

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

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May 4, 2015

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Desmond K. Blackburn, Ph.D.
Chief School Performance and Accountability Officer

VIA: Robert W. Runcie
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: **CREDIT RECOVERY PROGRAM IN THE WORKFORCE SCHOOLS**

This correspondence comes in response to the concerns voiced during the January 27, 2015 School Board Workshop B.E.S.T. Blueprint presentation, which referenced the return of Apex Learning in the workforce schools. In the spring of 2014, the principals analyzed student success rates and programmatic concerns with the current Plato-Edmentum credit recovery platform in comparison to the previous Apex Learning platform. Their efforts resulted in the creation of an 8-page position paper requesting to return to the Apex Learning platform. Excerpts from their collective work have been extracted to respond to the questions that were posed during the workshop presentation.

Implementation of Credit Recovery Program in Workforce Schools:

To protect the fidelity of credit recovery programs, the Community Schools, developed and monitors standard procedures for the nine (9) schools. The schools include Atlantic Technical High School, Community Schools North, Community Schools South, Dave Thomas Education Center, Hallandale Adult Community Center and the Off Campus Learning Centers, McFatter Technical High School, Seagull Alternative High School, Sheridan Technical High School and Whiddon-Rogers Education Center. Standard procedures include the following:

- Training sessions for all teachers prior to program use, with follow-up refresher training sessions
- Consistent account settings and parameters for usage
- Certified, in-field teachers for each course and site coordinators for each location
- 30-hour minimum timeframe to complete a ½ credit
- Minimum mastery level of 70%
- Ongoing evaluation and reporting guidelines for student success rates and program usage

Credit Recovery Program in Workforce Schools

May 4, 2015

Page 2

Curriculum Implementation in Apex Learning

In addition to the standard operationing procedures, a rigorous curriculum was standardized across the workforce schools to insure that a credit earned through the Apex platform met the course frameworks as outlined in the Florida Department of Education course code and the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, now Florida Standards. Each course was organized into semesters, units, lessons, and activities. A typical semester of work consisted of 5-6 units, each with 5-6 lessons. A typical lesson comprised of numerous activities including study sheets, practice assignments, readings, journals, discussions, and computer and teacher scored assessments. Each of the Apex Learning courses provided a complete scope and sequence and comprehensive online content that included:

- Direct instruction tutorials
- Interactive self-check activities
- Computer-scored practice problems, quizzes, unit test and semester exams
- Student progress and participation reports
- Teacher-graded assignments

Each month, site-based administrators, with the support of an Apex Learning operation staff member, received and reviewed student and overall program progress data, which helped to navigate decisions and monitor the utilization of the program. The table below is a sample of the reports that were retrieved and analyzed.

WORKFORCE PROGRAMS	Broward Community Schools North	Broward Community Schools South	Thomas Education Center Workforce	Hallandale Adult Workforce	OCLC	Seagull Workforce	Whiddon Rogers Workforce	TOTALS
Allocated Seats	500	500	150	175	1000	100	175	2600
Available Seats	-55	-74	50	49	179	26	64	239
Enrolled Students	555	574	100	126	821	74	111	2361
Course Enrollments	572	588	152	149	1173	110	131	2875
Average Course Enrollments per Student	1.04	1.02	1.09	1.18	1.41	1.49	1.18	1.2
Course Enrollments Progressing	557	571	136	147	1080	103	111	2705
ACTIVE COURSE ENROLLMENTS BY SUBJECT AREA								
English	197	180	31	31	206	20	18	683
Math	188	204	36	45	220	32	17	742
Science	81	88	20	30	107	13	12	351
Social Studies	90	98	32	41	234	15	43	553
World Language	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	7
Electives	1	1	15	0	313	23	16	369
COURSE COMPLETIONS								
Enrollments Completed (1/2	64	66	125	56	858	54	38	1261
Average Days to Completion	52	65	143	178	119	105	78	105.71
Average Grade for progressing enrollments	83	83.15	83.7	81.8	83	83.8	78.6	82.44
COMPLETED BY SUBJECT AREA								
English	18	25	29	10	185	14	4	285
Math	17	17	39	20	120	18	8	239
Science	9	17	11	13	191	6	2	249
Social Studies	17	6	25	11	202	7	16	284
World Language	0	0	3	0	0	0	2	5
Electives	3	1	18	2	138	9	6	177

Curriculum Implementation in Plato-Edmentum

From the onset, schools have experienced multiple challenges in the Plato-Edmentum platform. While the standard operating procedures are consistent among the schools, the following items continue daily to be struggles within the program:

- **Curriculum** – Multiple staff members from the District’s Academics Division worked with Plato-Edmentum employees to align course content to the Florida Standards. The scope and sequence of the existing curriculum from course to course lack consistency and balance. In geometry semester I, students have 10 mastery assignments, 0 drop box activities, 0 threaded discussions, 3 unit tests and a final exam. In algebra I semester I, students have 72 mastery assignments, 0 drop box activities, 0 threaded discussions, 8 unit tests and a final exam.
- **Limited Curriculum and Technical Support** - When gaps within the programs are brought to the attention of the PLATO-Edmentum staff, they respond by seeking assistance from District staff in writing the curriculum. Subsequently, multiple staff members from Academics have provided ongoing assistance amending, rewriting and writing curriculum for courses. When technical issues occur, the company has limited staff to respond to schools’ needs. Moreover, technical assistance is not available after 7:00 p.m., which may have a deleterious impact on our evening classes.
- **Lacks Alternative Curriculum** - The same curriculum is provided for students taking the course as a first impulse class in the traditional high school and students taking the course in one of the credit recovery programs.
- **Management System** - The program requires an excessive number of steps to complete a task. Teachers spend an inordinate amount of time locking and unlocking assignments, quizzes and tests, setting and resetting assignments, quizzes and tests that students failed to meet mastery. The excessive teacher management limits teachers’ interaction with students, who by mere enrolment in a credit recovery program, necessitate additional support.
- **Reports** - The program has limited data reports necessary for progress monitoring. There are no comprehensive reports for student credit completion, time on task, completion hours, overall grade or enrolment or completion and withdrawal data. In order to get these data, school employees must spend excessive hours accessing various singular reports and manually counting indicators to develop a comprehensive report.

Student Success Rates

The following data reveal student success rates in the Apex Learning platform for school years 2011, 2012 and 2013:

- In 2010-11, 82% of students who enrolled in an Apex credit recovery course in workforce schools successfully completed the half-credit.
- In 2011-12, 97% of students who enrolled in an Apex credit recovery course in workforce schools successfully completed the half-credit.
- In 2012-13, 98% of students who enrolled in an Apex credit recovery course in workforce schools successfully completed the half-credit.

Credit Recovery Program in Workforce Schools

May 4, 2015

Page 4

In 2014, the first year of implementation of the Plato-Edmentum platform, 44% of students who enrolled in a credit recovery course in workforce schools successfully completed the half-credit. The significant decline in student success rates has been attributed to the daily struggles that continue to exist with the platform.

Next Steps

The credit recovery program in the workforce schools is designed to provide an alternative education to students who are not meeting success in the traditional school setting. The curriculum, instructional delivery, course pacing, and teaching methodology must be different than the students' previous school experiences. Our current model has placed an undue hardship on the credit recovery model in the workforce schools. Subsequently, we will return to the Apex Learning platform on a smaller scale in the workforce schools for the 2015 summer term and present the Board with an item for full implementation in the workforce schools only for the 2015-2016 school year. Additionally, we will commence an extensive search and procurement process to find another platform to meet the needs of all of our K-12 students.

For questions or additional information on the credit recovery program in the workforce schools, please contact **Dr. Desmond Blackburn, Chief School Performance and Accountability Officer at 754-321-3838.**

RWR/DKB/VSU:smr

cc: Senior Leadership Team
School Performance and Accountability Directors
Workforce Schools Principals