

We have designed each "White Paper" to explore a fundamental educational principle and key issues engaging the education community we serve. It is our goal to partner with our readers as they meet the challenges they face.



Student Review, Testing & Assessment
CastleLearning.com



626 Layport Drive, Suite 100
Sebastian, FL 32958
800-345-7606
Fax: 772-581-1066

Prepared by Bill Ingui
President and Retired Educator

Credit Recovery & Castle Learning Online

The challenges presented by students who are at-risk of failing or of becoming a dropout statistic can seem an insurmountable problem for schools. Former Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling, in a May 10, 2007, *Washington Post* interview, explained that "the data shows that half of the nation's dropouts come from a small group of largely urban 'dropout factories,' where graduation is a 50-50 shot or worse." In her effort to deal with the problem, she explained, "It's hard to believe such a pervasive problem has remained in the shadows for so long."

Credit recovery programs are being viewed by schools as one approach to these co-related problems of at-risk students and dropout rates. Students are given an opportunity to recover course credits from classes they have missed or failed. The goal of **credit recovery** is to improve attendance rates, preventing student dropout and increasing the chances for a student to graduate from high school. The programs are typically scheduled during the school day, sometimes after school, during twilight schools (evenings), or during the summer. Some programs meet at schools within the district and others have their own locations.

The means to achieving these goals often centers on **computer learning systems** and **web-based online systems** for delivering curriculum or augmenting direct teacher instruction. *Castle Learning Online* provides these schools a full range of course content, from grades 3-12, covering core areas of Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and English. An array of instantaneous reports can help gain insight into the students' weak areas which helps the teacher change the approach to teaching in order to improve by addressing weaknesses.

Credit recovery is central to a plan that our *Castle Learning Online* team has prepared and that we share at Staff Development sessions. The plan we recommend includes an adaptable variation on these features:

- A teacher or a "credit recovery committee" reviews the academic achievement of students. This can be drawn from current weekly use of *Castle Learning* and the resulting reports that show weaknesses and strengths.
- A pre-recovery test is given and reviewed to screen students. This allows a remedial program to be designed for a student to work alone or with students facing similar problems.
- Planned exercises or assignments, guided by focal-point weaknesses, draw on questions from specific content within units. These questions can emphasize a skill or understanding that needs further study. Students also have access to hints, reasons, and defined vocabulary with *Castle Learning*.
- A post-recovery test is used to determine whether students have met a new level of achievement.

Carleton Project, a private school with two out of three locations located on the campus of the University of Maine at Presque Isle, took an innovative approach to alternative education. The opportunity to complete high school is offered to students who have not been successful in traditional classroom settings. The approach is individualized and students can work on assignments with dedicated teachers and have the opportunity to set up their own assignments, completing them at a pace that is comfortable and rewarding. Students moving through **Carleton Project** have had outstanding results, where more than 90% of them have graduated with a high school diploma and most pursue postsecondary options. Founder Alan Morris firmly believes this can be attributed to good teachers and the use of *Castle Learning Online* by teachers and students alike to supplement all learning. "I like that students can be in control of their own learning with *Castle Learning Online*.....nobody watching over their shoulders. They can even set up their own tests when they're ready....very empowering."

This use of *Castle Learning Online* is **credit recovery** at its best. Preventing students from dropping out and giving them a chance to be productive citizens are some reasons that so many of us went into this profession.