

SUCCESS STORY



A credit recovery program helps Native American students graduate

Albuquerque Public Schools Indian Education Department



Pearson

The Challenge

The Native American population attending Albuquerque Public Schools is extremely diverse. The students represent 114 different tribes and speak many different languages. “In just the tribes that are here in New Mexico, there are seven different Native American language groups,” explained Jay Leonard, instructional manager, Indian Education Department (IED).

In addition, the group has a high mobility rate. “What happens, for example, is that a kid comes in to Albuquerque Public Schools from To’Hajiilee, a Navajo Nation community,” Leonard said. “He is here for part of a semester, and then he moves back home. And then he’ll come back in January for the second semester. And we have a lot of that going on throughout the year.”

Limited English language skills and high mobility rates are two factors that contribute to the low Native American graduation rate in Albuquerque, which was 49 percent in 2012. “Of all the demographic groups here, the Native Americans have the lowest graduation rates,” noted Leonard.

The Blended Learning Solution

IED wanted to implement a credit recovery solution that would help Native American students graduate. Some high schools in the district were having success with digital learning, so IED decided to test it in an afterschool program in the community of To’Hajiilee. Eight students benefited from the test program, which convinced IED to start a blended learning afterschool program in the district.

IED launched the credit recovery program in March 2013 using GradPoint®, a set of online courses and services now part of the Pearson Connexus™ suite of offerings. Title VII, Title VIII, and Johnson O’Malley funds covered the software licensing fees, teacher salaries, professional development fees, and other program costs.

The credit recovery program ran from 3:30–5:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the computer lab of the Career Enrichment Center, a centralized location that hosts several afterschool programs and provides busing to and from district high schools. Three content-area teachers—English, math, and social studies—and Leonard staffed each session to help students.

PROFILE

City/State

Albuquerque, New Mexico

School Type

Public school

District Enrollment

93,600 students

Native American Enrollment

6,337 students

The credit recovery program has grown since the initial session in the spring of 2013, which included four students. IED now holds classes in two locations and conducts a summer school session. Sessions typically have waiting lists.

The Results

The credit recovery program’s success rate—the percentage of participating students who earn credits in the program—increased from 75 percent in 2013 to 90 percent in 2015. Since the program started, 297 students have earned credits (see Figure 1).

The program’s success can be attributed to two factors. First, the online solution is flexible enough to meet the needs of the mobile student population. “I really appreciate that we’re not restricted by the regular semesters that the high schools use,” explained Leonard. “We can bring a student into our program in November and he can work through the end of December and start up again when we come back in January, even though the semester has ended.”

Additionally, the blended learning format allows students to work on their own, receiving personalized aid from their teachers if they encounter difficulties. According to Debbie Sarinanas, Algebra 1 and Math Strategies teacher, “many of these students don’t succeed in traditional classes because of absences, gaps in their learning, the teacher’s pace, or a lack of confidence. The beauty of blended learning is that if the kids don’t understand, they can stop and get assistance. They don’t have to waste any time, and they can move at their own pace.”

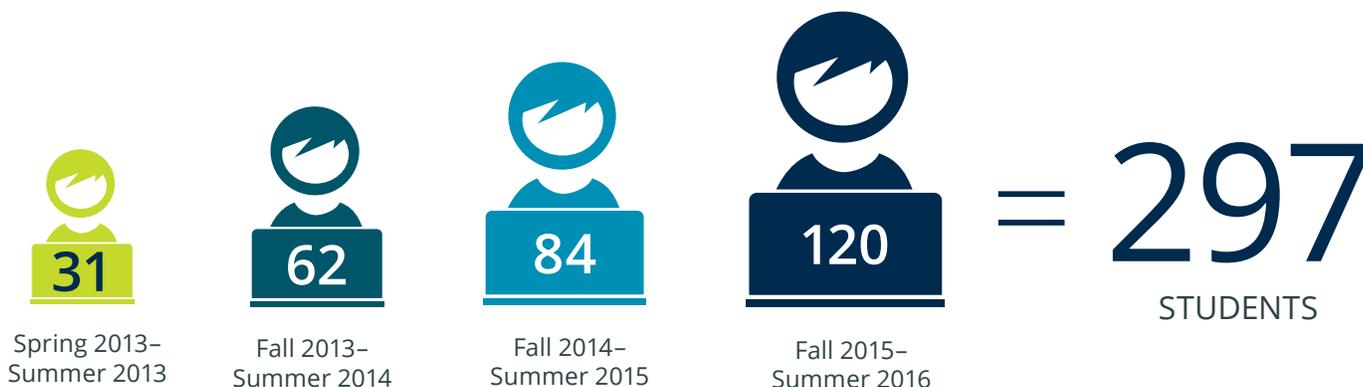
“I like online courses because they are at my own pace and it is easier to finish quickly.”

—Sierra Yazzie, Senior,
Highland High School

FIGURE 1

The Number of Native American Students Earning Credits

Credit Recovery Program, Albuquerque Public Schools IED



Tyler Malie, a senior at Ciebola High School, has thrived in the blended learning program. "I am shy, and I wouldn't ask my teacher for help when I had a question," he said, referring to his regular classes. In the afterschool program, he has no difficulty seeking help when he needs it, and he enjoys the freedom to work at his own speed.

Parents of students in the program are grateful that their children are using GradPoint because it helps them graduate. At the end of the 2015 summer session, Leonard received a text from a student's parent that said, "From me and [my son], thank you," along with a picture of the son's new diploma.

“Our program fills in the gaps. Students can work at their own pace and feel the thrill of their own success.”

—Margery Buckner, Native American Studies Teacher

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