

The State of Credit Recovery in Minnesota Public High Schools

Credit recovery is a strategy that allows students to recover course credit in required courses for high school graduation and can include online courses, course retake, packet work, and instructor-developed modified courses. For many students, the recovery of failed credit determines whether they will graduate from high school.

To help support students struggling to graduate from traditional high schools, Minnesota implemented **State Approved Alternative Programs (SAAPs)** in 1987. SAAPs provide students with alternative education options tailored to their individual learning styles and social emotional needs.



Presently, more than **200 SAAPs** provide credit recovery across Minnesota.



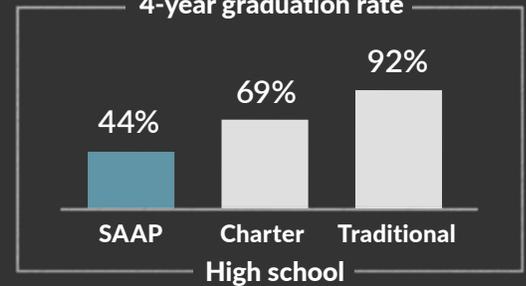
Students who are behind in credit typically move from traditional high schools into SAAPs.



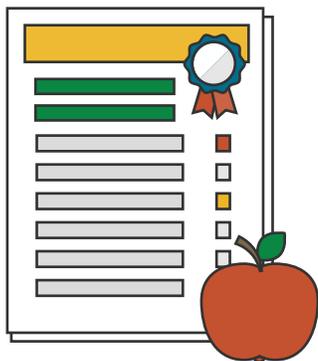
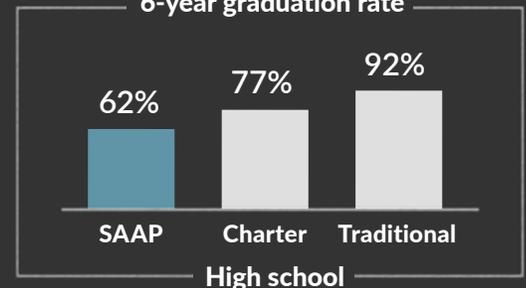
In 2017, SAAPs had the lowest 4-year graduation rate compared to traditional and charter schools in Minnesota.

When given **additional time and a focus on recovering credit**, SAAPs help more students graduate. However, SAAP graduation rates continue to lag behind traditional and charter high schools.

4-year graduation rate



6-year graduation rate



Since differences in graduation rates persist, **Minnesota Department of Education** wanted to better understand the state of credit recovery in Minnesota and whether students across the state have **equitable access to quality credit recovery programs**.



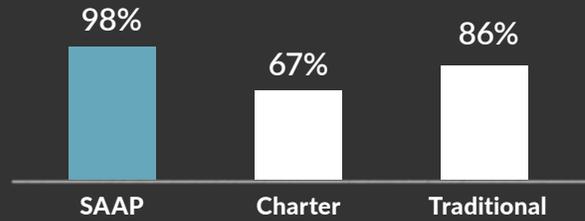
Source: Bradley, D., Plaman, J., & Reynolds, S. (2019) "A Scan of Credit Recovery Practices in Minnesota Public Schools." [Internal Memo]. Roseville, MN: Minnesota Department of Education.



To better understand what credit recovery looks like in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) partnered with Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest to examine state-collected survey¹ and interview data² from schools that offer credit recovery.

Most survey respondents from SAAPs and traditional schools reported offering credit recovery options, whereas respondents from charter schools were least likely to offer credit recovery options.

Percentage of Schools That Offer Credit Recovery Options



Implementation of credit recovery programs in SAAPs, traditional schools, and charter schools varied by factors such as:

<p>Access to a licensed content-area specialist</p>	<p>Timing of delivery (i.e., summer, during school, before/after school, anytime)</p>	<p>Method of delivery (e.g., online coursework, independent study)</p>	<p>Duration of program (e.g., 8-week semesters, flexible term dates)</p>
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Most school administrators and staff interviewed reported needing additional supports to address barriers to successful credit recovery for students, such as:

 Funds to hire highly qualified staff for credit recovery programming	 More time to allow students to recover credit
 Support to implement high-quality project-based and competency-based credit recovery	 Physical space to offer in-school instructor-led credit recovery options
 Improved transportation options for students	 Greater student and parent investment

These findings suggest that further investigation is needed to understand how variation in implementation of and access to high-quality credit recovery programming impacts students' ability to successfully recover credit and meet high school graduation requirements. MDE is considering the following next steps:

	<p>Collaborate with practitioners and stakeholders to identify components of successful credit recovery programs.</p>
	<p>Create a legislative task force to review statutes and make recommendations to provide equitable access to high-quality credit recovery options.</p>
	<p>Work with the Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board, the Board of Teaching, and alternative programs to examine the policies and procedures designed to ensure licensed content area specialists are available to students in credit recovery.</p>

¹ MDE electronically administered a survey of credit recovery practices to 505 public schools in January 2019. In total, 250 individuals responded to the survey, representing approximately 50 percent of schools initially contacted.

² Seventeen school administrators and staff participated in interviews.