

CREDIT FOR LEARNING



Sail Academy

New York City, New York

247

Average number of students served during the school year

100%*

Families with low incomes

**of students attend Title I schools*

Main funding sources:

- ▶ Foundation grants
- ▶ Corporate contributions
- ▶ U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs
- ▶ New York City Department of Youth & Community Development

Leveraging school partnerships to best serve students

Student-centered, active, and engaging learning experiences that build on young people's interests, while developing their skills and knowledge, are at the heart of high-quality afterschool programs. Young people of all ages can benefit from these experiences, however, adolescence is a critical time for exposure to these types of learning opportunities, when young people are discovering their interests and passions as they begin on their path toward adulthood.

Afterschool programs can provide older youth opportunities to find their inspiration and gain skills that will benefit them in and outside of the classroom while allowing them to earn school credits. Credit-for-learning programs in the afterschool space—which can range from students earning physical education credits through a local YMCA to taking part in a boat-building course for elective science credit—are a valuable resource that individualizes knowledge acquisition and complements school day lessons for middle and high school youth.

Overview

Sail Academy Chelsea, a youth development program that fosters interest in STEM and environmental science through boatbuilding, ocean literacy, and sailing curriculum, serves students in seven public high schools throughout New York City. Sail Academy's partnership with each school is central to its ability to best meet students' needs, which includes regular communication between the program and school-day staff and administration to keep up to date on Sail Academy students. Additionally, through this partnership Sail Academy Chelsea is able to provide opportunities for students to earn additional elective credits in math, science, and physical education.

A typical day for students

A typical day at the program varies depending on the student's grade level and the time of year. In the spring and fall, programming is on the water. After school, students head to the boathouse where they have a snack and get into groups. Then they set out on the river, developing basic sailing skills while exploring math concepts. An average day might include students learning to measure the speed of the current using an algebraic formula and going out onto the water to test their calculations. In the winter, students primarily work at their school sites on boatbuilding. Each day ends with an exit checklist to keep track of the content learned throughout the course. When students reach their second year, they

participate in more STEM and environmental science programming through Sail Academy's Ocean Literacy curriculum. Activities have involved monitoring oyster cages and building weather instruments. Based on their interests, 11th and 12th graders can specialize in areas such as racing, engine maintenance, and boatbuilding.

Outcomes

An evaluation of Sail Academy during the 2019-2020 school year found that 82 percent of 12th grade students surveyed agree that they are "better prepared to succeed in whatever [they] decide to do after high school." Eighty-seven percent of all students believe that they "have a better understanding of science concepts related to sailing and marine life." Overall, 98 percent of 9th grade students, 94 percent of 10th grade students, and 63 percent of 11th and 12th grade students earned at least one full credit in the 2019-20 school year. Forty-five percent of 11th and 12th grade students earned two or more credits.

Program characteristics

Sail Academy's school partnerships are essential in their ability to offer credit-bearing opportunities for youth. Formed out of the small school movement in New York City in the early 2000s, where the New York City Department of Education took large failing public high schools and broke them up into several new smaller schools of choice, the schools that Sail Academy partners with rely on nonprofit organizations to offer the enrichment opportunities for their students that they are unable to provide.

Sail Academy Chelsea's curriculum is designed to build on school-day lessons, focusing on enrichment and creating STEM identity. While Sail Academy does not grant the credit, they provide schools with curricula and hour logs for each student, enabling school department heads in the respective subject areas to determine if the student has met the requirements to earn credit. The program also looks to their partner schools to help identify and recruit students that would benefit from their programming, which is often not best suited for students who need to make up work or are in need of remedial classes.

Regular communication between partner schools and Sail Academy allows both entities to stay up to date on individual students' progress and needs, working together toward their shared goal of helping students thrive both in and out of the classroom. Sail Academy has found that these relationships are critical for student success, and because of this, the program only accepts students from their partner schools. To deepen partnerships and provide mutual accountability, Sail Academy establishes contracts with their partner schools, which outline expectations from each school and requires that a part of the program's budget is paid through the school's funding from the New York City Department of Education.

The need for credit-for-learning opportunities

Credit for learning expands educational opportunities for youth, where young people can explore their interests and delve deeper into subject matter outside of the classroom. These programs provide diverse learning experiences, promote student engagement, and prepare students for life after graduation.

Boosting motivation and engagement

When students are interested in what they are learning and have the opportunity to experience and develop a sense of agency, it can increase their engagement and motivation to learn. Credit for learning employs this student-centered learning approach, where learning is tailored to students' interests and needs, and students have ownership of their learning. This approach can be especially beneficial for older students, as school engagement has been found to decrease as students get older, or for youth who are disengaged from school.

Improving college and career readiness

Credit for learning provides youth the chance to engage in real-world learning experiences and learn about potential career paths while earning school credit. In these hands-on and applied learning contexts, students can develop skills that employers value, such as problem solving and collaboration, be mentored by and build connections with industry professionals, and complete internships or apprenticeships.

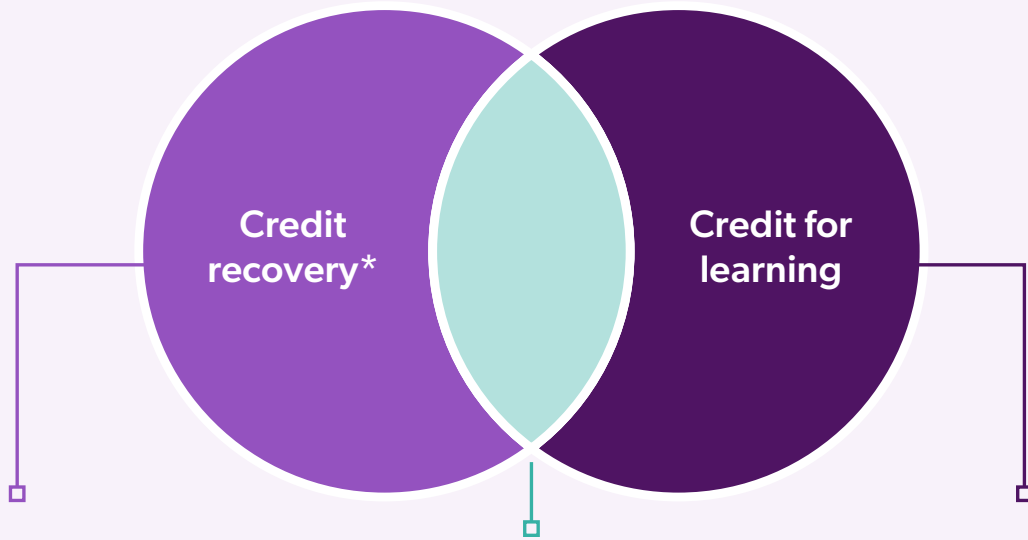
Addressing opportunity gaps

Research shows that students attending high-poverty schools too often lack access to the same learning opportunities as students attending low-poverty schools. Credit for learning can address equity issues present in the education system, broadening access to learning opportunities that schools may be unable to provide.

Read [Credit for Learning: Making Learning Outside of School Count](#) to learn more.

Credit recovery vs. Credit for learning

While the underlying intention of **credit recovery** and **credit for learning** differ from one another, there are overlapping strategies between the two credit earning opportunities.



- Intended for students who are **falling behind academically** or **at-risk of not graduating on time**.
- Provides opportunities to earn credits outside of the school day that count toward graduation requirements.
- Intended for students interested in **earning additional credits** toward graduation, or students looking to **further personalize their education or pursue an interest**.
- Students can **redo coursework in a class they have failed** or **retake the class** in an alternative manner, such as in summer school, during afterschool or weekend classes, or online.
- Can take place in afterschool and summer programs.
- Students can **earn credits for various activities and experiences outside of the classroom**, such as community service projects, internships or apprenticeships, independent studies, and student-led projects.

*U.S. Department of Education. (2018). Issue Brief: Credit Recovery. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/high-school/credit-recovery.pdf>

Program history

Sail Academy Chelsea started in 2008 when the founder, Bill Bahen, teamed up with a New York City math teaching fellow to create a program that merged math with boatbuilding and sailing. The program started at one school and has since expanded to seven public high schools throughout the city, partnering with schools serving a student body where at least 70 percent qualify for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Since 2008, student demographics at their original partner schools have shifted, resulting in a rise in students with higher incomes in their partner schools. Sail Academy Chelsea has identified new partner schools to continue their mission of providing programming to underserved youth.

Recommendations

for leveraging school partnerships to best serve students:

- ▶ Work on building and maintaining relationships with teachers and other school personnel. In starting these relationships, articulate what you can offer and how you can help support their students together. Emphasize how the partnership can be mutually beneficial.
- ▶ One way to solidify partnerships with schools is to establish a contract between your program and the school that outlines expectations from both parties. For example, determining that the school will help recruit students for the program, or the program will provide professional development.