COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR GOOD
RESEARCH BRIEF
MARCH 2026

Maryland districts' CCR support programming strategies are strong but varied.

Kayla Bill, Ditra Backup, Deborah Euzebio, & David Blazar // Maryland Equity Project

Maryland is striving to promote CCR, especially for students who are struggling academically.

Maryland is prioritizing college and career readiness (CCR) through its ongoing comprehensive education reform known as the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. In March 2025, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a new CCR standard with the goal of ensuring that, by the end of 10th grade, all students have "the skills and knowledge that enable [them] to be successful in entry-level credit-bearing courses or postsecondary education training at a State community college." The new standard also broadens the ways in which students can demonstrate CCR, including through their GPA, scores on assessments, and registered apprenticeships.[1]

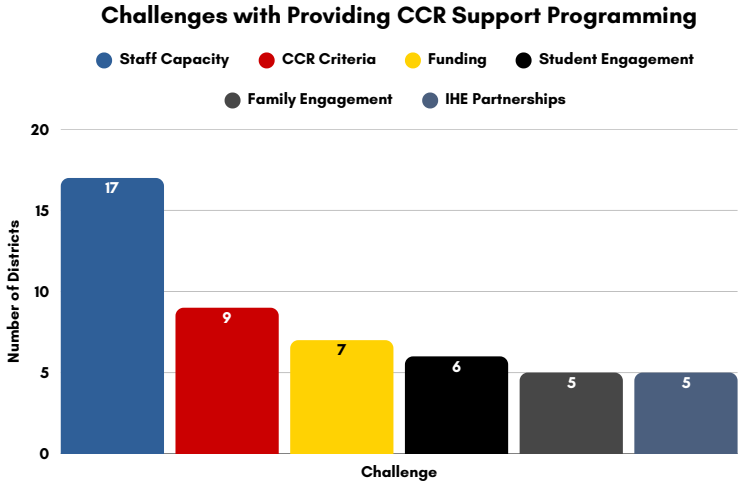
Academic literature indicates that high-quality educational experiences as a whole—including access to high-quality pre-K, tutoring, and expansive wraparound supports—are key to promoting CCR.[2] And these experiences are the foundation of the education system the Blueprint aims to create. But the Blueprint also assures additional CCR support programming for students up to and including 10th grade who are struggling to meet the state's new standard.[3] This brief explores the types of support programming Maryland's 24 school districts are offering and highlights strategies that we have identified as most promising, based on their alignment with academic literature.

Districts' CCR support programming is promising overall.

The CCR support programming offered by districts was generally promising because it aligned with the core components of CCR identified in the academic literature. This programming included:

- **Monitoring students' progress** toward CCR through formative assessments, grades, or other metrics[4]
- Developing **Individualized Learning Plans** (ILPs) with and for students[5]
- **Engaging with students' families** about their CCR status and how to promote CCR[6]
- Supporting student learning through **credit recovery programs**[7]

But offering this programming was not without challenges. Most districts struggled with staff capacity to implement these strategies. Several also described challenges related to implementing the new CCR criteria (e.g., explaining changes to families), funding for staff, communicating with families and encouraging them to "buy into" the importance of CCR, and building partnerships with institutes of higher education (IHEs) (which played an important role in course offerings).



Within support programming strategies, potential for success varies.

Districts' CCR support programming strategies were generally aligned with evidence from the academic literature, but this literature also highlights specific features of strategies that could enhance their likelihood of success. Promising features of progress monitoring, for example, include assessing students' progress on metrics aligned with state CCR standards, ensuring the reliability of progress metrics and their implementation, and

About this Brief. Our research team reviewed Maryland districts' 2024 Blueprint implementation plans, which were submitted to the Accountability and Implementation Board and are publicly available, to better understand the types of CCR support programming Maryland districts are offering for students up to and including 10th grade who are struggling to meet the state's new standard. Comprehensive findings from our analysis are detailed in this slide deck.

checking in about progress frequently.

Across all four CCR support programming strategies, there was great variation in the number of districts offering strategies that included these promising features. In other words, districts offered more or less promising versions of the types of support programming described above. The appendix table shows CCR support programming strategies, the promising features associated with them, and the number of districts engaging in each. Below, we highlight examples of districts engaging in strategies that offered some of these promising features.

Making the Most of Progress Monitoring

Two of the most promising—but least discussed—features for monitoring students' progress toward CCR included taking steps to ensure that metrics (and implementation of them) were (1) consistently and accurately measuring students' progress, and (2) checking in about progress on a regular basis. One encouraging example of ensuring the validity and reliability of progress metrics was Calvert County Public Schools' development of a guidebook that "describes processes and expectations for schools … to ensure consistent implementation of support and monitoring." Regarding the frequency of progress monitoring, Dorchester County Public Schools discussed "check[ing] in with students at least weekly" in an effort to monitor their grades, attendance, behavior, and progress.

Optimizing Individualized Learning Plans

While all districts described offering ILPs in some form, few described efforts to train staff about the ILP process or to provide them with dedicated time to engage in it. Baltimore City Public Schools was one of nine districts to discuss staff training on the ILP process, indicating that "professional development on [student learning plan] completion is offered at each systemic professional development day." Likewise, Queen Anne's County Public Schools was one of two districts that offered or was making plans to offer dedicated staff time for the ILP process. This district described a plan for two teachers at each school to "receive a course release per semester to be responsible for completing [ILPs] with students and staff."

Maximizing Opportunities for Family Engagement

Of the four promising features of family engagement around CCR support programming, providing information about CCR standards and postsecondary pathways and offering regular communication were the least commonly discussed by districts. St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) was one of 12 districts that discussed strategies for informing families about CCR standards and postsecondary pathways. SMCPS described hosting several "evening parent information sessions" throughout the year that provided information about and support with course registration and scheduling, Career and Technical Education programs, Dual Enrollment programs, and more. Furthermore, the district noted that the Southern Maryland College fair would provide evening sessions for parents about the college application process and financial aid.

Just four districts noted the frequency of their family engagement efforts. For example, Talbot County Public Schools described offering a minimum of two parent conferences per year—with opportunities for additional meetings if parents requested them—as well as "quarterly updates on success … provided through report cards and performance reports generated from local and state assessments."

Enhancing Credit Recovery Programs

Only a handful of districts discussed the promising features associated with credit recovery programs, but those that did offer potentially helpful models for others. For example, Baltimore City Public Schools discussed encouraging student attendance in credit recovery programs offered over the summer by allowing eligible students to receive a paycheck through Youth Works, the city's summer youth jobs program. The district described this effort as one that can "mitigate earnings [students] may lose by having to attend summer school." Frederick County Public Schools' strategies to enhance credit recovery programs included convening a stakeholder workgroup to "review credit recovery structures and processes … and make revisions to ensure equitable access for all high school students, especially those not CCR or not on track." This workgroup led to a new credit recovery structure that leverages courses offered at the county's virtual school and offers personalized support at all schools in the district.

Overall, these efforts are promising examples of how Maryland districts can work towards broader goals for CCR support programming in evidence-based ways.

Endnotes

[1] Maryland State Board of Education (2025). *College and career readiness (CCR) standard: Policy document.* Maryland State Board of Education.

[2] Conley, D. T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school.* Jossey-Bass.

Morningstar, M. E., Lombardi, A., & Test, D. (2018). Including college and career readiness within a multitiered system of supports in secondary schools. *AERA Open, 4*(1), 1-11.

[3] Maryland State Board of Education (2025)

[4] Fuchs, A., Radkowitsch, A., & Sommerhoff, D. (2025). Using learning progress monitoring to promote academic performance? A meta-analysis of the effectiveness. *Educational Research Review, 46.*

[5] Britton, T., & Spencer, G. (2020). Do students who fail to plan, plan to fail? Effects of individualized learning plans on postsecondary transitioning. *Teachers College Record, 122*(5), 1-36.

[6] Cuevas, S. (2020). From spectators to partners: The role of self-efficacy in Latina/o immigrant parents' engagement in students' post-secondary planning. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 22*(1), 271-287.

Morningstar et al. (2018)

[7] Viano, S., & Henry, G. T. (2024). Online credit recovery as an intervention for high school students who fail courses. *Educational Policy, 38*(1), 218-253.

[8] Fuchs et al. (2025)

Stecker, P. M., Lembke, E. S., & Foegen, A. (2008). Using progress-monitoring data to improve instructional decision making. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 52*(2), 48-58.

[9] Britton & Spencer (2020)

Fuchs et al. (2025)

Rumberger, R. W., Addis, H., Allensworth, E., Balfanz, R., Bruch, J., Dillon, E., Duardo, D., Dynarski, M., Furgeson, J., Jayanthi, M., Newman-Gonchar, R., Place, K., & Tuttle, C. (2017). *Preventing drop-out in secondary schools.* U.S. Department of Education.

Solberg, V. S., Phelps, L. A., Haakenson, K. A., Durham, J. F., & Timmons, J. (2012). The nature and use of individualized learning plans as a promising career intervention strategy. *Journal of Career Development, 39*(6), 500-514.

[10] Bryan, J., Griffin, D., Henry, L., & Gilfillan, B. (2019). Building culturally relevant school-family-community partnerships that promote college readiness and access (pp. 466-488). *Fundamentals of College Admission Counseling* (5th ed.).

Cuevas (2020)

Morningstar et al. (2018)

[11] Heinrich, C. J., Darling-Aduana, J., Good, A., & Cheng, H. (2019). A look inside online educational settings in high school: Promise and pitfalls for improving educational opportunities and outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal, 56*(6), 2147-2188.

Heppen, J. B., Sorenson, N., Allensworth, E., Walters, K., Rickles, J., Taylor, S. S., & Michelman, V. (2017). The struggle to pass algebra: Online vs. face-to-face credit recovery for at-risk urban students. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 10*(2), 272-296.

Levine, E., Johnson, J., Malave, J., & Santaniello, S. (2017). *Online courses for credit recovery in high schools: Effectiveness and promising practices.* Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

Rickles, J., Heppen, J. B., Allensworth, E., Sorenson, N., & Walters, K. (2018). Online credit recovery and the path to on-time high school graduation. *Educational Researcher, 47*(8), 481-491.

Appendix

Strategy	Promising Feature	# of Districts
Progress Monitoring [8] (n=24)	***Assesses progress on metrics aligned with Maryland CCR standards***	*22*
	Includes efforts to ensure validity and reliability of progress metrics and their implementation	*6*
	Occurs frequently	*5*
Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) [9] (n=24)	***Incorporates progress monitoring***	*24*
	Staff receives training about ILP process	*9*
	Staff has dedicated time to engage in ILP process	*2*
Engagement with Families [10] (n=24)	***Communicating about academic progress***	*20*
	Involving in the ILP process	*17*
	Providing information about CCR standards and postsecondary pathways	*12*
	Occurs regularly	*4*
Credit Recovery Programs [11] (n=13)	***In-person instruction and/or interactions***	*4*
	Supports to encourage attendance	*4*
	Individualized instruction	*3*
	Flexible schedule	*3*
	Progress check-ins	*1*