

'Credit Recovery' Is Educational Fraud

By [Walt Gardner](#) on July 7, 2017 8:09 AM

It was inevitable that school districts with low graduation rates would find ways to cut corners to make themselves look better. But the Los Angeles Unified School District takes the cake for its credit recovery strategy ("[Schools are boosting graduation rates by offering 'credit recovery.' But what are students learning?](#)" *Los Angeles Times*, Jul. 2).

The LAUSD maintains that mastery of material matters more than time spent in the classroom. I totally agree. But if so, then why doesn't the district allow students to demonstrate their proficiency when they feel ready? Why keep students in class for the traditional school year?

The truth is that credit recovery as practiced shortchanges all stakeholders. The high school diploma these students receive is a worthless piece of paper. For example, how can a student pass biology without passing full lab requirements? Graduation rates will most certainly improve, but what about what students have actually learned?

Nevertheless, the fraud persists, not only in Los Angeles but in New York City as well. For example, allowing a student to "make up" the work missed after cutting class by spending a few days on online courses and no supervision by a qualified teacher at Brooklyn's Secondary School for Journalism is a sham ("[Bet that the latest grade-fixing scandal is just the tip of the iceberg](#)," *New York Post*, Jul. 5).

What is the solution? There is still continuation school, summer school or class repetition during the regular school year. I also wonder if algebra is the single course most responsible for students not graduating. For example, in California more than three out of four community college students cannot pass the math placement exam and are forced to take one or more semesters of remedial math. Most drop out before earning a degree.

Yet California persists in making algebra a requirement for high school graduation even though few will ever use it in everyday life. Making algebra a requirement is like making Latin a requirement because so many English words have Latin roots. I say it's time to track students in high school. For those who have no interest or aptitude for college, let them take a vocational curriculum. Give vocational education the respect it so richly deserves. Stop treating it as inferior to an academic curriculum. I'll bet graduation rates would soar, and students would be equipped to earn a solid income doing what they love to do the most.