colunio (2019) felt that utilizing Robinson's (2014) research enhanced his analysis and captured the importance of engaging at-risk high school students to lessen dropout rates. Both

studies supported helping students with dropout prevention methods. A credit recovery program used by Robinson's Southern Performance Center (SPC) model assisted at-risk students with better learning environments in producing successful graduation rates. The blended learning model included face-to-face learning and an online credit recovery program. Robinson's Southern Performance Center (SPC) online credit recovery program was beneficial and worked with at-risk students, keeping them engaged and motivated to graduate (Colunio, 2019). Colunio (2019) agreed that Robinson's Southern Performance Center (SPC) online credit recovery program improved students' engagement with the program, students' experiences of attending traditional high schools, and dropout rates. Robinson's Southern Performance Center (SPC) had more effective outcomes for students to be successful in graduating and not dropping out of high school, regardless of their previous experiences with teachers or staff. Finally, Southern Performance Center (SPC) explored avenues to increase graduation rates and lessen dropout rates (Colunio, 2019).

Colunio's (2019) study believed Robinson's (2014) study, which used a qualitative paradigm study of human experiences, could assist him in lessening dropout rates and retention for at-risk high school students. Robinson's program, the Southern Performance Center model, engaged at-risk high school students, helping them to graduate. This model included a non-traditional setting, learning environments centered on students, smaller groups of students per class, and five teachers facilitating the program. This model made the program successful because of the blended learning of face-to-face and online credit recovery instruction (Colunio, 2019). Colunio's (2019) study explained how school counselors were responsible for at-risk students being

retained and not graduating if the counselors did not monitor the students' 4-year scheduled graduation plan correctly. Colunio (2019) cited Blount (2012) and Tromski-Klingshim & Miura (2017), who stated that "counseling services had shown to be positive contributions in the battle to retain at-risk students to graduation" (Colunio, 2019, p. 16).

Colunio's (2019) study cited Logan's (2011), which focused on a working definition of determining the status of at-risk students who dropped out. Colunio (2019) found "that students who have low grades, lack of motivation, have negative peers, and experience social isolation in school networks are more at risk of dropping out than those without these risk factors" and that this has been happening since 1970. The study aimed to identify at-risk students' issues and retain them to fix the problem so they could graduate (Colunio, 2019, pp. 28-29). Colunio's (2019) multiple case studies utilized a qualitative methodology. The study used interviews and collected individuals' perceptions, behaviors, and program mechanisms. The study examined "how the perceptions of each group of personnel (or case) compared with, or complemented, each other" (Colunio, 2019, pp. 89-90).

The study's limitations were only generalizable to some school counselors who worked with at-risk high school students, and the study was conducted in one high school. The study could have succeeded in keeping at-risk students in high school if they had hired suitable school counselors to develop proper relationships with students (Colunio, 2019).

Credit Recovery Enrollment, Benefits, and Consequences

Viano's (2018) study covered Credit Recovery (CR) online course enrollment, benefits, and consequences. Viano (2018) asked whether CR online courses work for at-risk high school students who are failing classes and need to graduate. The analysis investigated CR online courses and their effectiveness for at-risk students trying to graduate on time with their cohorts. The study found CR online courses were growing exponentially. It was an effective way for at-risk students to make up for failed courses without repeating the traditional way of retaking the entire class.

Viano's (2018) study indicated evidence that CR online coursework is available for high school students who have failed courses. The analysis found that CR online courses were far better than repeating traditional online credit recovery courses due to the growing need for CR programs. Evidence showed that high school students making up lost credits achieve faster with the CR online courses versus repeating the class in a traditional online setting. Other evidence pointed out that CR online courses give high school students higher odds of earning lost credits they formerly failed and were most likely to graduate. The study compared CR online courses to traditional ones (Viano, 2018a, 2018b). CR courses help at-risk high school students motivate their learning to accelerate and recover lost credits to graduate, which is different from learning the traditional way (Viano, 2018a, 2018b). The study utilized three essays to identify how credit recovery online course enrollment works. The three essays compare CR online course enrollment to traditional online course enrollment for at-risk students repeating a course they failed.

The first essay provided baseline answers to questions about “enrollment numbers, changes over time, the type of student who enrolled in credit recovery, and the type of school that was more likely to enroll students in credit recovery” as well as the effectiveness of CR online courses used for at-risk students to recover lost credits (Viano, 2018a, p. 1). The second essay used “quasi-experimental methods” to determine the contributing factors of CR online courses. This essay examined whether at-risk high school students graduate from CR programs and whether their dropout rates decreased. It compared CR programs to students who fully repeated failed courses. The analysis aimed to find the “causal effect of credit recovery on the likelihood of high school graduation” (Viano, 2018a, p. 2). The third essay focused on CR programs increasing at-risk high school students’ graduation rates and decreasing their negative behaviors using a “comparative interrupted time series approach” dealing with the effects of Credit Recovery program policies implementing “school-level outcomes” (Viano, 2018a, p. 3).

Credit Recovery (CR) online programs were additional resources that helped at-risk students who failed prior courses in “traditional (i.e., face-to-face)” online course programs. Viano (2018b) cited Allensworth & Easton (2005), Bowers (2010), and Mac Iver & Messel (2013), who suggested letting at-risk students who failed prior classes recover their lost credits using the CR online course program that was not available in the past. Viano (2018b) stated that CR online courses were more proficient ways for students to recover lost credits failed in the past; they offered flexible schedules, allowed students to take multiple failed courses at one time, and students did not have to repeat taking an entire traditional course to earn lost credits. The CR online courses promoted on-time graduation (Viano, 2018b).

Viano's work utilized an empirical framework and a random analysis assessment to find out if at-risk students in CR online courses increased their graduation rates and decreased their dropout rates. The study compared CR online courses to traditional face-to-face online methods where students had to repeat their failed classes fully (Viano, 2018b).

The analysis encouraged district high schools to implement CR online courses because they were cost-effective, had computers with high-speed internet access, decreased dropout rates, and helped at-risk students obtain higher graduation rates. It was a practical solution far better than traditional face-to-face online courses that limit students' ability to graduate on time with their cohorts (Viano, 2018b).

The three limitations in the study of Comparative Interrupted Time Series (CITS) models were: they were unsure if they were valid, the strategies did not recognize the difference between an at-risk student taking CR online courses versus not taking CR online courses because of the lack of data, the 2013 data was inaccurate, and the data was manipulated (Viano, 2018b).

Barcinas's (2020) study covered Credit Recovery (CR) online course enrollment, benefits, and consequences for at-risk high school students. The study demonstrated the importance of implementing CR online courses in all school districts. The study asked whether CR online courses stopped at-risk students from dropping out of high school. The study analysis investigated how CR online course programs lessened dropout rates for at-risk high school students, assisting students in obtaining high school diplomas. Credit Recovery online course opportunities were growing in the United States

throughout various school districts, helping students to graduate on time with their cohorts.

Barcinas (2020) cited Sipma (2016), who made known the need for Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRPs) since at-risk high school students were more likely to obtain a high school diploma with the availability of these programs (Barcinas, 2020). According to the United States Department of Education, OCRPs created a solution for at-risk students to achieve lost credits to gain a high school diploma and not drop out, to counter the probability that “over 12 million students within the next decade” will drop out (Barcinas, 2020, p. 1).

The study’s participants were high school counselors and students ages 18-22 years old. The high school eleventh and twelfth graders are enrolled in an Online Credit Recovery Program (OCRP) called the U.S. Department of Education alternative school to obtain their diploma (Barcinas, 2020). These students followed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the state and district guidelines to prevent them from dropping out of high school (Barcinas, 2020).

Barcinas (2020) cited Viano (2018), who stated that Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRPs) helped high school students successfully graduate. Viano (2018) said that OCRPs improved graduation rates when school districts “understood at-risk students’ perceptions of taking online learning courses” (Barcinas, 2020, pp. 2-3). Viano continued to state that in the 2018-2019 school years, the United States reported that 1,945 students graduated, and 283 students dropped out (Barcinas, 2020). The study identified that 18% of at-risk high schoolers graduated with their original cohorts if OCRPs were implemented. Online Credit Recovery Programs were an additional opportunity that

supported at-risk high school students with an “Accelerated Online Credit Recovery program” that helped them obtain the lost credits they needed to graduate with their cohorts successfully (Barcinas, 2020).

Barcinas (2020) cited Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela (2016) and Noble et al., (2017), identifying what it meant to be an at-risk student taking OCRPs. At-risk students struggled with reading and concentrating, had barriers to success, experienced issues outside of school, and had problems with insufficient graduation credits (Barcinas, 2020). School counselors should have stepped in to build these at-risk high school students’ confidence and improve their skill sets while motivating them to enroll in Accelerated OCRPs that gave them opportunities to graduate on time with their cohorts. A high school diploma is vital for at-risk high school students to develop their future careers, and as a result, policymakers have placed dropout prevention programs at the top of their list (Barcinas, 2020).

Barcinas (2020) summarized Alt (2015) and Laura & Petre (2017). Both studies concluded that “there was a gap in research between students who were at risk of not graduating and policymakers’ understanding of what challenges were hindering students from being successful” (Barcinas, 2020, p. 3). Self-efficacy was a necessary factor for at-risk students to be successful. Barcinas (2020) cited Horzum (2015) who argued that education included having internet services like OCRPs. Barcinas (2020) mentioned that Webber (2018) also said education and social problems contributed to dropout rates. However, the United States gave at-risk high school students the OCRP alternative schools to recover lost credits, graduate on time with their cohorts, and attend college (Barcinas, 2020).

Barcinas (2020) utilized Bandura's and Dewey's theories as a conceptual framework. The two theories were "Bandura's social cognitive theory and Dewey's constructivist theory" (Barcinas, 2020, p. 6). Bandura's (1994) theory was said to improve students' performance to graduate and promote self-efficacy, demonstrating how students achieved their goals. Dewey's theory was told to create "online learning instructional methods using differentiated instruction" (Barcinas, 2020, p. 6).

Barcinas (2020) cited Viano (2018), who said five factors affected at-risk students' learning and perceptions about the unique environments of Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRPs). The five factors were students' "pace of learning, learning style, the immediacy of feedback, methods of content delivery, and issues around navigating content" (Barcinas, 2020, p. 5). These five factors assisted at-risk students in graduating on time with their cohorts.

The study used a qualitative methodological approach, interviewing at-risk students and high school counselors' perceptions about OCRPs, focusing on one alternative high school. The at-risk participant group included juniors or seniors 18 years and older, students enrolled in OCRP courses, and students who attended the required 75% of school days. The school counselor participants were active United States high school employees with two years of experience and knowledge of OCRPs. The study used coding, categorization, and cross-case analysis to view the "similarities and inconsistencies to inform critical findings of the study and developed themes" (Barcinas, 2020, p. 7).

The study made two assumptions. One was that all participants answered the questions honestly and truthfully regarding their thoughts about Credit Recovery (CR)

online courses. The second was that all participants acknowledged the contributing factors causing them to be enrolled in CR online course programs (Barcinas, 2020).

The study's limitations were the limited number of students enrolled in the CR online course program and the low number of high school counselors participating. Secondly, the interviews were conducted through Zoom, and many students experienced internet challenges (Barcinas, 2020). The analysis aimed to understand at-risk high school students and high school counselors' perceptions of CR online programs while producing adequate data for the school districts and Board of Education, showing the vital need for CR online course programs. The CR online course programs demonstrated how CR online courses afforded at-risk students with opportunities to graduate on time with their cohorts (Barcinas, 2020).

Credit Recovery and Graduation

Rickles et al. (2020) study covered whether Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRPs) were effective for students to graduate. How rapidly were OCRPs growing in the United States? Was the cost worth having OCRPs over typical teacher-directed online classes? The study focused on Algebra 1 and English 9 classes implementing online credit recovery courses and compared OCRPs to teacher-directed approaches.

The study used Algebra 1 and English 9 to compare online credit recovery programs to teacher-directed online classes. Heinrich et al. (2019), cited in Rickles et al. (2020), found that placing the ninth graders in Online Credit Recovery Programs OCRPs environments needed to be compatible (Rickles et al., 2020).

Many schools in the United States were implementing OCRPs into their school before the coronavirus pandemic in 2019. Rickles et al. (2020) study cited Atkins et al.

(2007) and Gemin et al. (2015), who said that schools felt that OCRPs would provide personalized instruction for every student meeting their individual needs to get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan (Rickles et al., 2020).

Rickles et al.'s (2020) study cited The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board (2016), stating that OCRPs were boosting graduation rates in local high schools and across the country. They said OCRPs “have overgrown from a barely known concept a decade ago to one of the biggest and most controversial new trends in education” (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 1).

Rickles et al., 2020 go on to cite Loewenberg (2020) and Malkus (2019), who questioned whether high school students' learning was in jeopardy due to the growth of OCRPs throughout the nation (Rickles et al., 2020). According to Rickles et al. (2020), Ferdig (2010), Schaeffer & Konetes (2010), and the U.S. Department of Education (2015), research was still seeking evidence on whether OCRPs were effective (Rickles et al., 2020). Rickles et al. (2020) then cited Taylor et al. (2016), who further said that regardless of the evidence the research was looking for, every high school student enrolled in OCRPs had better outcomes than those high school students who were not registered. The key was that students had the counselors' support in their journey to recover lost credits and graduate with their cohorts (Rickles et al., 2020).

Credit Recovery and Important Outcomes

Rickles et al. (2020) study examined the cost of OCRPs and the students' outcomes in being enrolled in OCRPs, then compared the relationship of OCRPs to “teacher-directed course[s]” (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 2). Obtaining information on this

correlation raised three research questions about how OCRPs differ from schools, business as usual (BAU), and teacher-directed approaches. The questions were:

How did students' experiences in the online classes compare to the teacher-directed classes? How did students' proximal outcomes (content knowledge and credit recovery) in the online classes compare to the teacher-directed classes? And how did the resources and costs of implementing the credit recovery courses differ between the online and teacher-directed classes? (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 2)

Rickles et al.'s 2020 theory of action used an analytic approach and measured the data collected. The intervention for this study analyzed "Algebra 1 or English 9" to determine whether Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRP), as opposed to teacher-directed courses, were different. Students had to depend on Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs directed by teachers (Rickles et al., 2020). The study aimed to compare "typical teacher-directed credit recovery classes [that] students take at each high school" to OCRPs classrooms to understand the effectiveness of both programs (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 4).

Rickles et al.'s 2020 study examined the cost by comparing "the types and quantities of personnel and non-personnel resources needed to deliver the online credit recovery classes to students compared with typical, teacher-directed credit recovery" (p. 4). Personnel versus non-personnel resources included "instructor time, computers, textbooks, quantities, and unit prices" utilized in implementing OCRPs. The "Quantities" was the approximate cost to run Online Credit Recovery Programs (OCRP) classes, including "both district-incurred and teacher-incurred costs" (Rickles et al., 2020, pp. 9-10).

The cost of OCRPs as opposed to the teacher-designed course OCRPs, could have been more manageable—the school districts’ fees versus the cost to have teachers varied. Teachers cost them “\$70 more and \$44 more, respectively” per student for Algebra 1 and English 9 classes to be conducted online. To purchase the Edgenuity online credit recovery program, it costs “\$34 per student.” The study obtained an Edgenuity license to train and support teachers, costing \$11 per student. The results were that OCRPs with direct teachers cost less (Rickles et al., 2020).

The limitation was using one Online Credit Recovery Program (OCRP) like Edgenuity. The results could have been more precise. Therefore, the study could not determine “if students spent the recommended time with the online program” (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 18). The second limitation was direct teachers supporting the OCRPs. Students felt the study “tested a limited version of an online model with in-class instructional support.” The study did not “generalize to a virtual course with little to no instructional support or to a course that uses a different online provider” (Rickles et al., 2020, p. 18).

Credit Recovery Benefits and Challenges

Currently, many public high schools understand the difference between online credit recovery programs and traditional face-to-face courses students utilized in the past to recover their lost credits (Oliver, 2021). Public high school systems have outgrown historical ways of educating students who failed due to their deficiencies in accumulating the necessary credits to graduate. Remedial courses in traditional summer and after-school programs allowed students to repeat failed classes. If the students did not pass the courses in these programs, they would have to repeat them the following year or be

retained. These options no longer worked to increase graduation rates for students trying to make up lost credits on time (Oliver, 2021). Public high school systems are now choosing online credit recovery programs instead of traditional face-to-face courses educators formerly used to help students recover their lost credits (Oliver, 2021).

Oliver's 2021 study considered OCRPs instead of using public school systems' traditional face-to-face courses utilized in the past for students to recover their lost credits. OCRPs provided high schools with an additional option to increase graduation rates so students did not drop out. The study aimed to increase graduation rates so students could enter secondary learning settings like college (Oliver, 2021). The study covered the importance of public high schools finding ways to help at-risk students increase their graduation rates. The study demonstrated how academic success was a necessary tool when using OCRPs. Asynchronous learning assisted students with the accrual of their lost credits needed to graduate faster. It promoted self-efficacy and social-emotional preparedness for at-risk students to graduate on time and enter college (Oliver, 2021).

Credit recovery programs were alternative methods used by public high schools to assist students in recovering lost credits from failed courses to graduate. This method was applied during school hours. Some former names for traditional face-to-face credit recovery programs were E2020, Edgenuity, and Virtual online schooling. Credit recovery programs were a standard way to help students accumulate the lost credits they needed to graduate (Oliver, 2021).

Oliver (2021) highlights the importance of online credit recovery programs and how far the programs have come. Increasing graduation rates for students began with

summer schools offering remedial courses to help students earn credits they lost from failed coursework. Summer schools promoted a traditional style of teaching where the educators and students were face-to-face in a classroom setting (Oliver, 2021). Oliver (2021) cites Eddy's (2013) research, which offered a solution for how students can raise their low accumulations of lost credits to increase their graduation rates by implementing online credit recovery programs in public high schools instead of traditional face-to-face methods. In further citations, Oliver (2021) referenced Noble et al. (2017), pointing out that technology has improved tremendously, increasing graduation rates.

There are five crucial questions to help all certified secondary school counselors understand whether their online credit recovery program was the best choice for helping their at-risk twelfth graders graduate on time with their cohorts. The five questions were as follows:

1. Is your credit recovery curriculum intentionally designed to support the needs of students who struggle in a traditional classroom environment?
2. Does your credit recovery curriculum engage learners?
3. Is your credit recovery curriculum rigorous and standards-based?
4. Are your students mastering the skills and concepts necessary to prepare for whatever comes next?
5. Can teachers and administrators access real-time data and easily run reports to make instructional decisions? (Apex Learning, 2018, p. 1).

Credit Recovery and Motivation Strategies

Meacham's (2021) study covered blended learning settings for at-risk students in urban alternative high schools. The study examined students' attendance, graduation rates, and lost credits. The study's relevance was reflected in assisting at-risk students

with taking ownership of their education and keeping them motivated through blended learning environments with school counselors' support in their online endeavors.

Meacham's (2021) study asked how school counselors kept students motivated in online settings when they faced socioeconomic challenges that made it difficult for them to concentrate, stay engaged, and participate in their coursework. Taking at-risk students and placing them in hybrid instruction settings as opposed to traditional online settings helped them be engaged in the program. The study aimed to create blended learning environments to increase at-risk students' graduation rates.

Meacham's (2021) study demonstrated the significant historical challenges with at-risk students' low graduation rates, disengagement, dropping out, the inability to recover lost credits on time, and the inability to graduate with their cohorts. Meacham's (2021) study cited Wymb's (2014), who stated that due to the many socioeconomic issues at-risk students face daily, they were left with the choice to attend an alternative school or drop out of high school with no diploma (Meacham, 2021).

Meacham (2021) cited Wymb's (2014), who stated that online credit recovery programs might only be effective if at-risk students were motivated to take ownership of their learning. However, suppose at-risk students were in a blended learning setting with an alternative education platform that inspired them; then, students increased their graduation rates and graduated with their 4-year cohorts (Meacham, 2021). Meacham (2021) agreed with Wymb's (2014) study, saying that online formats are a solution to traditional courses (Meacham, 2021).

Meacham (2021) cited Apex Learning (2016) and Edgenuity-Odysseyware (2020) studies stating that online learning was a secondary source. As a result, at-risk students

need more support. Students were left trying to comprehend “instructional videos, modeled practices,” and quizzes independently (Meacham, 2021, p. 42). At-risk students have to repeat “this process until content for a unit [is] covered and the unit test [is] completed” (Meacham, 2021, p. 42). Meacham (2021) cited Wymbs (2014), who stated that at-risk students who do not interact with school counselors, do not have self-efficacy, or are immature would not benefit from attending an instructional methodology that utilizes online platform learning only (Meacham, 2021).

Meacham’s (2021) study had a three-tier instructional platform: face-to-face, blended learning, and online credit recovery. Meacham (2021) used the three-tier instructional platform in an urban alternative high school setting. The study found that 35% of the coursework was completed, and at-risk students could earn lost credits using the online educational program (Meacham, 2021). Meacham’s (2021) action research study used quantitative analysis to determine if alternative education for at-risk students in blended learning settings increased their credit recovery process and graduation rates. These at-risk students could not succeed in traditional high school settings (Meacham, 2021).

Meacham (2021) cited Deci and Ryan’s (2008) study that used self-determination theory. The meaning of self-determination theory was to understand people’s need to learn and how to have a sense of overall wellness when applying learning strategies. Deci and Ryan (2008) and Gagné et al. (2018) demonstrated how self-determination theory worked. A person must know the “three primary components necessary for an effective motivation to learn were competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (Meacham, 2021, p. 19). Meacham’s (2021) study had three limitations. First, students who had to take care

of their siblings could not attend school, which impeded their success and participation in the online alternative education program. Secondly, some at-risk students did not complete the surveys necessary to participate in the online program, and most of the students who did finish the study did not take the survey with fidelity. The final limitation was that at-risk students' responses to the voluntary surveys were ineffective because some students dropped out, transferred to other schools, and moved to other programs. Therefore, these limitations made it difficult for school counselors to have accurate data (Meacham, 2021).

Credit Recovery and Solutions to Graduate

Slade's 2020 study stated that despite the many criticisms about online credit recovery programs and the limited research, the literature showed that online credit recovery programs were still the best way to help at-risk students obtain lost credits, graduate, and not become statistical dropouts (Slade, 2020). In Slade (2020) the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (2017) was cited stating that when online credit recovery programs are effective, they show evidence of solid motivation that empowers struggling at-risk high school students to boost their graduation rates and prepare students to enroll into college or pursue other careers (Slade, 2020).

One of the issues addressed in Slade's 2020 study was the issue of inequity among Black high school students taking online credit recovery programs. The study covered injustice among Black high school students and other races, the effectiveness of credit recovery programs, and how to lessen dropout rates for at-risk students, showing the relevance of this study.

Slade's (2020) study also cited Viano & Henry (2018), who said that while dropout prevention programs were necessary strategies, credit recovery programs were a solution to help at-risk students graduate from high school. Students enrolled in credit recovery programs had a better chance of graduating without repeating failed courses in a traditional online setting for an entire year. The rising rates of credit recovery programs utilized throughout the United States allowed students to recover lost credits, graduate on time with their cohorts, and not drop out of high school (Slade, 2020).

In addition, Slade's (2020) literature introduced Apex Learning as an excellent online credit recovery program that supported students in obtaining their diplomas on time (Slade, 2020). After further review of the literature, there were hard academic decisions that had to be made by staff members with knowledge of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, Edgenuity, as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning (Slade, 2020).

Vaiana's (2017) study cited McCabe and Andrie (2012), stating their concerns about the effectiveness of credit recovery programs when high school students were placed in them to raise their graduation rates. McCabe and Andrie (2012), as cited in Vaiana's (2017) study, included how the dropout prevention strategies research confirmed that online credit recovery was an effective tool for improving school district graduation rates (Vaiana, 2017). Carr (2014) as cited in Vaiana's (2017) study demonstrated the importance of credit recovery programs in high schools. Carr (2014) stated, "If a student has learned 40% of the material for a course, online credit recovery allows accelerated learning and flexibility" (as cited in Vaiana, 2017, p. 46).

Vaiana's (2017) study cited Chan (2010), who believed students could get back on track to graduate using a constructive theory mindset when enrolled in online credit recovery programs. The goal was for students to think about their learning (Vaiana, 2017). Vaiana (2017) understood the effects credit recovery programs had on students' graduation rates, which was a key variable for their study. The relevance of Vaiana's (2017) study is that it aimed to create an online environment that allowed students to embrace both the practical and the hands-on sides of learning (Vaiana, 2017). Vaiana's (2017) observation showed how credit recovery programs and graduation rates for urban and non-urban public high schools were implemented and what portion of these two programs controlled students' attendance (Vaiana, 2017).

Viana's 2017 study reflected on the importance of having credit recovery programs in high schools while determining if online programs would impact the students' graduation rates. The study observed credit recovery programs in high schools, graduation rates, and the impacts these programs had on students (Viana, 2017).

Credit Recovery and Learning Environments

Ford (2019) demonstrated how all students participating in the online Edgenuity credit recovery program utilized the conceptual framework with four learning perspectives: "learner, knowledge, assessment, and community-centered" (Ford, 2019, p. 5). Ford 2019 stated that twelfth graders scored high in the traditional credit recovery program. The evidence showed heightened activity centered on learners, their knowledge, assessments, and community environments. The perceptions and results of the students and teachers participating in the online credit recovery program were favorable (Ford, 2019).

Ford's (2019) research aimed to lessen dropout rates and expand credit recovery programs to assist students with increasing their graduation rates to obtain a diploma (Ford, 2019). Ford (2019) cited Anderson and Elloumi's (2004) study explaining each learning environment; for example, the "learner-centered environment" is where teachers try to understand students' prior knowledge as well as information that students do not comprehend (Ford (2019). Ford's 2019 study continued to cite Anderson and Elloumi (2004), who stated that teachers do not constantly interact with students in a learner-centered environment, and students have challenges with online learning platforms (Ford, 2019).

In Ford's 2019 study, she found that in the "knowledge-centered environment," students expressed themselves, their experiences, and their knowledge about online learning settings. The knowledge-centered environment is where students can think about how they learn, the skills they are experts in, and how they create autonomy. Suppose students do not take the time to reflect in the knowledge-centered environment; in this case, they could limit their ability to "transfer their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts or to develop new knowledge structures" (Ford, 2019, pp. 14-15). The "assessment-centered environment" provided feedback to students and teachers, and formative assessment evaluations provided quality interaction with students and teachers while working on online credit recovery platforms.

Ford (2019) reflected on how expanding online credit recovery programs for high school students could lessen the school's dropout rates. The study aimed to address the severe issues high school students face, such as dropping out when hope is lost when they do not accrue their lost credits from previously failed courses. This saddened the students

who did not obtain a diploma due to being under the 2.0 graduation requirement it takes to graduate (Ford, 2019).

Ford's 2019 study also viewed the importance of accountability, at-risk students, credit recovery programs, dropout rates, and students' economic disadvantages, graduation rates, obtaining high school diplomas, online learning for at-risk students, traditional classroom settings, online classrooms, and truancy.

Ford (2019) studied action research accountability, adequate yearly progress (AYP), adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), assessment-centered, at-risk students, credit recovery, community-centered, core course, drop out, dropout rates, economically disadvantaged, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), graduate, graduate rate, high school diploma, knowledge-centered, learner-centered, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), online learning, traditional classroom, and truancy. The study addressed the serious issue of high school students dropping out of school and not graduating due to failed courses that had to be recovered for students to obtain a diploma (Ford, 2019).

Ford's (2019) study had a conceptual framework based on an action research analysis. Ford's (2019) study cited Bransford et al. (2000), explaining the four learning settings: learner, knowledge, assessment, and community-centered environments. Ford's (2019) analysis aimed to expand at-risk learning fields while reducing the dropout rates for at-risk high school students nationwide. This allowed the at-risk students to choose whether to drop out or seek alternative online educational methods to achieve graduation (Ford, 2019).

Ford's (2019) action-model framework showed how teachers are central to all students' learning and involvement. Ford (2019) cited Brown's (2011) action research,

stating that it is a conventional understanding that the student is the center of all their learning; however, it is clear that school counselor stakeholders are the foundational components for at-risk students' success (Brown, 2011). The study compared the results of an online credit recovery program to traditional online credit recovery delivery methods. The method measured the students' final test scores and the students' and counselors' participation in online credit recovery programs at a high school level (Ford, 2019).

All the students in this study participated in the online Edgenuity credit recovery program. The study's conceptual framework had four learning perspectives: "learner, knowledge, assessment, and community-centered" (Ford, 2019, p. 5). The eleventh and twelfth graders scored high in the traditional credit recovery program. The evidence showed heightened activity centered on learners, their knowledge, assessments, and community environments. The perceptions and results of the students and counselors participating in the online credit recovery program were favorable (Ford, 2019). Ford's (2019) goal was to lessen dropout rates and expand credit recovery programs to assist students with increasing their graduation rates to obtain a diploma (Ford, 2019).

The two assumptions in the study were that all stakeholders were involved throughout the entire online program and that meetings would occur periodically among the teachers, school counselors, parents, and students (Ford, 2019). The two limitations of the study were the small number of participants in each grade level. The study relied on school counselors to recommend students to the online credit recovery program, as well as school counselors selecting students to participate in the study. The study only

included some of the courses that the Edgenuity program offered, which also limited the analysis (Ford, 2019).

However, this chapter focused on the metacognition learning theory, where at-risk twelfth graders know how they think and learn, which in turn, enhances their accelerated online credit recovery experience causing them to accrue lost credits within 9 weeks and raise their grade point average above 2.0 placing them back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) Opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR)

Edgenuity and Apex Learning are the two online credit recovery programs utilized in many school districts throughout the United States. Edgenuity is considered a Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, and Apex Learning is an Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The TOCRP, according to Coppett (2020), was in eight out of 10 of the largest school districts, and Apex Learning is utilized in over 2,000 school districts in the United States.

Loewenberg (2020), as cited in Coppett (2020), compared the difference between Edgenuity and Apex Learning online credit recovery programs. Coppett (2020), referring to Edgenuity (2018), stated that online credit recovery programs focused on at-risk middle and high school students. Edgenuity offers direct instruction through videos where the teacher monitors the students' learning on a computer screen which is a more complex task (Coppett, 2020). The TOCRP, Edgenuity, targeted a broad population, used a much slower bandwidth speed technology, which did not have an easy creative way to

engage students and did not give at-risk students the rapid time frames needed (9 weeks) to recover lost credits and graduate on time with their cohorts.

The TOCRP, Edgenuity, placed at-risk twelfth graders in a traditional online credit recovery program in the second quarter of school (18 weeks into the school year) to assist students with raising their graduation rates. Vaiana (2017) introduced the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning, which helped at-risk twelfth graders raise their grade point averages within 9 weeks to accrue their lost credits (Viana, 2017). The AOCRCP, Apex Learning, gave twelfth graders enough time to make up lost credits within 9 weeks. In contrast, the TOCRP, Edgenuity needed at least 18 weeks to a maximum of 36 weeks to recover missing credits.

The Apex Learning AOCRCP's target population was at-risk high schools, focused explicitly on twelfth graders who had to graduate within 9 weeks. The educational technology platforms offered by Apex Learning help students recover their lost credits within 9 weeks of graduation. Coppett (2020), referring to Apex Learning (2018), stated that the Apex Learning system helped at-risk high school students stay motivated. One way was allowing students to "focus on short-term success" (Coppett, 2020, pp. 44-45). Another way was creating a meaningful learning environment using content that keeps students engaged. High school students have a sense of belonging in their learning process that will "[reconcile] learning gaps [allowing] students to feel success rather than a sense of hopelessness" (Coppett, 2020, pp. 44-45). Apex Learning trains its leaders to specifically utilize its rapid software system to help students recover lost credits within 9 weeks (Coppett, 2020).

The AOCR, Apex, according to Noble et al. (2017), was a “flexible-paced” design to help seniors “stay on track and graduate instead of finding themselves in their senior year with no way to graduate” (Slade, 2020, pp. 1-2). The AOCR, Apex explicitly addressed the 9-week time frame to recover lost credits (Slade, 2020).

Apex Learning was considered to be an effective alternative school according to Barcinas’s (2020) study, which cited Horzum (2015) and Webber (2018), who argued that all education should have internet services like online credit recovery programs, while Webber (2018) pointed out that educational and social problems contributed to the dropout rates. The United States recognized alternative schools like Apex Learning, which sends at-risk twelfth graders to the Apex accelerated online credit recovery program to accrue their lost credits, graduate on time with their cohorts, and attend college (Barcinas, 2020).

Apex Learning was an accelerated online credit recovery program (Apex Learning, 2020a). The literature showed how Apex Learning’s analysis investigated how the Apex Learning Courses credit recovery program allowed their at-risk struggling twelfth graders to be reengaged into the school system and achieve graduation. The study covered how to reengage students who have dropped out of high school back into the school system (Apex Learning, 2020a).

The literature further demonstrated a case study at a high school in Washington. The challenge at this school was that students needed flexible high school schedules due to work, family, and outside demands that impeded them from graduating (Apex Learning, 2020b). A solution for this Washington high school was implementing Apex Learning Courses that included standard-based instruction content and engaging the

students in virtual and blended learning classroom settings. Washington High School found that adding Apex Learning Courses to reengage struggling students who formerly dropped out increased their graduation rates and decreased their dropout rates (Apex Learning, 2020b).

Struggling at-risk students at Washington High School obtained a 4.5% increase in their graduation rates and decreased the dropout rates to 1%. Offering Apex Learning Courses to these students brought them back on track to graduate (Apex Learning, 2020b). The principal of Washington High School said, “Apex Learning online courses were rigorous in content and matched well with their core curriculum; without Apex Learning digital curriculum, many seniors would not have had a chance to graduate on time” (Apex Learning, 2020b, p. 1).

The study said that many at-risk struggling high school students fell behind due to a lack of academic success, confidence, life challenges, and work schedules that led to students dropping out (Apex Learning, 2020b). When school districts and their leaders choose incorrect online credit recovery platforms to implement in their high schools, at-risk students are left with schedules that need to be more flexible and a learning environment that does not address or meet the student’s needs. Washington High School chose the correct online credit recovery program for their high school (Apex Learning, 2020b). As a result of being refocused on the school system, they did not drop out; therefore, the at-risk struggling students are now graduating. Washington High School’s principal said that using Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses was how they established their online credit recovery program (Apex Learning, 2020b).

According to a Washington High School principal, an additional benefit would be introducing at-risk twelfth graders to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program with higher-speed internet technology that addresses at-risk twelfth graders' concerns and constraints around graduation within 9 weeks (Apex Learning, 2020b). The AOCRП also merged technology with content to help at-risk twelfth graders succeed faster. Utilizing the AOCRП allowed at-risk twelfth graders to correct incorrect answers when making up lost credits. At-risk twelfth graders can think about how they think, learn, and problem-solve (an example of the metacognitive learning theory) while participating in the AOCRП to quickly correct their mistakes (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Apex Learning, 2020).

Apex Learning (2020c) identified the different ways at-risk struggling students learn as the key to their success. The Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses online credit recovery program addressed these challenges and modified the curriculums to fit students' unique learning styles (Apex Learning, 2020c). Apex Learning Courses' online credit recovery program allowed students to recover lost credits, get back on track with their 4-year scheduled graduation plan, and be successful graduates. Students worked at their own pace, and others chose an accelerated path to enhance their credit recovery process (Apex Learning, 2020c). Students in the Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses online credit recovery program improved their credit recovery process, graduated, joined the Marines, and continued to work to support their families (Apex Learning, 2020c).

The researcher's study compared what other authors utilized to gather the appropriate online recovery program for at-risk twelfth graders within a 9-week timeframe to recover lost credits and graduate. Other authors in the literature suggested

that a critical factor is for certified secondary school counselors to acknowledge the 9-week time factors that at-risk twelfth graders face daily to graduate. Moreover, the authors agreed that embracing the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program with higher-speed internet technology gives at-risk twelfth graders a chance to raise their grade point averages to graduate faster in 9 weeks (Coppett, 2020). The two South Carolina High Schools suggested that at-risk twelfth graders can recover their lost credits more quickly when placed in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program sooner than the last 9 weeks of graduation (Apex Learning, 2020c). Implementing the “metacognitive learning theory” into the online credit recovery program would also enhance at-risk twelfth graders’ online credit recovery experiences (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The study stated that more school districts throughout the United States should incorporate Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses’ online credit recovery program into their high schools. The program provided direct instruction, formative and summative assessment, real-time data, performance reports, and the best methods for struggling at-risk students to graduate. Individualizing every student’s instruction curriculums to meet their specific needs led to mastery of content, graduation, and other careers students yearn to experience (Apex Learning, 2020c).

Flexible learning schedules were the key to refocusing at-risk, struggling high school students into the academic environment. Affording students the ability to work, attend school, care for their families, and do all this at their own pace was paramount. More school districts in the United States should embrace this online learning style for high school students at risk of failing to graduate. Washington High School incorporated

the Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses online credit recovery program into their school. They stated that their students have maintained “both student achievement and the graduation rate have steadily increased with fewer students dropping out,” while many other school districts’ credit recovery programs were not affording this opportunity to their at-risk high school students. Therefore, they were not graduating (Apex Learning, 2020b, p. 2).

Apex Learning digital curriculums engaged students’ learning, created individualized curriculums to fit every student’s needs, provided students with skills to think critically and solve problems, integrated teacher support, allowed students to take control over their learning, gave immediate feedback, and closed learning gaps for all students to be on track with their grade level content to graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2020b).

Ongoing Criticisms

Online learning credit recovery programs still need to be criticized about the efficacy of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. According to Viano (2018a) the negatives were “quasi-experimental methods, the causal effect of credit recovery on the likelihood of high school graduation, and comparative interrupted time series approach” (Viano, 2018a, pp.2-3). Viano stated that with all these harmful components of the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex still increased at-risk students’ graduation rates and decreased their negative academic behaviors (Viano, 2018a).

Some of the criticisms continued, according to Alt (2015) and Laura and Petre (2017), as cited by Barcinas (2020), stating that self-efficacy was a necessary factor for

at-risk students to be successful (Barcinas, 2020). The gap was between students at risk of not graduating and the challenges that hinder the students from being successful, supporting Viano's (2018a) claim.

Edgenuity also criticized the Apex Learning Infographic, stating it was not a stringent online credit recovery program that met the United States Department of Education guidelines for graduation. However, Apex Learning Infographic was a rigorous, successful credit recovery program based on state standards that provided curriculums designed to engage at-risk students and motivate them to graduate. The Apex Learning Infographic program also offered compelling data for teachers and administrators. The program was viewed as effective, increased graduation rates quickly, and was a solution that helped at-risk students to graduate and prepare for their future in college or other careers. "Alternatively, we may find out that credit recovery programs artificially elevated success rates without providing our most marginalized students with what they needed to [succeed]" (Slade, 2020, pp. 29-30). Self-efficacy was a vital component of the efficacy of online credit recovery programs.

The Efficacy of the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program in Three High Schools

Three high schools utilized the Apex Learning online credit recovery program: two South Carolina high schools and Washington High School. Two South Carolina high schools were challenged to find online credit recovery programs that offered struggling students a way to improve academically and graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017a).

Apex Learning (2017a) covered preventive ways to help struggling students not have to take formal online credit recovery programs. The goal was to catch students early before preventive measures were needed. The study's relevance demonstrated the importance of school counselors identifying struggling students before they have to recover lost credits to graduate (Apex Learning, 2017a). The key was to create preventative strategies for struggling high school students to obtain graduation. Helping struggling students get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan was the goal. Two South Carolina high schools were challenged with this issue (Apex Learning, 2017a).

Apex Learning (2017a) provided a case study that examined the two South Carolina high schools. The challenge was finding an Online Credit Recovery Program (OCRP) that offered struggling students a way to graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017a). The study aimed to create preventative methods and interventions for struggling students to get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan before a formal online credit recovery program is needed (Apex Learning, 2017a).

The goal was to implement OCRPs to assist struggling students in increasing their graduation rates and improving academically. The key was utilizing the OCRP early before students faced a limited time to graduate in twelfth grade. The solution was offering Apex Learning, a multitier digital platform, to meet struggling students' academic needs while supporting them with effective intervention strategies that prevent them from dropping out of high school (Apex Learning, 2017b). The study found that using Apex Learning multitier Online Credit Recovery Program (OCRP) increased their

graduation rates “4% to 74.4% in the 2010-2011” school year, and their dropout rates decreased from “4.3% to 2.9% in the 2009 to 2010” school year (Apex Learning, 2017b, p. 1). Seventy percent of the students enrolled in the Apex Learning multitier Online Credit Recovery Program (OCRCP) recovered their lost credits and completed the courses needed to graduate. As a result, the South Carolina State Department of Education gave these two schools an inaugural innovation award (Apex Learning, 2017b).

The two schools’ instructional technology specialists chose the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex Learning’s multitier digital Online Credit Recovery Program, over the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, Edgenuity, to implement early efforts to identify struggling students at risk of not graduating. The study aimed to give struggling students a chance to recover the total or partial courses they failed by offering remediation so the students can graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017b). This way, struggling students did not have to receive an “F” and repeat the failed course. They were taking the remediation courses in which the Apex Learning digital curriculum offered a successful preventative method that allowed struggling high school students to graduate on time (Apex Learning, 2017b).

The South Carolina schools offered remediation courses (partial credits) to struggling students and full credit recovery options for students who needed more than remediation courses. The total credit recovery option assisted students in recovering the lost credits for one failed class. This option was given in a regular classroom setting during school hours, and their teacher proctored an exam for them to pass the failed course. The students were allowed to work independently to complete their online coursework. Students who failed more than one course were enrolled in the Accelerated

Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex, and a blended learning environment where highly qualified teachers were present, which was also done during their regular classroom hours (Apex Learning, 2017a).

The Apex Learning digital curriculums enriched traditional classroom settings. They gave teachers a way to assess every student's status and how many partial or complete courses they failed to provide early interventions to get the struggling students back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan. Utilizing the Apex Learning digital program with the student's regular courses allowed the teachers to enhance students' test scores from failed classes by diagnosing them early to see if they needed to be placed in remediation courses (Apex Learning, 2017b).

Apex Learning's (2017b) study suggested implementing Apex Learning digital curriculums in high schools. The two South Carolina high schools implemented Apex Learning's digital curriculums in their high schools to catch struggling students failing partial or complete courses that needed to be recovered to earn credits to graduate. It was the best thing they ever did. Assisting struggling students ahead of time is a preventative strategy that all high schools should utilize (Apex Learning, 2017b). These two South Carolina high schools aimed to create preventive methods and early interventions for struggling at-risk students to get them back on track with their 4-year standard graduation plan before a formal online credit recovery program was needed (Apex Learning, 2017b). The challenges and solutions of Washington High School were listed above (Apex Learning, 2020a) and the Apex Learning online credit recovery program assisted the school in successful outcomes, where the students could accrue lost credits and graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2017b).

In reviewing the literature of the three high schools that used the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, Apex found that pathways were provided to their at-risk high school students to graduate. They addressed the graduation rates, dropout rates, preventive measures, and a flexibility component to lessen their dropout rates. However, they did not address specific time factors like 9 weeks, 18 weeks, twenty-seven weeks, or 36 weeks for students to recover their lost credits and graduate (Apex Learning, 2020c).

Apex Learning (2020c) was another instrument that high school counselors utilized to assist at-risk twelfth graders with successfully recovering their lost credits and getting back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum to graduate on time with their cohorts (Apex Learning, 2020c). Apex Learning's (2020c) study covered five principles for assisting struggling high school students in learning. The study's relevance asked an important question: Is the credit recovery program designed to help students succeed? The study analyzed how to help struggling students achieve their learning by implementing five principles that enhance students' learning (Apex Learning, 2020c).

Apex Learning's (2020c) study examined whether struggling students' learning process was being enhanced. To conduct this study, they asked five questions:

1. Is your credit recovery curriculum intentionally designed to support the needs of students who struggle in a traditional classroom environment?
2. Does your credit recovery curriculum engage learners?
3. Is your credit recovery curriculum rigorous and standards-based?
4. Are your students mastering the skills and concepts necessary to prepare for whatever comes next?
5. Can counselors access

real-time data and easily run reports to make instructional decisions? (Apex Learning, 2020c, p. 1)

These five questions were essential to determining if struggling high school students were getting the learning they needed to succeed when enrolling in online credit recovery programs at their high schools. The study aimed to ensure that struggling students utilized credit recovery programs at their high school, including credit recovery programs designed to help students succeed (Apex Learning, 2020c).

This five-question survey helped certified secondary school counselors determine whether they implemented the proper online credit recovery programs in their schools. The challenge was whether certified secondary school counselors of district schools chose the right online credit recovery program and put that program into operation at their high school. All certified secondary school counselors throughout the United States need exponential online credit recovery programs that accelerate students' learning (Apex Learning, 2020c).

In response to the five questions listed above, certified secondary school counselors answered the following to gauge the level of learning students were experiencing at their high schools: yes, somewhat, or no. The scores vary from 90-100, 80-89, or 70-79. Every category of scoring determines the level at which struggling students are learning. For example, high schools that scored 90-100 were at the top because their credit recovery program gave struggling students access to rigorous curriculums, including high-quality digital technology that supported students' needs and allowed them to learn the materials. "Students do not just get credits; they earn them" (Apex Learning, 2020c, p. 1). High schools that scored 80-89 meant that their high school

credit recovery program had some strong points; however, improvement was necessary. These high schools should consider implementing curriculums with more engagement to help struggling students focus (Apex Learning, 2020c).

The last score, 70-79, meant that their high schools' credit recovery program lacked effectiveness, leaving a learning gap for struggling students to achieve graduation. More grade-level content allowed students to catch up on recovering lost credits, master the content, build their confidence, and understand how they learn by utilizing their skills to achieve graduation. Rigorous online credit recovery programs empowered struggling students' achievement (Apex Learning, 2020c).

No matter what survey high schools take to determine whether an online credit recovery program is right or wrong, the focus is always student-centered (Apex Learning, 2020c). Preventative measures were necessary when school districts choose what credit recovery program to utilize in their high schools. Apex Learning cited Eddy (2016), Dessoiff (2009), and Stanley and Plucker (2008), who said that dropout rates were alarming and "between 6,300 and 7,000 high school students drop out daily" (Apex Learning, 2020c, p. 1; Eddy, 2016, p. 1). The question was for certified secondary school counselors who work with at-risk twelfth graders in the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. For certified secondary school counselors, the question was, would taking this survey with at-risk twelfth graders before referring them to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program is helpful to gauge how to help struggling at-risk high school students be successful (Apex Learning, 2020c).

Summary

This chapter summarized the literature on credit recovery programs, provided a general synopsis of the literature, and addressed the gaps in the literature. Twelfth graders were left to make hard decisions about their academic lives when time was the primary factor in them graduating on time with their cohorts (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). The questions were why this was happening, and why are certified secondary school counselors waiting until the fourth semester (last 9 weeks of a school semester) to implement online credit recovery in their curriculums (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program needed to address the time factor in raising graduation rates for our at-risk twelfth graders. However, the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program addressed this explicit time factor that equips at-risk students to raise their graduation rates (Vaiana, 2017).

The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program was identifying an additional resource to help at-risk twelfth graders achieve higher on-time graduation rates (Vaiana, 2017). The literature stated how it was fair and wise to close the time gap that at-risk twelfth graders faced when going to their certified secondary school counselors seeking 9 weeks to accrue their lost credits to be back on target with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate with the cohorts. The ultimate goal for struggling at-risk students was to assist them in enhancing their graduation rates to graduate while fulfilling the United States Department of Education academic requirements in graduating (Vaiana, 2017).

This chapter examined literature that was implemented and equipped at-risk twelfth graders with the necessary tools and resources to close the 9-week timeframe gap they face. The literature gave validity to this chapter (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Llewellyn, 2019). The literature included current and effective technology to enhance at-risk twelfth graders' online learning experiences. It included the importance of certified secondary school counselors implementing the metacognition learning theory for at-risk twelfth graders struggling with the online credit recovery process (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Llewellyn, 2019).

The literature has proven that current technology was applied when addressing the 9-week time factor issue. The metacognition learning theory was implemented in at-risk twelfth graders' curriculums who took the accelerated online credit recovery program; then their graduation rates were increased, providing successful graduates (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Llewellyn, 2019).

The Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program was designed for at-risk twelfth graders struggling to accrue lost credits, bring their grade point average above the 2.0 level, and align them with their 4-year standard graduation plan to graduate (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Llewellyn 2019).

Learning Gaps

The literature has pointed out two gaps: time and learning. Time was crucial for at-risk twelfth graders to graduate on time with their cohorts. The time factor of

secondary counselors sending at-risk twelfth-grade students to accelerated programs within the last 9 weeks of a school year (last quarter) was an issue. The learning factor gap must be closed so students can obtain their lost credits to get back on track with their 4-year graduation curriculum plan, accelerating their learning.

In Chapter III, the methodology of the study was described. Chapter III included the research design, researcher setting, participants, data collection, and analysis methods. Chapter III addressed the research's trustworthiness and the study's limitations, delimitations, and assumptions.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

At-risk twelfth graders struggling educationally in academics were pleading for assistance because they were angry and afraid that they would be unable to recover their lost credits to graduate within 9 weeks (Vaiana, 2017). The at-risk twelfth graders were rushing to their teachers and insisting they helped them to graduate on time with the rest of their cohorts.

When at-risk twelfth graders needed support, their teachers pointed them toward their certified secondary school counselors. Parents of the at-risk twelfth graders were asking their children questions such as “What are you doing?” “Why are you failing?” and “What is wrong with you?” These at-risk twelfth graders were responsible for making difficult decisions regarding their academic lives, which worried them (Heibel, 2017; Toste et al., 2021; Vaiana, 2017). Understanding the different online credit recovery programs available for at-risk twelfth graders struggling below the 2.0-grade point average and needed to recover lost credits in 9 weeks, as well as get back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum to graduate, was vital (Galindo, 2017; Edgenuity, 2023; Apex Learning, 2021).

These worried at-risk twelfth graders were below a 2.0 grade point average and needed to recover lost credits within 9 weeks. They were not currently on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum for high school graduation (Great Schools Partnership, 2013a). The key was keeping at-risk students on track with recovering lost credits and staying on task with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum. It was paramount to allow at-risk twelfth graders to take an online credit recovery program that

offered quicker timeframes and flexibility that helped them to work at their own pace for “when and how they learn” (Heibel, 2017, p. 24).

The Glossary of Education Reform defines “at-risk” as “exposed to harm or danger” (Great Schools Partnership, 2013a, para. 1). This term was often used to describe students with a higher chance of failing in school or dropping out. Students at risk of not graduating in their 4-year standard graduation curriculum often struggle because they need more recovered credits to raise their grade point average above 2.0. Additionally, students were considered at-risk when they faced circumstances that jeopardized their ability to graduate and must be retained at a grade level. At-risk meant students lacked earned credits, did not improve their grade point average above 2.0, or had not gotten back on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum (Great Schools Partnership, 2013a). The United States Department of Education defines (2018) credit recovery as a strategy that encourages at-risk students to redo previously failed courses. This strategy described students who needed to recover lost credits from failed courses. For students to graduate there was a requirement by the United States Department of Education for high school students to complete all lost credits to meet their 4-year standard graduation curriculum (United States Department of Education, 2018).

In order to achieve higher graduation rates, the online credit recovery program had to have a faster online credit recovery approach that assisted at-risk twelfth graders in not feeling the pressure of 9 weeks to graduate (Vaiana, 2017). Certified secondary school counselors in public high schools who worked with at-risk twelfth graders who had 9 weeks to graduate were expressing frustration with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, which was not fast enough and did not help at-risk students to

recover lost credits within 9 weeks before graduation (Apex Learning, 2021; Coppett, 2020).

At-risk twelfth graders under time constraints to graduate within 9 weeks of high school were still being offered the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program, which required 18 to 36 weeks to recover lost credits. At-risk twelfth graders were in a race against time to graduate and needed to find an online credit recovery program that would afford them a faster pathway to graduation in 9 weeks (Apex Learning, 2021; Edgenuity, 2023; Galindo, 2017).

Certified secondary school counselors' choosing the best online credit recovery programs for at-risk twelfth graders struggling with grade point averages below 2.0, needed to recover lost credits within 9 weeks and regain the appropriate status of being on track with their 4-year standard graduation curriculum was vital (Apex Learning, 2021; Edgenuity, 2023; Galindo, 2017).

Research Questions

The study aimed to assess certified secondary school counselors' perceptions and experiences toward The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

1. What are the perspectives of certified secondary school counselors knowledgeable of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?
2. What factors affect the timeframe in which certified secondary school counselors send at-risk twelfth students to the Accelerated Online Credit

Recovery Program to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts?

3. To what extent do certified secondary school counselors understand metacognitive learning theory and its effects on at-risk twelfth-grade students enrolled in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to graduate on time with their cohorts?

The researcher intends to align the qualitative action research study with the data collected from the online surveys.

Context

The study was conducted via email and an online survey. The email addresses were from the Florida Department of Education Research and Assessment Department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE). The demographics focused on certified secondary school counselors in the state of Florida. The study comprised a minimum of one hundred participants. The surveys with the certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE) focused on increasing at-risk twelfth graders' graduation rates via online credit recovery programs that accelerate their process to elevate their graduation rates quicker. The public high schools across Florida comprised 2,227 high schools, 1,485 public schools, and 742 private schools (High-Schools.com, 2023). The School District of Palm Beach County contains 59 high schools (U. S. News and World Report, 2023). For the 2023 school year, 65 public high schools serve 64,306 students in Palm Beach County, Florida (Public School Review, 2003). Today, 67 counties of Florida constitute a dynamic state home to more than 17 million people (Florida Associate Counties, 2023).

A Description of the Population and Settings

The target participants were certified secondary school counselors who worked with or maintained records for at-risk twelfth graders with 9 weeks to recover lost credits to graduate. The participants' targeted populations were at-risk twelfth graders below the 2.0 grade point average who had 9 weeks to recover missing credits and graduate (Heibel, 2017). The certified secondary school counselors identified at-risk twelfth graders as Hispanic, African American, Asian, and Caucasian students, not to exclude other populations. The certified secondary school counselors surveyed were at least 100 participants identified and agreed to participate in the online survey from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) for certified secondary school counselors across Florida.

There were 59,000 obtainable emails for secondary high school counselors (High School Counselors Marketing, 2023). There were over 21,328 high school counselors currently employed in the United States. 68.3% of all high school counselors were women, while 31.7% were men. The average high school counselor age was 41 years old. The most common ethnicity of high school counselors was White (67.0%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (14.2%), Black or African American (10.6%) and Unknown (3.8%). High school counselors were most in demand in Los Angeles, CA. Santa Rosa, CA, pays an annual average wage of \$61,780, the highest in the US.

In 2022, women high school counselors earned 98% of what men earned. Connecticut was the best state for high school counselors to live in. High school counselors are 84% more likely to work at education companies than private companies (Zippia, 2023). The ratio of students to high school counselors in Florida is 434:1,

number 14 least counselors per student among all states and 6,428 counselors to 2,791,707 students in Florida (Stacker, 2023). Motivation and passion were the fundamental bases for the participants in this qualitative action research design.

Rationale for Design

In 1930, Kurt Lewin, who coined the term “action research,” developed a four-step process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Lewin’s design is the motivation for this study. The qualitative action research design, the research questions, and the online survey correspond with Lewin’s 1930 design. The researcher used three (acting, observing, and reflecting) of the four-step process (Mertler, 2019). The objective of all three research questions and the online survey was to examine the certified secondary school counselors’ relationship between the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Edgenuity, 2023).

Research into the practice issue compared the certified secondary school counselors’ perceptions and experience with the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs. Viano’s (2018a) narrative study, using the United States Statistical data, concluded that graduation rates were the highest ever using online credit recovery programs. The narratives of the participants’ perceptions about the Traditional and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs used to recover credit for at-risk twelfth graders provided the answers to the overarching research questions that were collected as part of the online survey collection during this study (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; Edgenuity, 2023; Viano, 2018a, 2018b).

Colunio's (2019) study showed how the behaviors of certified secondary school counselors influenced the school environment, ultimately affecting at-risk twelfth graders' academic performances (Colunio, 2019). Colunio (2019) also found "that students with low grades, lack motivation, have negative peers, and experience social isolation in school networks are more at risk of dropping out than those without these risk factors" (pp. 28-29). This corroborated with the certified secondary school counselors' experiences in 2023, which have been ongoing since 1970. Colunio's study aimed to identify at-risk students' issues and retain them to fix the problem so they could graduate through online credit recovery programs (Colunio, 2019). The literature agreed that students succeed and stay in high school when school districts hire suitable certified secondary school counselors who develop proper relationships with at-risk twelfth graders and aim to help them recover lost credits within 9 weeks and graduate (Colunio, 2019). The literature also pointed to another valuable theory called metacognition to teach at-risk twelfth graders to think about how they learn.

The relevance of Colunio's (2019) study to the researcher's study demonstrated the importance of lowering dropout rates for at-risk twelfth graders. It exhibited how certified secondary school counselors had a tough job assisting at-risk twelfth graders with recovering lost credits to improve their academics and lessen their dropout rates (Colunio, 2019). Engaging at-risk twelfth graders who might be bullied, bored, overwhelmed, disengaged, or lost at school was a challenge for certified secondary school counselors (Colunio, 2019). The goal was to keep at-risk twelfth graders motivated using metacognitive learning theory (Colunio, 2019). Colunio's (2019) study lends trustworthiness to the researcher's action research study.

Colunio's Credibility to Researchers' Design

Colunio's 2019 study lends credibility to the researcher's design. It demonstrated how certified secondary school counselors' perceptions were vital to at-risk twelfth graders obtaining the lost credits they need to get back on track with their 4-year graduation curriculum plan. A certified secondary school counselor's job was to assist at-risk twelfth graders in an accelerated online credit recovery program to improve their academics and increase their graduation rates (Colunio, 2019).

The key was for certified secondary school counselors to monitor at-risk twelfth graders, so they stay within a 2.0-grade point average and maintain alignment with their 4-year graduation curriculum plan to graduate on time with their cohort (Colunio, 2019). As certified secondary school counselors monitored at-risk twelfth graders' journey through high school, they observed the time and learning gap factors. They ensured that at-risk twelfth graders were connected to the proper accelerated online credit recovery programs that allowed them to graduate on time with their cohorts (Colunio, 2019).

The goal was for certified secondary school counselors to be attentive to at-risk twelfth graders on the verge of failing and prevent them from dropping out of high school by accelerating their learning with an online credit recovery program that accelerated their education and successfully assisted them in graduating (Colunio, 2019). Colunio's 2019 study connected with the researcher's design as they aimed to identify at-risk twelfth graders who struggled to raise their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate. Certified secondary school counselors increasingly understood that fixing the problem early and not waiting till the last 9 weeks of school (last quarter) to solve the graduation issues was the key to graduating (Colunio, 2019).

Data Collection

The data collection included getting approval from the Lynn University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Then, email addresses were requested from the Florida Department of Education Research (FLDOE) Listserv of Florida-certified school counselors. After receiving the email addresses from the Florida Department of Education Research (FLDOE) for Florida-certified secondary counselors, then an invitational email (Appendix A) along with a link that contained consent forms (Appendix B) as the first question of the online survey (Appendix C) were sent via email. The potential participants were blind copied, and the Lynn University IRB approval letter was attached to the email. All approved and signed forms were gathered under the Lynn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. The researcher used human subjects. The human subjects consisted of certified secondary school counselors familiar with the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs (IRB, 2022; Apex Learning, 2021). The software used was Survey Monkey.

The research design was a qualitative action research study, and the research questions and the online survey corresponded with this design. All the research questions examined the relationship between Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs (Coppett, 2020). Research into the practice issue compared the two programs used in the previous and current year data with the certified secondary school counselors familiar with the Traditional and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs. The participants' perceptions about the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs answered the overarching research questions by comparing and contrasting the collected online survey data (Apex, 2020a; Apex, 2017a).

Instrumentation

The qualitative action research data collection was through a researcher-made Survey Monkey online survey. The researcher analyzed the data in a three-part process: the online surveys contained 14 questions. Eight questions consisted of Likert scale questions with options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Six open-ended questions were answered to the best of the certified secondary school counselors' knowledge. Some survey questions were: 2. Are they high school counselors working with students on credit recovery? 3. Are they a part of a Title I school? 5. In their experience, was The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program more successful in elevating graduation rates, or was the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program a better successful outcome? 9. How did they decide to send at-risk twelfth-grade students to either The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program or the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program? A review of the online survey was documented, using Survey Monkey as the qualitative software. The data was transcribed and compared with the literature. The researcher's analysis was conducted using a qualitative action research methodology. The rationale was action research (Mertler, 2019; Vaiana, 2017).

The researcher analyzed this qualitative action research data by distributing online surveys to all Florida FLDOE Listserv-certified secondary school counselors. The researcher examined the online surveys through Survey Monkey. The online surveys were comprised of 14 questions. The first question was the Informed Consent. Certified secondary school counselors were required to answer this question to move forward in the survey. Once the participants had signed the informed consent form, they agreed to take the online survey. If the informed consent form was not signed, the certified

secondary school counselors were asked to exit the study, affirming that they disagreed to participate. The questions included eight Likert scale questions that consisted of statements from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Six open-ended questions were answered to the best of the certified secondary school counselors' knowledge. The duration of the online survey was approximately five minutes. The online surveys utilized Survey Monkey online surveys to analyze the data. The online survey results were based on how many certified secondary school counselors (the participants) are currently working with at-risk twelfth graders with online credit recovery programs.

The Survey Monkey online survey was open for three weeks and included three reminders. All FLDOE Listserv emails were sent out once the IRB approval was secured, and three weeks later, they were closed. If the certified secondary school counselors disagreed to take the online survey, they were kicked out automatically, and the survey ended. There was no compensation for participation. The certified secondary school counselor participants in this study may assist at-risk twelfth graders in increasing their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate. They were asked to answer fourteen questions about the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (Survey Monkey).

During the online surveys, the certified secondary school counselors of at-risk twelfth graders had the opportunity to talk about their worries, limitations, and concerns regarding at-risk twelfth graders' inability to graduate with or without utilizing the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online

Credit Recovery Program. The online surveys allowed certified secondary school counselors to be candid (Colunio, 2019).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations included the risks and benefits of working with human subjects. The study was conducted on human subjects. As a result, participants were informed of the potential dangers listed below and allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. There was no penalty if they exited the survey.

This online survey was strictly anonymous and voluntary; no penalty for non-participation was imposed. There were minimal risks in participating in the online survey. However, if the participants felt uncomfortable or anxious at any time, they could exit the study. Again, there was no penalty if they left the survey.

There were risks, but they were minimal. There was no penalty if the certified secondary school counselor exited the survey, was not a currently certified secondary school counselor, did not work with at-risk twelfth graders utilizing online credit recovery programs, and did not work at a Title I high school.

There were no benefits to answering the online survey questions; however, the participants could enjoy sharing their experiences, and the possibility of empowering at-risk twelfth graders with 9 weeks to recover lost credits and graduate with their cohorts. The benefits were certified secondary school counselors' opportunity to voice their concerns and constraints in a confidential and anonymous platform around the probability of at-risk twelfth graders not graduating (Colunio, 2019).

68.3% of all high school counselors were women, while 31.7% were men. The average high school counselor age was 41 years old. The ethnicity of high school

counselors was 67.0% White, 14.2% Hispanic or Latino, 10.6% Black or African American, and 3.8% Unknown (Stacker High School Counselors in Florida, 2023).

Data Security

The data was collected digitally. The researcher only had access to the data and passwords. The data was responsibly destroyed by being shredded after the online survey data had been validated and the research project had been verified to be completed (IRB, 2022).

Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data from the online survey was stored in locked cabinets from the beginning to the end of the project. The online survey results were used strictly for research purposes, and the participants were kept anonymous. The researcher did not share names or identifying information with others. The participants' names and school names will never be mentioned in the research data or findings. No IP addresses were kept or known to the researcher. The participants' online survey answers will be stored for two years on a password-protected computer and, after that, will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the appropriate departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight (IRB, 2022).

Quality of Data

The research validity was reviewed with certified secondary school counselors via an online survey and the responses of their perceptions and experiences regarding the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program and the outcomes of the respective online credit recovery programs

(Vaiana, 2017). The researcher was aware of professional and intellectual biases and the research outcome (Colunio, 2019).

The researcher was transparent at the start of the online survey by keeping a journal to note the personal biases and notes about questions that may arise throughout the data collection process (Viano, 2018a, 2018ba, 2018b). The researcher reviewed the reliability and trustworthiness of the study through the patterns of the relationship of the certified secondary school counselors and their emerging answers on the online survey. Fortifying this study required signed approval and permission from the certified secondary school counselors. The online survey data was also approved by the Lynn University Institutional Review Board (IRB, 2022), along with the email addresses of the certified secondary school counselors obtained from the Florida Department of Education Research and Assessment Department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE). Collecting the necessary data was crucial in this study.

Twelve online test survey invitees were initially contacted via email through the Survey Monkey survey interface on May 12, 2023. Three invitations bounced back, most likely because they were no longer valid email addresses. Nine responses were received between May 12, 2023, and June 9, 2023. The online survey invitees answered all 14 questions and gave their responses (see Appendix D for data results).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, percentage) were used to analyze the online survey questions. The open-ended questions were examined by

organizing them into codes to generate three to five themes. The themes were used to gain the meaning of the overarching research questions.

All FLDOE Listserv emails received were sent to the invitees, who were contacted via email through the Survey Monkey online survey interface. Once the IRB approval was secured three weeks later, it was closed. All survey invitees were blind copied. Invitations that bounced back were likely because the email addresses were no longer valid (Survey Monkey). The number of responses received was documented once the IRB approval was secured; three weeks later, it was closed. The number of invitees who responded were certified secondary school counselors who work with the Online Credit Recovery Program, and the number of invitations bounced back were documented.

The researcher used qualitative software provided by Survey Monkey. The survey was conducted with certified secondary school counselors who work with online credit recovery programs (Edgenuity or Accelerated). The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to convert some responses to numerical data. The data was primarily from a qualitative action research methodology.

The data was collected through Survey Monkey online surveys, open-ended and short-answer questions, and later transcribed. The data was analyzed in three parts: gathering the online study of 14 questions, including the Likert scale and open-ended short-answer questions, reviewing the survey and documenting results, and transcribing data while comparing it with the literature. The researcher aligned the data collected from the online surveys with the research questions.

Analysis Procedures

The qualitative action research data collection was collected through online surveys, open-ended and short-answered questions, and later transcribed. The data was analyzed in a three-part process: an online survey containing 14 open-ended and short-answer questions, a review of the online survey that was documented, and then the data transcribed and compared with the literature. The analysis was based on a qualitative action research methodology, and themes were drawn from the organized codes. The rationale is action research (Vaiana, 2017). The qualitative software used was Survey Monkey. The quantitative data (SPSS) was analyzed through descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, percentage). The themes were triangulated with the quantitative descriptive statistics results to clarify the overarching research questions.

Limitations and Delimitations

The inherent limitations were that some certified secondary school counselors on the Listserv were not currently secondary school counselors or were not working with at-risk twelfth graders utilizing online credit recovery programs. Another limitation was that some certified secondary school counselors on the Listserv were not presently working at a Title I high school that used online credit recovery programs. Another limitation was the number of participants who took the online survey (minimum of one hundred participants). There will always be challenges in any attempt to bring about active change. The delimitation was that the online survey study only utilized current certified secondary school counselors, with the possibility that they stated what the researcher wanted to hear. The researcher expected honesty from all certified secondary school counselors when answering the 14 questions. Only certified secondary school counselors

familiar with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program were allowed to take the survey.

Summary

The methodology utilized in this qualitative action research study aligned with Kurt Lewin, who coined the term “action research” in 1930. This chapter used Lewin’s four-step process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on the perceptions of the certified secondary school counselors in Florida regarding the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs. The researcher obtained the email addresses of these certified secondary school counselors from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), the research and assessment department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida. The rationale for this methodology was that the researcher adopted the four-step process that Lewin had developed. The focus was on three steps: acting, observing, and reflecting. Lewin called this model “Look, Think, and Act” (cited in Mertler, 2019, p. 6). One hundred participants were certified secondary school counselors in Florida. The researcher utilized online surveys with at least one hundred participants to analyze the data and literature. Chapter IV presented the data analysis of the research questions and a summary of the results. Finally, Chapter V discussed the study’s conclusions and recommendations regarding the implications for practice and future research. This chapter also analyzed the study’s findings as they related to existing literature and demonstrated how they contribute to the education field.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

To increase the number of at-risk twelfth graders graduating from high school on time with their cohorts, educational advocates and policymakers are encouraging certified secondary school counselors to focus more on online credit recovery programs. They are explicitly using the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program for at-risk twelfth graders to recover their lost credits more quickly versus waiting for the last 9 weeks of school to graduate (last quarter, weeks 27-36) to place them in the accelerated online credit recovery program (Apex Learning, 2020). Moshman (2018) and Padmanabha (2020) discuss how at-risk twelfth graders' online credit recovery experiences were enhanced when the metacognitive learning theory was incorporated into the classroom for at-risk students working with the accelerated online credit recovery program (Coppett, 2020; Apex Learning, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Although limited research is available, more schools are implementing online credit recovery programs to increase their high school graduation rates (Viano, 2018a, 2018b).

Summary of Analyses

The study examined the perceptions and experiences of 66 certified secondary school counselors working with at-risk twelfth graders using the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The researcher used qualitative software provided by Survey Monkey. The survey was conducted with certified secondary school counselors who work with online credit recovery programs (Edgenuity or Accelerated). The data had some responses converted

to numerical data utilizing Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was primarily from a qualitative action research methodology.

The data was collected through Survey Monkey online surveys, which included eight Likert scale questions and six open-ended and short-answered questions. The survey data was analyzed in three parts: gathering the online poll of 14 questions, comprised of Likert scale and open-ended short-answer questions, reviewing the survey responses, and documenting the results while comparing them with the literature. The researcher aligned the data collected from the online surveys with the research questions. The analysis from this qualitative action research methodology and themes were drawn from the organized codes. The rationale is action research (Vaiana, 2017). The qualitative software used from Survey Monkey and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) gave the researcher the quantitative data needed to analyze the descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, percentage). The themes were triangulated with the quantitative descriptive statistics results to clarify the overarching research questions.

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the descriptive statistics (mean, mode, median, standard deviation, percentage) that analyzed the online survey questions. The open-ended questions were examined by organizing them into codes to generate three themes. The data themes were used to gain the meaning of the overarching research questions.

Survey Participants

This action research design involved analyzing the qualitative data from an online survey utilizing Survey Monkey. Two thousand three hundred and three emails were sent

to all the participants who were certified secondary school counselors in Florida. The online survey data was collected from 105 certified secondary school counselors who responded. 66 counselors agreed to the informed consent and could take the survey, while 39 selected “disagree” to the informed consent, thus unable to participate.

The online survey demographic questions data utilizing Survey Monkey from the certified secondary school counselors are as follows. Concerning school demographic data, 63% of the participants who opened the survey took the survey. In comparison, 37 % disagreed with the informed consent, thus not completing the study. Most participants (86%) indicated working with credit recovery programs, while 14 % stated they did not. Half of the participants (50%) indicated their school is a Title I institution, while the remainder (50%) did not. The most significant number of participants (83.33 %) specified their schools were large-sized (800-1500 students), while 16.67 % were medium size and the rest of the participants were small-sized (0-400). Eighty-seven certified secondary school counselors also skipped answering these four questions.

Results for Research Question 1

Research question 1 sought to determine how many certified secondary school counselors were experienced with the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs.

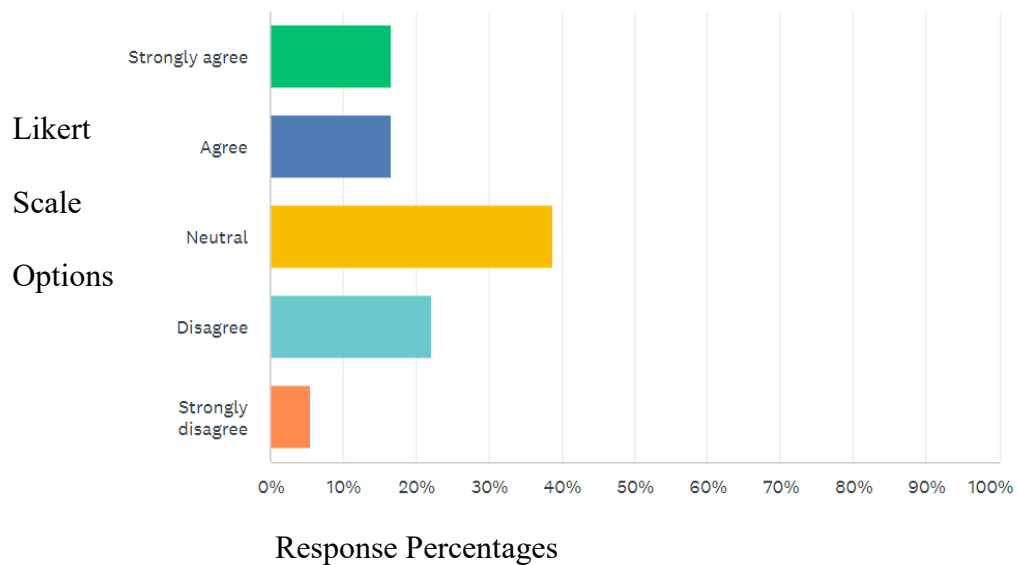
RQ1: What are the perspectives of certified secondary school counselors knowledgeable of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

Figure 2 illustrates the counselors' responses to the efficacy of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Program. It shows the counselors' experience with both online credit recovery programs.

Figure 2
Certified Secondary School Counselors Experience

“In your experience, is the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program more successful in elevating graduation rates than the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?”

Answered: 18 Skipped: 87



Note: Certified secondary school counselor experiences with online credit recovery programs.

The certified secondary school counselors' data responses were split approximately in thirds, in which one-third of participants (33.33%) agreed/strongly agreed, one-third (38.89%) were neutral, and one-third (27.78%) agreed/strongly disagreed. The participants' preference choice of the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program was as follows: 11.11%

strongly agreed, 16.67% agreed, 33.33% were neutral, 22.22% disagreed, and 16.67% strongly disagreed. The inverted question produced similar data, in survey question five responses from the certified secondary school counselors. Ultimately, the largest response (40%) selected “Disagree or Strongly Disagreed,” indicating that they did not perceive the TOCRP to be successful in elevating graduation rates.

Statistical Descriptive Data

When reviewing participants’ data, they preferred the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program, with a mean of 5.5 out of 18 responses, just under one-third, from data gathered from analyzing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Similarly, 33% of participants (six of 18) indicated that the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program is less effective than the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

Themes Generated from RQ1

In reviewing the written responses about RQ1, most certified secondary school counselors leaned more toward the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. When asked what the positives of the TOCRP are, the participants enumerated the program offered many benefits, flexibility, and content, as shown in the responses below.

- *Traditional Online is at the same school where Admin is concerned about graduation rates, so the urgency to complete courses is greater. So counselors and Administrators are more hands-on with these students. However, Accelerated programs are separated from traditional school settings which do have those*

students away from distractions to focus more on coursework as opposed to social interruptions.

- *Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs can sometimes not give students the sense of urgency. They may not work as efficiently as they should again thinking, [sic] they can manage their time.*
- *There are often times when students need to recover only portions of a course rather than the entire semester. Those times it is best to use accelerated recovery programs.*
- *Not enough monitoring through the current system.*
- *The integrity of the students.*
- *It does not have the acceleration that the Accelerated Online Program has.*
- *The traditional online credit recovery sometimes takes too long and at-risk students do not have the patience to complete the program.*
- *The accelerated program, while faster to get through, leaves students without the content knowledge and students prefer this method because they are able to easily cheat and get through a class in only a few days. The traditional online program we use is not specific to just credit recovery, but also students taking a class for the first time. The traditional program covers all content in the curriculum and requires that students speak with the instructor and answer questions to show they have learned the necessary content to proceed in the class. The traditional program sets students up for greater success in future classes and needs outside of the school. Many students have even asked for the accelerated program as they have friends who have completed the program and they pass pictures around of*

correct answers. While the program flags students based on the pace in which they complete the course, this still does not prevent students from cheating.

- *When a student has a period for credit recovery then the traditional makes sense since there is a teacher, and it goes at a slower pace. I like the fact that we don't have to do additional paperwork.*
- *Many of the students don't take it seriously because graduation is so far in the future. Some students just aren't interested in doing the work and need the fastest course possible to sustain their interest.*
- *Students were not motivated the first time around in class, they are even less so retaking the class online.*
- *Not as user-friendly. More time consuming to work through.*
- *Students cheat to get it finished.*
- *Traditional credit recovery programs offer several benefits, including: Flexibility: These programs often provide flexible scheduling options, allowing students to make up missed credits at their own pace. This flexibility can be particularly beneficial for students with diverse schedules or responsibilities outside of school. Individualized Support: Many traditional credit recovery programs offer personalized instruction tailored to the needs of each student. This individualized support can help students address specific areas of weakness and build essential skills for academic success. Opportunity for Success: For students who have fallen behind or struggled in traditional classroom settings, credit recovery programs offer a second chance to earn credits and stay on track for graduation. This opportunity can boost students' confidence and motivation to succeed*

academically. Increased Graduation Rates: By providing a pathway for students to make up missed credits, traditional credit recovery programs contribute to higher graduation rates. This is essential for ensuring that more students have access to the opportunities and benefits that come with a high school diploma. Preparation for Future Success: Successfully completing a credit recovery program can equip students with the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed for post-secondary education, career readiness, and lifelong learning. Overall, traditional credit recovery programs play a valuable role in supporting student achievement and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential academically.

Eighteen certified secondary school counselors answered the questions, and 87 did not answer them. Two participants indicated they needed clarification about the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program because they are first-year high school counselors. One participant did not see any problems with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program if the at-risk twelfth grader only made up one or two classes to recover their lost credits. Another counselor indicated they needed to learn about the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

In theme I, most of the certified secondary school counselors continued to speak highly about the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The certified secondary school counselors' written responses to the following three online survey questions (What problem/s do you see with the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program? In your position as a secondary school counselor, do online credit recovery programs give you more

confidence for the success of at-risk twelfth graders? Why or why not? Thinking back to the 2022 and 2023 graduation rates, which online credit recovery program was most effective for assisting at-risk twelfth graders in increasing their graduation rates and why) listed above are as follows:

- *Issues with the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery program is that a student can choose not to attend and no one is following through since graduation rates are not affected. So the student can drop out of school altogether.*
- *With Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs, the students and the parents are hesitant because they want to graduate from a traditional high school. Also, with this program, transportation has to be provided by the family which some may not want to have to take public transportation.*
- *The speed of accelerated programs is sometimes too advanced for students who have not grasped the foundational work in courses. I believe accelerated programs are more beneficial to students who are equipped to handle the rigor.*
- *Not secure enough when it comes to monitoring student progress.*
- *We do not use accelerated.*
- *It helps students to catch up quicker on recovering their lost credits to graduate.*
- *The question for me is are [sic] the students truly learning the material?*
- *The accelerated program, while faster to get through, leaves students without the content knowledge and students prefer this method because they are able to easily cheat and get through a class in only a few days. The traditional online program we use is not specific to just credit recovery, but also students taking a class for the first time. The traditional program covers all content in the curriculum and*

requires that students speak with the instructor and answer questions to show they have learned the necessary content to proceed in the class. The traditional program sets students up for greater success in future classes and needs outside of the school.

- *They might not be absorbing much, but who's to guarantee they'll learn in the conventional credit recovery system? The primary goal of the program is to fulfill their high school credit requirements. Ideally, they wouldn't need credit recovery at all, but it's a valuable opportunity they should seize.*
- *One of the problems is that we need the student and parent to fill out the paperwork in order for them to get started.*
- *The problem is not with the program. The problem is with seniors not having the motivation, self-discipline, or sense of urgency to do the work. those [sic] that understand this is their "last chance" to graduate "on-time" typically are able to be successful with AOCRCP.*
- *Students cheat to get it finished.*
- *The problem with accelerated online credit recovery is that students sometimes will fail the original credit in the classroom to do this online program, because they know it will be easier and faster. Because it is accelerated, students do not always get the same level of content from the material and will not truly retain the knowledge.*
- *While accelerated credit recovery programs offer many benefits, they can also present several challenges, including: Quality of Learning: The fast-paced nature of accelerated programs may compromise the depth and quality of learning.*

Students may focus on meeting minimum requirements rather than mastering concepts, leading to gaps in understanding that could affect their long-term academic success. Retention of Knowledge: Because of the condensed timeline, students in accelerated credit recovery programs may struggle to retain the information they learn. This can hinder their ability to apply concepts in future coursework or real-world situations. Limited Support: Accelerated programs may not provide adequate support systems for students who need additional assistance or personalized instruction. Without sufficient guidance and resources, struggling students may fall further behind or become disengaged from their studies. Equity Issues: Accelerated credit recovery programs may exacerbate existing disparities in educational outcomes, particularly for marginalized or disadvantaged students. Students who lack access to resources or support systems outside of school may struggle to keep pace with the accelerated curriculum. Perception of Diluted Standards: Some critics argue that accelerated credit recovery programs water down academic standards and devalue the rigor of traditional coursework. This perception could undermine the credibility and integrity of the education system as a whole. Long-Term Educational Goals: While accelerated credit recovery programs help students catch up on missed credits quickly, they may not adequately prepare students for more advanced coursework or post-secondary education. Focusing solely on credit recovery without addressing underlying academic weaknesses could limit students' future opportunities. It's essential for educators and policymakers to carefully consider these challenges and implement strategies to mitigate potential negative consequences while maximizing the

benefits of accelerated credit recovery programs. This might include providing additional academic support, monitoring student progress closely, and ensuring that rigorous standards are maintained to uphold the quality of education.

- *If the student has less than 5 credits to make up, then a credit lab with Traditional Online Recovery can work since a counselor can monitor. The Accelerated Recovery one is better if the student is highly motivated.*
- *Online Credit Recovery Programs do not give more confidence because it depends on the motivation of the student to complete the courses.*
- *I believe that accelerated programs do give more confidence to students. They are able to see their progress as they complete courses.*
- *No, I don't think they are getting the information necessary to say they are proficient in the subject area. I think they just do what they can to complete the lesson and get it done. They aren't necessarily interested in learning.*
- *Yes because it gives them an alternative to earn the credit or obtain grade forgiveness for a course that is holding them back from graduating.*
- *Yes it does. Students who are at risks are able to take the class over and do well.*
- *I have confidence that they will receive the diploma, but I am also sure that should they choose to go on to any higher education that they will need remediation because somewhere along the way they did not grasp the learning concepts of that particular subject area.*
- *We have students who specifically will fail a class by either not attending or because they do not want to do the work and they know they can recover the class quickly. Students also refuse to attend summer school as they know they can*

recover a class quickly, but as we have seen, many students who are in classes that use content to progress on to higher levels continue to fall short academically because they did not learn the material and simply wanted the fastest and easiest way out. Students have learned how to manipulate the programs and without someone sitting and watching each student individually there is no way to prevent the cheating, which students openly admit to.

- *Certainly, it brings me peace of mind knowing they'll attain the necessary credits for graduation. Without it, they might not graduate or could even drop out.*
- *I won't say it gives me confidence, but I do like having this option for the at-risk students. I wish we had as a counselor one login for both options. It is a challenge to monitor my students when I have to go back and forth between traditional & accelerated. This is my first year at the high school level and I am inclined to give all of them next year the accelerated route so I can monitor them better.*
- *Yes. Some students work better on their own at their own pace [sic]. A short class works well and gives them hope that they can still graduate.*
- *I am just happy they are an available resource to us because there is not enough room for students to retake courses live in the classroom with first attempt students.*
- *Absolutely, but only if there is "buy-in" from the at-risk seniors to do what they need to do to. Typically, once they have a taste of success in completing a course or two in the AOCR, they get on a roll and don't look back.*

- *It is successful, however, as previously stated, [sic] students will cheat to get it finished. So, the students tend to get it done and meet grad requirements, but it doesn't always seem they are actually learning the material.*
- *Yes, it is a great tool for the success of at-risk seniors. For example, if someone requires more than 7 classes, they could sign up for these extra online credit recovery classes and finish outside of school. Because it is online, things can be done 24/7 so the time constraints of a traditional school setting are not there. It is flexible for working students as well.*
- *As a secondary school counselor, online credit recovery programs can indeed offer a valuable tool in supporting the success of at-risk twelfth graders. However, my confidence in their effectiveness hinges on several factors, and it's essential to approach them with a balanced perspective. Firstly, online credit recovery programs can provide flexibility and accessibility, which are critical for at-risk students who may face various barriers to traditional education. These programs allow students to work at their own pace, often from the comfort of their own homes or at times convenient for them. This flexibility can accommodate students' diverse schedules, responsibilities, and learning styles, potentially increasing their engagement and motivation to succeed. Moreover, online credit recovery programs can offer personalized learning experiences, allowing students to focus on areas where they need the most support. With adaptive technologies and targeted interventions, students can receive tailored instruction and remediation, addressing specific learning gaps and challenges they may face. This individualized approach can be particularly beneficial for at-*

risk students who may require additional academic support to graduate on time. Additionally, online credit recovery programs can expand educational opportunities for at-risk twelfth graders, enabling them to access courses and resources that may not be available in their traditional school settings. This can empower students to explore diverse subjects, pursue their interests, and even accelerate their academic progress if they're motivated to do so. However, it's crucial to acknowledge the limitations and potential pitfalls of online credit recovery programs. While they offer flexibility and personalized learning, they may lack the in-person support and accountability mechanisms that are essential for some at-risk students. Without adequate guidance, mentorship, and oversight, students may struggle to stay on track, manage their time effectively, or seek help when needed. Furthermore, the quality and rigor of online credit recovery programs can vary widely, and not all programs may meet the standards necessary to ensure students' academic success. It's essential for counselors and educators to carefully evaluate and select reputable programs that align with their students' needs and educational goals. In conclusion, while online credit recovery programs can offer valuable opportunities for at-risk twelfth graders, they are not a panacea for addressing the complex challenges these students face. Success ultimately depends on a holistic approach that combines online learning with comprehensive support services, personalized guidance, and a commitment to meeting students' individual needs. By leveraging the strengths of online credit recovery programs while addressing their limitations, counselors can increase

their confidence in supporting the success of at-risk twelfth graders and helping them graduate with the skills and knowledge they need for future success.

- *The Traditional Online because credit lab managers were able to help the students.*
- *For those years, The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program was most effective because the students either completed their assignments before graduation or came in the summer to complete them and participate in summer graduation.*
- *I believe both programs worked to increase graduation rates.*
- *Edgenuity was most effective because students have the most time/opportunity to work on the courses.*
- *Edgenuity Credit Recovery Program.*
- *Accelerated.*
- *The Edgenuity platform and Penn Foster have been successful in increasing graduation rates.*
- *The accelerated program was the best for meeting graduation requirements as students were able to finish a class very quickly, but again, the content learned suffered and we are setting our students up for failure at that point. When you are looking at graduation rates, the quicker the better, but when you are looking at knowledge gained and retained the traditional is significantly better for students.*
- *I just began this year and don't have that information available. We use an adult education program used at Chamberlain High School.*
- *Edgenuity.*

- *Without question, the AOCRCP is much better for at-risk seniors to be successful. The format is clearly more user-friendly and more efficient for them to work through.*
- *I am unsure of other programs other than Edgenuity and or FLVS.*
- *Edgenuity.*
- *As of 2022 and 2023, several online credit recovery programs have demonstrated effectiveness in assisting at-risk twelfth graders in increasing their graduation rates, with a particular focus on core courses such as Math and English, which are essential for meeting graduation requirements.*

Eighteen certified secondary school counselors answered the questions, and 87 did not answer them. Three participants stated “I don’t know” which was removed from analyzing the survey and it did not provide any useful data. Four participants stated “Yes” with no further details. One indicated “No” with any further details. Another stated they were not a counselor in 2021-2022 school years. The last counselors stated they did not know about either the Traditional or Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program because this was their first year as a high school counselor.

Results for Research Question 2

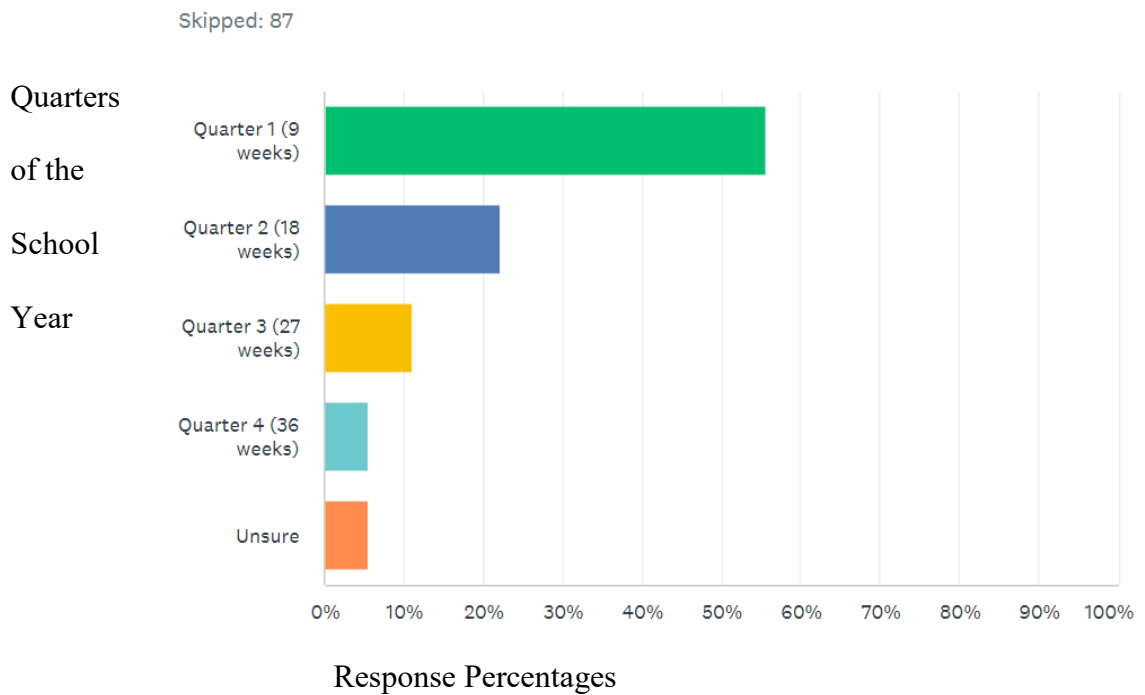
Research question 2 sought after answering the timeframes in which the certified secondary school counselors sent at-risk twelfth graders to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

RQ2: What factors affect the timeframe in which certified secondary school counselors send at-risk twelfth students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts?

Figure 3 illustrates the counselors' decisions regarding the timeframes when sending at-risk twelfth graders to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. It shows the counselors sending at-risk twelfth graders to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program in the first 9 weeks of school before they can place the at-risk twelfth graders into the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

Figure 3
Certified Secondary School Counselors At-risk Timeframes

When do you decide to send at-risk 12th grade students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?



Note: Certified secondary school counselors' timeframe to send at-risk students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

Most respondents (78%) sent their at-risk twelfth-grade students to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program during the first quarter of the school year, while

approximately 12% sent in quarters three and four. The factors in which certified secondary school counselors send at-risk twelfth-grade students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program are just over half (55.56%) in the first quarter. However, just below one-third (22.22%) sent the students in the second quarter. Finally, approximately ten percent (11.11%) were sent in the third and fourth quarters combined. About one-fifth (22%) of the respondents sent students to the recovery program in the second quarter of the school year.

Theme Emerging from RQ2

In reviewing the written responses concerning RQ2, the counselors stated that the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program is the first program all at-risk twelfth graders were sent to before counselors engaged in the accelerated online credit recovery program. The certified secondary school counselors' written responses to these three online survey questions (Do you prefer the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program? In your experience, is The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program more successful in elevating graduation rates than the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program? and what problem(s) they see with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program) are as follows:

- *Traditional Online Credit Recovery is a credit lab at the school so counselors can monitor the student. However, if they are more than credits down, counselors will look at Accelerated since it is too much for a student to have 6-7 courses plus make up more courses.*
- *If a twelfth grader has a few credits to make up, the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program can be effective if the student works steadily. If not and the*

student has a very low GPA, missing too many credits, and does not seem motivated, the Accelerated Online Recovery Program may be necessary.

- *The discussion and placement is based on the credits needed for graduation and the student's ability to earn them most efficiently.*
- *Credit deficiencies, low GPA, ease of completion for credit recovery program offering pre-test to determine lessons needed.*
- *It would depend on their needs and what they can do.*
- *The sooner the students start the program the better it is to recover all credits.*
- *After the student has failed on Edgenuity.*
- *The truly at risk need to get to the accelerated program because usually they have more credits to recover.*
- *Before students start each school year they are evaluated to see if they are a match to recovery any failed core classes. If they are, students are then placed into a virtual lab class on the school campus, supervised by an instructor, where they start their credit recovery program. The accelerated program, while faster to get through, leaves students without the content knowledge and students prefer this method because they are able to easily cheat and get through a class in only a few days. The traditional online program we use is not specific to just credit recovery, but also students taking a class for the first time. The traditional program covers all content in the curriculum and requires that students speak with the instructor and answer questions to show they have learned the necessary content to proceed in the class. The traditional program sets students up for greater success in future classes and needs outside of the school.*

- *I send students to traditional when it's 1 or 2 classes. If they have to make up more classes, I'll send them to the accelerated online program. The benefit of the accelerated program is that they finish faster and that keeps them motivated.*
- *I usually send them to the traditional route the 1st 9 weeks if they have 1-2 classes. If they have 3+ classes and/or is the 2nd semester then I enrolled them in the Accelerated route.*
- *We send seniors to our accelerated program during the senior year. We put tenth and eleventh graders in the traditional credit recovery program. There are a few seniors in both or in traditional because they were finishing up from the previous year.*
- *We use edgenuity[sic] so I do not know the difference between the two.*
- *AOCRCP is much quicker and user-friendly format than TOCRP. At our school, we only allow twelfth grade students to take part in the AOCRCP. We place tenth and eleventh graders in the TOCRP if needed. We also strongly encourage both groups of students (rising tenth/eleventh for TOCRP and rising twelfth for AOCRCP) to take part in their respective Credit Recovery program which is offered each Summer [sic]. AOCRCP is a much quicker and user-friendly version of Credit Recovery and we prefer our seniors to use the AOCRCP platform.*
- *When they are missing more than 5 credits and or their GPA is below 1.5.*
- *If by "Traditional Online Credit Recovery" you mean something like an online program that requires the full semester to be completed rather than just the content that wasn't mastered, sometimes, we decide to do this method because organizations like NCAA (for sports eligibility and scholarships in college) do not*

accept accelerated credit recovery. I may also decide the traditional option, because the course is only available on that platform, or if the parent would still like their student to learn the material rather than just retrieve the credit. Most times, I would prefer accelerated credit retrieval, because of its brevity and ease. These students do not have time to do a full course.

- *Credit recovery programs indeed present both positive and negative aspects. One notable issue is the lack of accountability among students for their educational success. Many students seem to view credit recovery as a convenient shortcut rather than a genuine opportunity to learn and improve. This attitude undermines the integrity of the educational system and diminishes the value of academic achievement. However, it's important to acknowledge that credit recovery can also be a valuable resource for students who need additional support to graduate. For instance, it can provide a lifeline for a struggling twelfth grader to achieve their graduation goals and move forward with their academic and personal aspirations. The real challenge arises when credit recovery is excessively relied upon as a blanket solution to systemic issues within the education system. When it becomes a default option rather than a targeted intervention, it fails to address the root causes of academic struggles and may perpetuate a cycle of underachievement. Ultimately, a balanced approach is necessary, one that leverages credit recovery programs strategically while also addressing the broader factors contributing to student success and failure. This might involve implementing more personalized support systems, fostering a culture of*

accountability, and ensuring that credit recovery is used judiciously rather than as a substitute for genuine learning and academic progress

Eighteen certified secondary school counselors answered the questions, and 87 did not answer them. One participant stated “I don’t know” which was removed from analyzing the survey and it did not provide any useful data.

Results for Research Question 3

Research question 3 sought after answering an open-ended question of how much understanding and awareness the certified secondary school counselors had about the metacognitive learning theory.

RQ3: Are you familiar with the metacognitive learning theory and the benefits it offers at-risk students? Feel free to write as much as you would like.

As the data collected regarding RQ3 was qualitative in nature, most certified secondary school counselors needed knowledge about the metacognitive learning theory. Many respondents answered “yes” but provided no additional details. The certified secondary school counselors’ written responses to this final online survey question (Are you familiar with the metacognitive learning theory and the benefits it offers at-risk students?) are as follows:

- *Yes, that is why we have at-risk twelfth graders with mentors that will conference with the students weekly, monitor their progress, and see how the student is feeling and what their needs may be.*
- *Yes. The metacognitive learning theory is the way we become aware and understand their own thoughts [sic] processes.*
- *I am not.*

- *Somewhat. It offers students more time.*
- *Yes, it helps students to think about how they learn.*
- *No, I am not familiar with this theory.*
- *The theory yes, but I have not seen or read any research on the benefits for at-risk youth. I believe to best assess your at-risk youth you should first determine what makes them at-risk and how they got to where they are today. For our school specifically it mostly deals with attendance issues and the ease of cheating to recover a class quickly when they do not want to attend. We also offer alternative school sites where students are able to complete classes at an expedited rate, but with smaller class sizes and more structure so cheating is not possible.*
- *No, I am not familiar with that.*
- *No, which is sad because I have a masters [sic] in school counseling and am currently in my Doctoral program in Ed leadership and innovation [sic].*
- *Not at all.*
- *I'm familiar with this theory however I have never put thought into how it may benefit an at-risk student.*
- *Quite a bit of my doctoral research employed the Metacognitive learning theory, which focuses on understanding and regulating one's own cognitive processes, offers several benefits to at-risk students: Enhanced Self-Regulation: Metacognitive strategies help students develop awareness of their learning processes, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own comprehension and problem-solving strategies. By learning to regulate their thinking and learning behaviors, at-risk students can become more proactive and*

self-directed learners, leading to improved academic outcomes. Improved Academic Performance: Engaging in metacognitive practices such as setting goals, self-assessment, and reflection can lead to improved academic performance. At-risk students who develop metacognitive skills are better equipped to identify areas of weakness, seek out appropriate resources and support, and implement effective study strategies to achieve their learning goals. Increased Motivation and Confidence: Metacognitive learning theory emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy—the belief in one’s ability to succeed. By developing metacognitive awareness and competence, at-risk students can enhance their confidence in their own learning abilities, leading to increased motivation and persistence in the face of challenges. Transferable Skills: Metacognitive strategies are transferable across various subjects and contexts. As at-risk students develop metacognitive skills, they become better equipped to apply these strategies to new learning situations, leading to more adaptive and flexible learning behaviors. Long-Term Learning: Metacognitive learning theory promotes deep and meaningful learning by encouraging students to engage in critical thinking, reflection, and analysis. At-risk students who develop metacognitive skills are more likely to retain and apply their learning over the long term, rather than simply memorizing information for short-term recall. Empowerment and Agency: Metacognitive learning theory empowers at-risk students by giving them greater control over their own learning processes. By understanding how they learn best and taking ownership of their learning journey, students feel a greater sense of agency and autonomy, which can have

positive effects on their academic engagement and achievement. Reduction of Risk Factors: Metacognitive strategies can help mitigate some of the risk factors associated with academic underachievement and dropout among at-risk students. By equipping students with the tools they need to monitor and regulate their own learning, metacognitive learning theory addresses underlying cognitive and motivational factors that contribute to academic struggles. Overall, metacognitive learning theory offers valuable insights and strategies for supporting at-risk students in overcoming academic challenges, improving their learning outcomes, and fostering long-term success in school and beyond.

Eighteen certified secondary school counselors answered the questions, and 87 did not answer them. One participant stated, “I don’t know,” which was removed from analyzing the survey, as it did not provide any valuable data. Three counselors stated “Yes” with no further details. The other two counselors indicated “No” with no further explanation.

Summary of Results

The data showed that all certified secondary school counselors taking the online survey worked with at-risk twelfth graders who worked with online credit recovery programs. Most counselors leaned more toward The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The counselors stated that most of their high schools were more familiar with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program typically housed at their high schools. The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program is the first program that all at-risk twelfth graders were sent to before counselors engaged in sending the at-risk twelfth graders to the accelerated online credit

recovery program. Finally, according to their responses to research question three, most certified secondary school counselors needed knowledge about the metacognitive learning theory.

This action Research design involved analyzing qualitative data from an online survey utilizing Survey Monkey. The study examined the perceptions and experiences of sixty-six certified secondary school counselors working with at-risk twelfth graders using the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The methodology included surveys from sixty-six certified secondary school counselors using a Likert scale and open-ended questions. The survey results concluded by the certified secondary school counselors acknowledged that both Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs worked for at-risk twelfth graders who had time constraints of recovering their lost credits in a 9-week time frame to graduate.

Chapter V will discuss this data in light of the existing research and its implications for the field. Chapter V will also discuss the three themes. The themes were: Theme 1: Most certified secondary school counselors leaned more toward the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program versus the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (RQ1). Theme 2: All certified secondary school counselors stated that the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program was the first program all at-risk twelfth graders were sent to before counselors engaged in the accelerated online credit recovery program (RQ2). Theme 3: Most certified secondary school counselors had no awareness of the “metacognition learning theory” (RQ3).

Chapter V: Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter begins with a review of the study's purpose and a restatement of the research question that guided it. This chapter also includes a summary of the study's theoretical foundation and a discussion of the findings relating to the literature and theoretical foundation. Implications for practice and research are also included. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a final summary.

Purpose of Study

This action research study investigated the difference between certified secondary school counselors' perceptions and experiences working with at-risk twelfth graders using credit recovery programs. The certified secondary school counselors utilized the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The question is, are at-risk twelfth graders struggling to recover lost credits sent to the best online credit recovery program in a timely fashion that allows them to graduate in a 9-week timeframe with their cohorts? This research study also aimed to determine if certified secondary school counselors are placing at-risk twelfth graders into the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program before the last 9 weeks of a school year to obtain their lost credits. Closing the timeframe gap is critical to whether at-risk twelfth graders graduate on time with their cohorts. The research questions were aligned with the study.

1. What are the perspectives of certified secondary school counselors knowledgeable of credit recovery programs concerning the efficacy of the Traditional

Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

2. What factors affect the timeframe in which certified secondary school counselors send at-risk twelfth students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts?

3. To what extent do certified secondary school counselors understand metacognitive learning theory and its effects on at-risk twelfth students enrolled in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program to graduate on time with their cohorts?

The results of the three research questions are discussed in the rest of the chapter.

Summary of Results

The trends and patterns of the researcher's learning were that the certified secondary school counselors were not sending at-risk twelfth graders in time to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program when the student only had 9 weeks in the last quarter of school to recover lost credits and graduate. The focus of the study was the three overarching questions. The study aimed to assess certified secondary school counselors' perceptions and experiences toward the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program. Research question 1 highlighted how the certified secondary school counselors chose the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. Research question 2 focused on the timeframes in which the secondary counselors sent at-risk twelfth graders to the AOCR. Research question 3 demonstrated the certified secondary school counselors' need for knowledge about the metacognitive learning theory.

Discussion of Results

The research reflects the researcher's passion for working with certified secondary school counselors to assist them in understanding the importance of placing at-risk twelfth graders in the accelerated online credit recovery program earlier than quarters three and four (weeks 19-36) of a school year. There was urgency when certified secondary school counselors allowed at-risk twelfth graders to participate in the best online credit recovery program that would enable them to recover their lost credits quickly.

What does this mean? The researcher looked at Coppett's (2020) study regarding how vital it is for at-risk twelfth graders to be motivated when taking online credit recovery programs. When working to increase a student's graduation rate, certified secondary school counselors must examine all the motivation factors, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students need to feel confident in their educational learning while feeling good about gaining a high school diploma.

How does this information play a role in graduation rates? Technology is increasing, and every generation's graduation rate should exceed the former generation. Online credit recovery programs are increasingly needed due to the rapid growth of graduation rates in past years (Coppett, 2020). The research shows how online credit recovery programs are becoming more integral to increasing at-risk twelfth graders' graduation rates. Even though the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program has been around for a long time, the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program offers extensive benefits for at-risk twelfth graders who only have 9 weeks to recover their lost credits and

graduate rapidly. The AOCRCP further enhances online learning platforms for at-risk students while not discrediting the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program.

The researcher suspects that the lack of time at-risk twelfth graders are given (9 weeks in the last quarter of the school year) to recover their lost credits will influence the results of whether they are successful in raising their grade point averages to graduate. As certified secondary school counselors become more aware of the timeframes they connect at-risk twelfth graders to in online credit recovery programs, they begin to understand that online credit recovery programs are a solution to help at-risk twelfth-grade students graduate from high school. Students enrolled in online credit recovery programs have a better chance of graduating (Viano & Henry, 2018).

The most interesting responses were to research question 3, about metacognition. Reviewing the counselors' responses to this question was discouraging because many counselors were unaware or familiar with the metacognitive learning theory that enhances at-risk twelfth graders' learning. A high school principal from Washington High School demonstrated how connecting at-risk twelfth graders to higher-speed technology implemented through the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCRCP) and introducing the students to the metacognitive learning theory was a way of addressing at-risk twelfth graders' concerns and constraints around trying to graduate within a 9-week timeframe (Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). One of the goals of the AOCRCP is to merge high-speed technology with content to help at-risk twelfth graders succeed faster in recovering their lost credits. When at-risk twelfth graders are allowed to think about how they think, learn, and problem-solve utilizing the metacognitive learning theory coupled with participating in the AOCRCP, this gives them

a chance to quickly correct their mistakes in courses they have to take to make up lost credits (Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b; Apex Learning, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The researcher's influence on the certified secondary school counselors is to assist them in making sure that at-risk twelfth graders are placed in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program earlier than the last 9 weeks of the school year to recover their lost credits and graduate successfully with their cohorts.

The researcher explained why the themes came out the way they did by analyzing Survey Monkey data from the online survey. In the analysis of the qualitative data sources, three 3 codes were identified. Codes were further grouped into three themes (See Figures 2 and 3). The three themes were:

1. Traditional online credit recovery programs are great for at-risk twelfth graders who need four or fewer courses to recover lost credits.
2. Accelerated online credit recovery programs are great for at-risk twelfth graders who need five or more courses to recover lost credits.
3. Metacognitive learning theory is how at-risk twelfth graders become aware and understand their own thought processes, which helps students think about how they learn.

Below is a discussion of the themes utilized to address the overarching research question. The research data from the online survey responses from the Survey Monkey survey were aligned to the research questions. Research question 1 was answered by the certified secondary school counselors in this way: The certified secondary school counselors felt that the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program (TOCRP) needed to

afford at-risk twelfth graders the quicker speed required to take advantage of gaining their lost credits faster. However, the TOCRP was slower and built differently than the accelerated online credit recovery program. When at-risk twelfth-grade students are in danger of not graduating, they need a quicker computer system program that would accelerate them to recover their lost credits faster.

Some certified secondary high school counselors felt the accelerated online credit recovery program was too fast for some at-risk twelfth graders. They believed students must be focused and ready to speed up the process to make up lost credits quicker. The counselors also expressed that most parents and students needed to be made aware of the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR), and parents are more hesitant to send their children to the AOCR because they think their children will not be able to obtain a traditional high school diploma. More awareness is needed about the benefits of the AOCR.

The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program gives most schools confidence because it is a resource at their high school, and the students do not have to be sent out and attend a different school. The TOCRP is familiar to the certified secondary high school counselors and the students. The counselors expressed concern that the TOCRP sometimes takes too long, and at-risk students need more patience to complete the program.

The counselors agreed that the AOCR is the best program that gives struggling at-risk twelfth graders who are behind in five or more credits the speed to catch up and recover their lost credits quicker. The program speeds up the process for at-risk twelfth graders to recover the credits needed to graduate with their classmates and return to their

original high school if they like, to obtain their diplomas. The accelerated program also gives at-risk twelfth graders more confidence because they are focused and motivated to use their ability while processing the content better on the second try in retaking the course. The counselors stated that when at-risk twelfth graders can see their results of passing the failed courses after completing each course, it gives them hope and encourages them to utilize the accelerated online credit recovery program to recover their lost credits.

The counselors explained that the accelerated program was the best for meeting graduation requirements as students could finish a class very quickly, but the concerns around knowing if the at-risk twelfth graders are learning the content is the problem at hand. When looking at graduation rates, the quicker, the better way is the accelerated online credit recovery program. When looking at content gained, TOCRP is significantly better for at-risk twelfth graders who only need to make up four or fewer courses to obtain credits to graduate. Without question, the AOCR is much better for at-risk seniors to be successful. The format is more user-friendly and efficient for them to work through (see Figure 2).

The research data from the online survey utilizing Survey Monkey responses were answered by the certified secondary school counselors and aligned to research question 2 in this way: The TOCRP is what most high schools use for all at-risk twelfth graders. The counselors must send all at-risk twelfth graders to the TOCRP in the first and second quarters of the school year (weeks 1-18). Therefore, all at-risk twelfth graders are first sent to the TOCRP.

The AOCRCP is only utilized when the at-risk twelfth graders need to catch up in five or more credits to be back on track to graduate. The schools then send at-risk twelfth graders to the AOCRCP, which is usually in the last quarters (three and four, weeks 19-36) of a school year only after the at-risk twelfth grader is too far behind and cannot carry six to seven regular courses in addition to recovering lost credits from courses they failed (see Figure 3).

The research data from the online survey utilizing Survey Monkey responses were answered by the certified secondary school counselors and aligned to research question 3 in this way: Research question 3 sought after answering an open-ended question of how much understanding and awareness the certified secondary school counselors had about the metacognitive learning theory. The researcher explained the research data responses in this way. Most counselors need to become more familiar with metacognitive learning theory. The researcher describes the five counselors' responses that were familiar with the metacognitive learning theory below.

Four counselors believed that the metacognitive learning theory was critical in assisting at-risk twelfth graders in understanding and becoming aware of how they learn (visual, audio, kinetics). When certified secondary school counselors knew how the metacognitive learning theory worked, they could help at-risk twelfth graders apply it to the courses they had to retake to recover lost credits to graduate. The fifth counselor obtained a doctoral degree and laid out the major points of how certified secondary school counselors can enhance the at-risk twelfth grader's process when the counselors allow the students to utilize the metacognitive learning theory while making lost credit from failed courses.

The fifth certified secondary school counselor went on to state that at-risk students who develop metacognitive skills are better equipped to identify areas of weakness in their learning process; the students can seek appropriate resources and support and implement effective study strategies to achieve their learning goals and recover their lost credits to graduate. The twelfth-grade at-risk students also increased their motivation and confidence when learning the metacognitive learning theory. Understanding the metacognitive learning theory helped them know the importance of self-efficacy and believe in their success. Learning how to develop metacognitive awareness and being competent, the at-risk twelfth-grade students not only enhanced their confidence in their learning abilities but also increased their motivation, making them persistent in facing the everyday life challenges in education.

The same participant continued to state how vital it is for at-risk twelfth graders to learn transferable skills and how reducing risk factors works. Once the at-risk twelfth graders implemented the transferable skills to their online credit recovery studies, they realized that this skill could be utilized in all subjects and contexts. The fifth counselor highlighted how these skills made the at-risk twelfth graders better equipped to apply these strategies to their new learning situations, which led to them being more adaptive and flexible in their learning behaviors, not to mention the long-term effects that the metacognitive learning theory promoted while deepening and encouraging the meaningful learning process for them to engage in critical thinking, reflection, and analysis metacognitive learning theory to develop the skills needed to retain and apply their learning over the long term timeframes not just when there are pressed for recovery their lost credits in a 9-week timeframe (the last quarter of the school year).

The metacognitive learning theory helps at-risk twelfth graders with a 9-week time frame to graduate to consider their thinking and learning (Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). Padmanabha (2020) also states how metacognitive learning theory is underutilized in the twenty-first century. The goal of the metacognitive learning theory is to teach at-risk twelfth graders how to think about how they learn while advancing their graduation rates.

Reducing risk factors using the metacognitive strategies helped at-risk twelfth graders lessen some of the risk factors connected to their academic scorn of not achieving and possibly dropping out. The reduction of risk factors strategies equipped the at-risk twelfth graders with the tools they needed to help them monitor and regulate their learning processes when using cognitive and motivational factors that created barriers to their academic struggles of not achieving (Apex Learning, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

At-risk twelfth graders are mainly taught various learning styles, such as audio, visual, or kinesthetic learning, and some students learn better using a combination of these techniques. In the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (AOCR), utilizing the metacognitive learning theory, students are taught how to tackle their thinking about how they specifically learn in an online setting. Teaching students the metacognitive learning theory to think about how they failed past coursework that they are now repeating is one way to reduce the risk factors in their learning. Implementing and linking the metacognitive learning theory enhances at-risk twelfth graders' perceptions of making better choices in their academic process (Apex Learning, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b).

Reducing the risk factors allows at-risk students to make more intelligent choices when enrolling in the AOCR. They go through their coursework with a different mindset, make up their lost credits faster within 9 weeks, take exams knowing their learning styles, and use their background knowledge to complete the failed coursework and recover lost credits to graduate (Apex Learning, 2020; Moshman, 2018; Padmanabha, 2020a, 2020b). The metacognitive learning theory offered valuable insights and strategies that supported at-risk twelfth graders in overcoming their educational challenges and recovering learning outcomes that promoted long-term success in their high school years and beyond.

The researcher's theoretical foundation model in this study was critical in establishing how much more advanced an at-risk twelfth grader recovering lost credits to graduate with their cohorts would be if the metacognitive learning theory were applied to their online credit recovery courses. The research utilized this theoretical foundation by Kurt Lewin (1930), who coined the term "action research" by developing a four-step process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Lewin's design is the motivation for this study. The qualitative action research design, the research questions, and the online survey correspond with Lewin's 1930 design. The researcher used three steps (acting, observing, and reflecting) of the four-step process (Mertler, 2019). The objective of all three research questions and the online survey is to examine the relationship between certified secondary school counselors and how they work with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program (Apex Learning, 2020; Edgenuity, 2023). The research in practice compared the certified

secondary school counselors' perceptions and experience with the Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs.

Implications for Practice

Through the implementation of overarching research questions, the researcher learned that most certified secondary school counselors need to be made aware of the importance of the metacognitive learning theory that enhances the at-risk twelfth grader's ability to understand their learning processes, enabling them to think about how they learn. To help certified secondary school counselors teach at-risk students about the AOCRCP and how they can make up credits quicker when they are failing five or more courses that have to be repeated, the counselors need to become more aware of how the AOCRCP works and benefits at-risk students struggling to get back on track to graduate.

These implications have a crucial impact on the study because if at-risk twelfth graders are not taught the value of how they learn through the metacognition learning theory, they tend to avoid seeing the urgency of recovering lost credits in a rapid manner to graduate. At-risk twelfth graders and their parents should be more educated about the AOCRCP so they can seek out assistance from their certified secondary school counselors early so they are not left in a crunch in the last 9 weeks of the school year as they try to recover lost credits to graduate with their cohorts. Moshman (2018) and Padmanabha (2020a, 2020b) highlight these factors.

The impact of this study demonstrated the evidence of its influence that resonates in the qualitative results from the overarching research questions. The participants' responses to the 14 research questions demonstrated how the counselors benefited from sharing their perceptions and experiences of assisting at-risk twelfth graders in recovering

lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts. The responses to the survey questions assisted the counselors in better understanding the importance of the timeframes (weeks 19-36) in which they send struggling at-risk twelfth graders to the AOCRCP.

The responses to the survey questions also brought awareness to the counselors of the danger at-risk twelfth graders face when they do not graduate with their cohorts due to the counselors sending them to the AOCRCP in the third or fourth quarters of the school. The study showed that counselors realized that being more strategic in the timeframes they sent at-risk twelfth graders to the AOCRCP determined whether the students will be successful in recovering their lost credits and graduating.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research included enlarging the number of participants in the study and including larger samples to show more significant results. A few participants could not have provided a better statistical descriptive analysis. The researcher would utilize other platforms to gather the survey information besides Survey Monkey online survey platform. In the future, the researcher would have another certified secondary school counselor embarking on obtaining their doctoral degree implement the same online survey to compare participants' responses and success rates.

The researcher would also run pilot studies with three to five Title I high schools that use online credit recovery programs to increase at-risk twelfth graders' grade point averages. Findings in the researcher's research demonstrated increased confidence and motivation of at-risk twelfth graders exposed to the metacognitive learning theory.

The researcher would change the online survey from a 5-point Likert scale to a 4-point Likert scale, removing the choice of *neutral*. Most of the 66 certified secondary

school counselors selected *neutral*, which led the researcher to believe the counselors were rushing to finish the survey.

Limitations

As with any research study, some limitations should be noted. This study used an online survey on Survey Monkey to gather information from certified secondary school counselors. The most significant limitations were the length of the survey study and the responses that came in very slowly and sparsely. This survey study took place over three weeks after the initial emails were sent to the certified secondary school counselors. The researcher noted any biases.

Summary

The summary of the findings of this action research study was to survey over 100 certified secondary school counselors who would complete the five-minute online survey in its entirety. The researcher sent 2,303 online surveys to all Florida's certified secondary school counselors. The results showed that out of 105 responses from certified secondary school counselors, 66 agreed to the informed consent. At the same time, 39 disagreed with the informed consent and could not take the online survey. Most of the 66 certified secondary school counselors completed the survey partially. Sixty-six certified secondary school counselors participated, allowing the researcher to complete the focus of the study, which was to align the three overarching research questions with the certified secondary high school counselors' perspectives and experiences who work with at-risk twelfth graders embarking on taking an online credit recovery program to increase their grade point averages to graduate with their cohorts.

The researcher concluded that 87% of public high school students in the United States graduated with their cohort, the average adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), Tallahassee, Florida, reports that Floridians' high school graduation rates in the 2021-2022 school years were 87.3%. There was an increase of 0.4% from the 2018-2019 pre-pandemic school years (FLDOE, 2023). According to Wisevoter (2023), the high school graduation rates in the United States varied significantly from state to state. The national average for high school graduation rate stands at around 84%, but there are states with higher or lower figures than what is listed above. Wisevoter (2023) stated that the senior year for high school students is the most rigorous and matters the most. Senior high school students' grades are the most important in the first semester of their twelfth grade (Wisevoter, 2023).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) raised the question of the effectiveness of an online credit recovery program in improving the graduation rates of students at risk of school failure. They state that students who needed more credits to advance to twelfth grade and did not use the online credit recovery have an 8% probability of graduating (NCES). However, students who did not have enough credits to advance to 12th grade and used credit recovery increased their chances of graduating to 23% (NCES). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects and analyzes data for the federal government. These statistics from the NCES support the researcher's dissertation by demonstrating the importance of being connected to either the Traditional or Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

Summary of Dissertation in Practice

The researcher summary of the dissertation in practice concluded with chapters I through V. In Chapter I, the researcher examined various online credit recovery programs. Still, the specific focus of this chapter was on the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. The chapter described the qualitative action research design utilizing an online survey from certified secondary school counselors. The study participants were certified secondary school counselors who work with Traditional and Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs for at-risk twelfth graders. Chapter I described obtaining email addresses from the Florida Department of Education Research and Assessment Department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (FLDOE). Finally, chapter I included the theoretical framework and the research questions.

Chapter II reviewed the literature about online credit recovery programs and the history of online credit recovery programs. Chapter II presented the literature overview of online credit recovery programs, discussed certified secondary school counselors placing at-risk twelfth graders in inappropriate online credit recovery programs in a timeframe sooner than the last 9 weeks of school to promote successful graduation, explained the theoretical framework of the researcher's study, and discussed the benefits and effectiveness of online credit recovery programs, and presented the argument for more research.

Chapter III described the methodology used in this study. The chapter covered the research design, researcher setting, the participants, data collection, and analysis methods. Chapter III also included how the researcher addressed trustworthiness and the

study's limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. Chapter IV presented the data analysis of the research questions and a summary of the results. Finally, Chapter V discussed the study's conclusions and recommendations regarding the implications for practice and future research. This chapter also analyzed the study's findings as they related to existing literature and demonstrated how it contributed to the education field.

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Appendix A: Emails to Gain Certified Secondary School Counselors Participants

Email Subject: Certified secondary school counselors' perceptions and experiences with Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Programs.

Good Afternoon,

My name is Frances Maxwell-Baxter, and I am a doctoral candidate at Lynn University and this research is part of the dissertation in practice. I am also a former certified secondary school counselor in Florida. I am conducting research on the perceptions and experiences of certified secondary school counselors with The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program and the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program. Your participation in this study is important because your experiences and ideas can add to the body of scholarly knowledge regarding The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program.

I am hoping you will take this quick 14-question Survey Monkey online survey with your feedback. As you may be aware, many at-risk twelfth graders are not graduating due to their grade point averages being below 2.0. This dissertation has been approved by the Lynn University Institutional Review Board (IRB #), see attachment. Your name and email addresses were obtained through the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) research and assessment department for certified secondary school counselors across Florida (see authorization to conduct research). No IP addresses will be known to the researcher.

This research aims to collect anonymous information regarding what online credit recovery programs contribute to at-risk twelfth graders' success in recovering their lost credits and graduating on time within a 9-week timeframe with their cohorts. With your help and valuable feedback, I will take a look at what contributes to success for at-risk twelfth graders being placed in the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program sooner than the last 9 weeks of a school semester. This research will support certified secondary school counselors working with at-risk twelfth graders with only 9 weeks to recover their lost credits to graduate on time with their cohorts.

This five-minute (at most) survey will be open from _____. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (Frances) if you have any questions about the research project, you may contact Frances Maxwell-Baxter, at fmaxwellbaxter@email.lynn.edu at Lynn University and Dr. Erika Grodzki, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at egrodzki@lynn.edu.

There are no benefits to answering the online survey questions; however, you may enjoy sharing your lived experiences of empowering at-risk twelfth-graders who have a 9-week timeframe to graduate with their cohorts. Thank you for being so willing to assist me in this vital research.

Appendix B: Informed Consent/Purpose of the Research

Purpose of the Research

The study aims to understand the difference between The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program for at-risk twelfth graders. The study will provide information on what factors affect twelfth graders trying to graduate within a 9-week time frame with their cohorts. The information gathered from this survey may assist future school counselors in planning for high school seniors below the 2.0 grade point average needed to graduate. The researchers' audience is certified secondary school counselors.

Specific Procedures

Your participation in this study will assist at-risk twelfth graders in increasing their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate. You will be asked to answer questions about the Traditional Online Credit Recovery as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery. The online survey will use fourteen questions. The questions eight Likert scales questions and six open-ended questions the certified secondary school counselors will have the ability to type as much as they like. The first question is the Informed Consent (informs secondary school counselors that the question is required to be answered in order to move on in the survey). If the certified secondary school counselors disagree to take the online survey, they will be kicked out automatically and the survey will end. The participants may exit the survey at any time without penalty.

Duration of Participation and Compensation

The total duration of your participation should be no more than 5 minutes. There will be no compensation for participation.

Risks

This online survey is strictly voluntary, and no penalty will be imposed for non-participation. There are minimal risks in participating in the survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable or anxious at any time, you may exit the survey.

Benefits

There are no benefits to answering the online survey questions; however, you may enjoy sharing your lived experiences of empowering at-risk 12th-graders who have a 9-week timeframe to graduate with their cohorts.

Anonymity

The online survey results will be used strictly for research and kept anonymous. The researchers will not share names or identifying information with others. The research data or findings will never mention your name or school name. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers will be stored for two years on a password-

protected computer and, after that, will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the research project, you may contact Frances Maxwell-Baxter, at fmaxwellbaxter@email.lynn.edu at Lynn University. For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Erika Grodzki, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at egrodzki@lynn.edu. You can also contact my chairperson, Dr. Kiser, at BKiser@lynn.edu.

Documentation of Informed Consent

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting the relationship with the researcher or study.

I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and have the research study explained. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above. By selecting "Agree," you consent to participate in this study. If you select "Disagree," the survey will end.

Appendix C: School Counselor Survey

1. Informed Consent/Purpose of the Research The study aims to understand the difference between The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program for at-risk twelfth graders. The study will provide information on what factors affect twelfth graders trying to graduate within a 9-week time frame with their cohorts. The information gathered from this survey may assist future school counselors in planning for high school seniors below the 2.0 grade point average needed to graduate. The researchers' audience is certified secondary school counselors. **Specific Procedures** Your participation in this study will assist at-risk twelfth graders in increasing their grade point averages above 2.0 to graduate. You will be asked to answer questions about the Traditional Online Credit Recovery as opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery. The online survey will use fourteen questions. The questions eight Likert scales questions and six open-ended questions the certified secondary school counselors will have the ability to type as much as they like. The first question is the Informed Consent (informs secondary school counselors that the question is required to be answered in order to move on in the survey). If the certified secondary school counselors disagree to take the online survey, they will be kicked out automatically and the survey will end. The participants may exit the survey at any time without penalty. **Duration of Participation and Compensation** The total duration of your participation should be no more than 5 minutes. There will be no compensation for participation. **Risks** This online survey is strictly voluntary, and no penalty will be imposed for non-participation. There are minimal risks in participating in the survey. However, if you feel uncomfortable or anxious at any time, you may exit the survey. **Benefits** There are no benefits to answering the online survey questions; however, you may enjoy sharing your lived experiences of empowering at-risk twelfth-graders who have a 9-week timeframe to graduate with their cohorts. **Anonymity** The online survey results will be used strictly for research and kept anonymous. The researchers will not share names or identifying information with others. The research data or findings will never mention your name or school name. No IP addresses will be kept or known to the researchers. Your answers will be stored for two years on a password-protected computer and, after that, will be deleted. This project's research records may be reviewed by the departments at Lynn University responsible for regulatory and research oversight. **Contact Information** If you have any questions about the research project, you may contact Frances Maxwell-Baxter, at fmaxwellbaxter@email.lynn.edu at Lynn University. For any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Erika Grodzki, Chair of the Lynn University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects, at egrodzki@lynn.edu. You can also contact my chairperson, Dr. Kiser, at BKiser@lynn.edu. **Documentation of Informed Consent** The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting the relationship with the researcher or study. I have had an opportunity to read the consent form and have the research study explained. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the research project, and my questions have been answered. I am prepared to participate in the research study described above.

By selecting “Agree,” you consent to participate in this study. If you select “Disagree,” the survey will end.

1. Informed Consent
2. Are you a secondary high school counselor working with students on credit recovery?
Yes, currently or in the past
No
3. Are you a part of a Title I School?
Yes
No
4. Do you prefer The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree
5. “In your experience, is The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program more successful in elevating graduation rates than the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?”
Strongly agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly disagree
6. How big is your high school?
Large (800-1500 students)
Medium (400-800 students)
Small (001-400 students)
7. When do you decide to send at-risk 12th grade students to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program?
Quarter 1 (9 weeks)
Quarter 2 (18 weeks)
Quarter 3 (27 weeks)
Quarter 4 (36 weeks)
Unsure
8. When do you decide to send at-risk 12th grade students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?
Quarter 1 (9 weeks)
Quarter 2 (18 weeks)
Quarter 3 (27 weeks)
Quarter 4 (36 weeks)
Unsure
9. How do you come to the decision to send at-risk 12th grade students to either The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program or the Accelerated Online

Credit Recovery Program? What are the benefits? Feel free to write as you much as you would like.

10. What problem(s) do you see with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program? What are the benefits? Feel free to write as you much as you would like.
11. What problem(s) do you see with the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program? Feel free to write as much as you would like.
12. In your position as a secondary school counselor, do online credit recovery programs give you more confidence for the success of at-risk 12th-graders? Why or why not? Feel free to write as much as you would like.
13. Thinking back to the 2022 and 2023 graduation rates, which online credit recovery program was most effective for assisting at-risk 12th graders in increasing their graduation rates and why? Feel free to write as much as you would like.
14. Are you familiar with the metacognitive learning theory and the benefits it offers at-risk students? Feel free to write as you much as you would like.

Appendix D: Pilot Study Results

1. Inform Consent

9 responses

Agree (44.4%)

Yes 2 (22.2%)

Agree 1 (11.1%)

Yes 2 (22.2%)

Value Count

Agree 4

Yes 2

agree 1

yes 2

2. Are you currently a high school counselor working with students on credit recovery?

9 responses

Yes 55.6%

No 44.4%

3. Are you a part of a Title I School?

9 responses

Yes 56.6%

No 44.4%

4. Do you prefer The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Programs opposed to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

Yes 55.6%

No 44.4%

Why? Type as much as you like

5. In your experience is The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program more successful in elevating graduation rates or is the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program a better successful outcome?

8 responses

Yes 62.5%

No 37.5%

Why?

6. How big is your high school? Out of the twelve initial surveys, nine responses as follows:

9 responses

Large 44.4% (5)

Medium 33.3% (3)

Small 22.2% (1)

7. When do you decide to send at-risk 12th grade students to the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

Semester 1 11.1%

Semester 2	66.7%
Semester 3	11.1%
Semester 4	11.1%

8. When do you decide to send at-risk 12th grade students to the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

Semester 1	33.3%
Semester 2	22.2%
Semester 3	33.3%
Semester 4	11.1%

9. How do you come to the decision to send at-risk 12th grade students to either The Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program or the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

- I give students a choice
- GPA
- Slipping grades and tardiness or missing school entirely
- Past successes
- Failing grades
- Number of credits needed
- Based on each case
- Not sure
- Low grades

10. What problem(s) do you see with the Traditional Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

Value	Count
It is just the students clicking and answering multiple choice questions.	11.1%
It takes too long to complete, students get bored	11.1%
None	22.2%
Student motivation can be a concern	11.1%
Takes too long	11.1%
Too slow	11.1%
its inefficient	11.1%
not competitive	11.1%

11. What problem(s) do you see with the Accelerated Online Credit Recovery Program?

9 responses

Value	Count
Could lead to students front loading information	11.1%
It may be too accelerated and may not be enough time to achieve mastery	11.1%
None	33.3%
Too condensed	1%
Unfamiliar	11.1%
it lacks coverage	11.1%
student motivation	11.1%

12. In your position as a high school counselor, do online credit recovery programs give you a higher degree of confidence for success of at-risk 12th-graders?

9 responses

Value	Count
It depends on the case, overall- yes	11.1%
N/A (not counselor)	11.1%
N/a	11.1%
No	11.1%
Yes	22.2%
yes	33.3%

13. Thinking back to the 2022 and 2023 graduation rates, which online credit recovery program was most effective for assisting at-risk 12th-graders to increase their graduation rates and why?

8 responses

- Traditional
- Edgenuity
- Accelerated but can also lead to students front loading information
- Both
- Online
- Not sure
- Traditional, it has more coverage

14. Are you familiar with the metacognitive learning theory and the benefits it offers at-risk students?