

THE CREATIVE EDUCATORS' GUIDE  
TO REACHING  
**EVERY STUDENT**

How to use technology to address all learning styles



**WE are TEACHERS**

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# Dear Educators,

We know how difficult it can be to reach all of your students. We also know how challenging it can be when students fall behind in their studies. It can seem nearly impossible to get them back on track with their classmates. There are solutions, though!

In this quick guide, you'll find creative ideas and resources for reaching all of your students, no matter what the challenge. From students who lack motivation to those who are at risk of not graduating, there are ways to inspire every last one of them.

The truth is all students learn at different speeds and in various ways. What works really well for one student might not work at all for the next. This is where technology and customized learning can really make a difference.

We will show you how to reach even the most at-risk student in this Creative Educators' Quick Guide, sponsored by [Odysseyware](#). It will give you the tools and resources you need to really make a difference!

To download additional copies of this guide or to share with friends, [weareteachers.com/reachingeverystudentguide](http://weareteachers.com/reachingeverystudentguide).



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# HOW TO REACH THE UNREACHABLE: 3 TEACHERS SHARE THEIR TRUE STORIES



**N**ot all students progress at the same pace. The best teachers not only recognize this but also embrace the challenge.

Tailoring instruction to meet the individual needs of students takes time. And for those at risk of dropping out of school or who have experienced multiple interruptions in their studies, it may take some added creativity to figure out how to engage them. Three inspiring teachers who have excelled at working with hard-to-reach students talk about how they got those students back on the path to success.

**Jeff Knight**  
Mary Dickerson Juvenile Justice Center  
Camdenton, Missouri

On any given day, there are up to a dozen students ages 12 to 17 in Jeff Knight's classroom. Some can only read at a first grade level; others at a college level; some are doing trigonometry, while others are struggling with basic math concepts. Not only is the wide range of abilities difficult to accommodate, the environment is also a tough one for learning.

"My kids don't want to be here," says Knight, who has worked at a juvenile deten-

tion facility in Camdenton, Missouri, for nine years. The teens have been in trouble, and had to give up their cell phones. Immediately after being placed in the facility, they must start attending class. "They are not thinking about schoolwork," says Knight.

**"It's about the relationships."**

### **Learning the Rules**

On the first day, Knight tells kids: "This is your free pass day. Do what you can. Tomorrow we're going to buckle down and get to work." He knows he must build a rapport and trust. "This job has been what teaching should be about. It's about the relationships," says Knight. "My

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kids are obviously in circumstances that some people just don't understand."

His students are waiting for their cases to be adjudicated in court. Some are first-time offenders; others have become familiar faces. They may be in the facility for one day or six months. On average, Knight has them in his classroom for about a week.

Knight works hard to make connections with students. No matter what the length of their stay, Knight is committed to helping them continue their education. He focuses on looking beyond the stereotypes and concentrating on their strengths.

### Finding a Routine

Working with youth in detention, Knight says he tries to provide a sense of normalcy, a regular routine and a productive learning space. Instruction focuses on four core areas: English, history, science and math. Because of the wide range of abilities, Knight talks with students and develops lessons for each individual student. His classroom contains a variety of curriculum materials, a computer and access to an online curriculum.

When Knight started, he worked from binders filled with lessons divided by subject and level. He'd hand students a folder of work that matched their grade. Now, he uses a digital curriculum, Odysseyware, to customize lessons for each student. He likes this program because you can skip or bypass sections so students start assignments at the appropriate level.

### Taking Success Home

Because the program is an online credit-recovery curriculum and aligned with the district standards, students can return to their traditional schools after a few days at the detention center and receive credit for their work. Knight says the system is ideal for his

situation because it is flexible and allows students at different grade and ability levels to work independently.

"This has really opened up a more structured direction for each individual student," says Knight. "If they are pretty sharp and moving at a rapid pace, they can complete a semester's worth of work in half the time."

### Kalli Willson

Cedarcrest High School  
Duvall, Washington

In her 10th grade biology class outside of Seattle, Kalli Willson gets both A students and those who need extra support just to pass. Passing the biology exam is a high school requirement, so Willson needs to reach each and every student. This can be a challenge in her general education class, which typically



**"Each class has its own personality and way of doing things."**

has 30 to 32 pupils, and not all students enter with the background knowledge necessary to succeed.

While there is "no magic to it," says Willson, there are some strategies that she's found over the years work

best to motivate her students. It starts with getting to know each student at the beginning of the year. Willson hands out a personalized questionnaire to find out what they have been successful in and why, in addition to what their situation is at home and what resources they have available.

### Strategies for Better Learning

Willson also asks students to tell her, confidentially, whom they want to sit near and why. When grouping students for labs, she tries to mix the ability levels of the students so they can help and learn from one another.

"I've had a number of interesting and eye-opening things that I learn," says Willson. "Being able to know a little bit more about the students helps guide how I group them. Because I listen to them and

when one student didn't want to sit next to another because of hygiene issues, Willson followed up and learned that the student was between housing situations and didn't have regular access to a shower.

### Asking Questions

Whenever she has a concern about a student who is struggling or acting out, Willson has learned not to point a finger but to approach them in a compassionate way and ask: "Is there something that I can help you with?" or "What would you like me to do to help you?"

To give students the incentive to work hard, she gives small rewards to her often sleep-deprived, busy teenagers. After the students are engaged and have completed a task, Willson sometimes offers downtime to check their phones, have a snack or rest a bit. She also offers flexibility with homework deadlines, which she says gives students ownership and promotes cooperation.

"Each class has its own personality and way of doing things," says Willson, who tries to adjust to their needs. "By the end of the year, we are a community."

The bottom line to motivate her class: "Care about the kids," says Willson. "Kids know which teacher cares and which teacher doesn't. Be concerned about your students academically and otherwise. Be willing to treat them with an understanding and a gentleness that they may not get at home."

### Sharon Chambers

Garza County Juvenile  
Detention Center  
Lubbock, Texas

Employed by the Post Independent School District in Texas, Sharon Chambers works in the Garza County Juvenile Detention Center with youths (elementary, middle and high

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school students), many with limited English-language skills.

Chambers teaches 45-minute blocks of electives—music, art, business, health and speech—to students ages 10 to 21, while they complete their sentences. On average, Chambers works with students for nine months, but their stays can be anywhere from one month to two years.

### Personalizing Learning

Keeping up on their progress in school is an incentive, says Chambers. Once students realize Chambers' classroom is a credit-recovery classroom, "they are off and running," eager to complete the elective work to help them advance

dents with various learning styles to meet their needs.

Last year, one of Chambers' students earned so many credits that he returned to high school as a senior and plans to enroll in community college—something he had not thought possible. "The program is giving these kids a little bit of hope that they didn't have before," she says. "If you are really trying, then there is no way to fail."

### Help From Peers

Tailored instruction has been a successful approach in Chambers' classroom. When students are working on the same subject, she will have them sit next to each other for



"The program is giving these kids **a little bit of hope** that they didn't have before."

toward a diploma.

She offers an individualized, online curriculum that can translate the material into a different language and read aloud passages. Other students do better with workbooks and pencils alongside the computers, adds Chambers. Providing optional materials is key to connecting with at-risk stu-

peer tutoring or to help each other out.

"They enjoy coming to my room. We had more students pass the end-of-school-year test. I think they are getting more of what they need," Chamber says. "They are not repeating what they already know. They are learning what they need to be able to pass the test. It's very individualized." ■

## 4 Proven Ideas to Motivate Students



### 1. Lighten the mood.

Music is important to kids. So when Jeff Knight sees kids doing a good job, he rewards them by letting them pick a radio station to listen to in the background during class. Or if they need a break from their individual work on computers, sometimes the class does puzzle activities to have fun together.

### 2. Set reachable goals.

A caring teacher can help students, particularly those who are at risk, set realistic and attainable goals for school and beyond. Having a clear path and milestones to achieve along the way can help motivate students to succeed.

### 3. Connect with students' interests.

"I think building relationships is important in all aspects of life," says Knight. "I try to figure out what students like and start a conversation about that, or relate it to a lesson."

### 4. Engage with the broader community.

Create opportunities for students to work as a team, contribute what they learn for a purpose and receive positive recognition for their accomplishments. For students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, a feeling of pride and belonging may be especially important for success.

# CREDIT RECOVERY 101

## 10 FAQs TO HELP YOUR SCHOOL



**C**redit recovery can include a variety of strategies and programs. However, all are aimed at helping high school students who have failed a class redo course work in an alternative way and earn academic credit. We asked Kay Davenport, president of the National Alternative Education Association and principal at Smyrna West Alternative School in Smyrna, Tennessee, to address some common questions about the topic.

**Q: Who is credit recovery designed to help?**

**A:** It is a way for students who are lacking credit—no matter what the reason—to catch up and graduate. It allows them to complete schoolwork at their own pace. In our setting, it is available to high school

“Technology offers some of **the best opportunities yet** for delivering instruction and **engaging students in authentic learning.**”

students in all grades. Sometimes students may know the material but have had attendance issues. Others may have just been overwhelmed one semester and fallen behind. Credit recovery can also be used to accelerate progress toward early graduation.

**Q: How does it work as a dropout-prevention strategy?**

**A:** If students get too far

behind, they can feel overwhelmed with the prospect of retaking the same courses or repeating grades. This is a way of saying, “You can do this,” and for students to regain their status and continue. It prevents a short mishap from deterring them from graduation. On the other hand, students may have external pressures, such as providing for a family, and in those cases acceleration provides the only alternative to

dropping out. Often the course work through credit-recovery courses is presented differently than the student has seen it presented in the past and can be more engaging.

**Q: When and where can credit-recovery programs take place?**

**A:** During school, after school, in the summer—in or out of the school building. Some credit recovery is designed for

## CREDIT RECOVERY 101



students who are still in high school, while the county or district will offer other adult education programs. Many programs are computer-based so that students can complete coursework on their own.

**Q: Who can teach or administer credit-recovery programs?**

**A:** Most of the time, we want students to be under an accredited source. If a course is not within the district, students have to come in to take a comprehensive test after they have completed the courses.

**Q: Are there extra fees involved for students in credit recovery?**

**A:** In most cases, the district picks up the cost. But for those getting credits to graduate early, there may be a cost.

**Q: How has credit recovery changed in recent years with technology?**

**A:** Technology offers some of the best opportunities yet for delivering instruction and engaging students in authentic

“It gives students a second chance ... The statistics are clear: **If you have a high school diploma, you will have so many advantages.**”

learning. Computer-based credit recovery can include videos and adapt to students' different learning styles. This can really help students and teachers. Instead of taking an entire course again, students can pretest to pinpoint the skills that are missing and get individualized lessons to address those gaps. In most cases, a blended approach is best: Students work online and also have an adult to supplement and provide supervision. Nothing takes the place of human interaction, especially with education, where kids thrive on attention.

**Q: How successful are programs in getting students to complete a diploma?**

**A:** Success totally depends on the student's attitude, motivation and the support that they get. It also helps to have someone monitor their work and cheer them on.

**Q: Is all credit recovery online?**

**A:** No. There are many ways to use credit-recovery courses. Some teachers prepare folders with material for students to make up work. They may use contracts where students and

parents commit to putting in more effort to earning the credit that was not completed. But students today are very comfortable with technology, and computer-based credit recovery is expanding.

**Q: How do programs ensure that credit recovery offers the same quality instruction students get in the classroom—and also that it results in the same quality work from students?**

**A:** It is very important for states and districts to choose software that is proven to align to the district's standards and that assessments represent students' work and are aligned to standards as well.

**Q: Why is credit recovery expanding?**

**A:** It gives students a second chance. I don't think anyone would say that they don't want to see every person in America have a diploma. The statistics are clear: If you have a high school diploma, you will have so many advantages. ■

# TOP 10 DIGITAL TOOLS TO HELP STRUGGLING STUDENTS



When it comes to advancing education, especially for students who are struggling, digital tools can help by leaps and bounds. Matt Renwick is an elementary school principal in Wisconsin who also runs a website about literacy, leadership and technology. (You can learn more on his website at [mattrenwick.com](http://mattrenwick.com).) He recently sat down with us to recommend digital tools that schools can implement easily and without a lot of time or money.

Renwick believes in looking at technology with a critical eye. He also encourages schools to look at all their options and figure out how to best integrate them for their specific needs.

"Technology is great," he says, "and we have some great tools, but we need to look at how we use them. Technology doesn't replace teachers. The relationships between the teacher and the students have to come first."

Want easy ideas for doing this? Here are 10 examples of Renwick's favorite tools and why they work so well for high school students.

**1 Google Maps**  
With this free online tool, students can explore the world virtually. Geography just became a lot more engaging.

**2 Skype**  
Want to talk to a scientist in Alaska? Or chat with another classroom in Turkey? These things are possible with the ease and magic of Skype, making the learning environment more authentic and flexible than ever.

**3 Game-based learning**  
For all ages, learning through play is an effective tool. "There is research that says kids who use video games can read six levels above their average level," Renwick says. He adds that games can be especially good to try with students who aren't motivated by school.

**4 Smartphones**  
With thousands of apps at our fingertips, smartphones are really opening doors when it comes to mixing technology with learning. Want to study the constellations or practice

hard division? There's an app for that. Renwick believes moderation is the key, though. "You have these mini-computers in your pockets, but you don't need to pull them out all the time," he says.

**5 Credit-recovery programs**  
Let's face it, not all students are on the traditional path. Every year, students can experience an interruption in their studies due to illness, detention, moves or other unexpected events. Credit recovery offers a lifeline for students who are trying to get back on track for graduation.

**6 Digital audio books**  
Anything that can get kids reading is a good thing. Digital audio books are an excellent way for students to stay engaged, especially in subjects that they struggle with. Dictation software is also a handy tool.

**7 YouTube**  
This online video powerhouse is a goldmine for great content. We've found valuable

science content, including Talk Nerdy to Me and The Brain Scoop from the Field Museum in Chicago.

**8 Facebook**  
This social media tool offers a lot more than being "friends" with people you used to know in high school. It's also a great resource for connecting with educational sites, fellow teachers and even hosting your own private group that you can connect and share ideas with.

**9 Digital portfolios**  
This can be a wonderful and exciting way for students to share their work. It really gives them a sense of pride to have it all gathered in one place. Check out Renwick's website section about digital portfolios and how to make them work for you.

**10 Google Drive**  
It seems like everyone is using this tool these days, and for good reason. It's excellent for sharing documents, files, etc. You can have a document open and edit it while 10 others are looking on simultaneously and remotely. ■

# TECH RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS

Take a look at these excellent resources to help get your school to the next level.

## WEBINARS:

Enjoy [on-demand webinars](#) on subjects like:

- Behavior screening
- Building community
- Deep learning in a digital era
- Customized learning
- Diverse learning needs



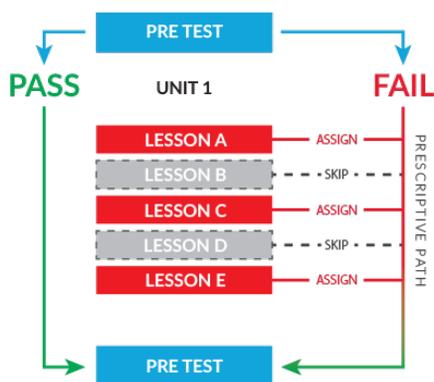
## TRANSFORM YOUR SCHOOL:

Get information on how you can transform teaching and learning in your school with [innovative strategies](#) that leverage technology.



## CREDIT-RECOVERY RESOURCES:

Discover the unique [CRX Mode](#) from Odysseyware and how it can help your school assist students who need a little extra help.



## BLENDED LEARNING SOLUTIONS:

[Watch a video](#) that shows why this approach to blended learning is different. It includes benefits like:

- Alignment and customization
- Real-time assessment
- Teacher authoring tool



## TECH BLOG:

Get the latest and greatest resources and information about technology in schools from the [Odysseware blog](#).



## COURSE CATALOG:

Learn more about courses available through Odysseyware at the [Course Catalog](#) page, where you can filter by grade or by subject. Here are just a few of the featured areas you'll find:

- History
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- Blended learning
- Mathematics
- Information technology
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## PATH TO GRADUATION 6 WAYS TO ENSURE SUCCESS FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

### EMBRACE KNOWLEDGE

**“THE BEAUTIFUL THING ABOUT LEARNING IS THAT NO ONE CAN TAKE IT AWAY FROM YOU.”**

-BB KING

### PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

**“AN INVESTMENT IN KNOWLEDGE PAYS THE BEST INTEREST.”**

-BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

### READ AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

**“THE MORE THAT YOU READ, THE MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW. THE MORE THAT YOU LEARN, THE MORE PLACES YOU’LL GO.”**

-DR. SEUSS

### CONQUER CHALLENGES

**“YOU MAY ENCOUNTER MANY DEFEATS, BUT YOU MUST NOT BE DEFEATED.”**

-MAYA ANGELOU

### KEEP GOING

**“IF YOU QUIT ONCE, IT BECOMES A HABIT. DON’T QUIT.”**

-MICHAEL JORDAN

### DREAM BIG

**“EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”**

-NELSON MANDELA

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