

**MEMORANDUM**

May 29, 2020

TO: Courtney Busby  
Officer, Special Populations

FROM: Allison E. Matney, Ed.D.  
Officer, Research and Accountability

SUBJECT: **APEX LEARNING REPORT, 2018–2019**

The Apex Learning Report for 2018–2019 provides information on the utilization and impact of online courses, specifically Apex Learning courses, among secondary students. Apex Learning provides online courses for students in grades 7–12, with courses for credit recovery, original credit, including Advanced Placement (AP), and dual credit courses. This report includes online course enrollment and completion rates of students in general and among special student populations for the past two school years.

Key findings include:

- There was a 23 percent decrease in total online course enrollment from 11,261 in 2017–2018 to 8,615 in 2018–2019. A similar decreasing trend was observed in total online course completion from 11,247 in 2017–2018 to 8,610 in 2018–2019. The largest decline observed was with online course providers outside the district (e.g., Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, etc.). Among school offices, the West Office showed the most noticeable decrease in Apex Learning enrollment (N=773); 96 percent was due to the decline observed at Lamar HS (N=742).
- There was a 16 percentage point increase in the proportion of completed courses taken through Apex Learning, compared to other online learning providers. In 2017–2018, 66 percent of all online courses were provided by Apex Learning; in 2018–2019, 82 percent of all online courses were taken through Apex Learning.
- Contrary to the original intent of the Apex program as a credit recovery initiative, majority of the completed online courses taken during the two school years included in this report were for original credit purposes. In 2017–2018, 62 percent of all online courses were taken for original credit; this increased to 77 percent in 2018–2019.
- From 2017–2018 to 2018–2019, online course enrollment declined among the at-risk and gifted and talented students in the district. However, there was a six percent increase in enrollment among English Learners (ELs).

Further distribution of this report is at your discretion. Should you have any further questions, please contact me at 713-556-6700.



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Attachment

cc: Yolanda Rodriguez Demetra Walker Felicia Adams Maria Bonilla



# RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

**APEX LEARNING REPORT,  
2018–2019**



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# Apex Learning Report, 2018–2019

## Executive Summary

### Program Description

Apex Learning was first introduced to the Houston Independent School District (HISD) in 2010 through the Apex Credit Recovery Initiative to provide alternative means of instruction for senior high school students to recover or complete credit requirements needed for graduation. Over the past ten years, the online curriculum offerings expanded and added courses for students in grades 7–12, with courses for credit recovery, original credit, including Advanced Placement (AP), and dual credit courses. As of the 2018–2019 school year, Apex Learning was available to students in 39 high school and combined-level campuses, with fewer courses offered to middle schools compared to previous school years.

The purpose of this report is to provide program administrators and district leaders with information on the utilization and impact of online courses, specifically Apex Learning courses, among secondary students in 2017–2018 and in 2018–2019. This report includes online course enrollment and completion rates of students in general and among special student populations.

### Highlights

- There was a 23 percent decrease in total online course enrollment from 11,261 in 2017–2018 to 8,615 in 2018–2019. A similar decreasing trend was observed in total online course completion from 11,247 in 2017–2018 to 8,610 in 2018–2019. The largest decline observed was with online course providers outside the district (e.g., Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, etc.). Among school offices, the West Office showed the most noticeable decrease in Apex Learning enrollment (N=773); 96 percent was due to the decline observed at Lamar HS (N=742).
- There was a 16 percentage point increase in the proportion of completed courses taken through Apex Learning, compared to other online learning providers. In 2017–2018, 66 percent of all online courses were provided by Apex Learning; in 2018–2019, 82 percent of all online courses were taken through Apex Learning.
- Contrary to the original intent of the Apex program as a credit recovery initiative, majority of the completed online courses taken during the two school years included in this report were for original credit purposes. In 2017–2018, 62 percent of all online courses were taken for original credit; this increased to 77 percent in 2018–2019.
- From 2017–2018 to 2018–2019, online course enrollment declined among the at-risk and gifted and talented students in the district. However, there was a six percent increase in enrollment among English Learners (ELs).

### Recommendations

- Apex Learning was introduced to the district to address graduation and dropout rates almost a decade ago. Given the continued decreasing trend of online course enrollment in the district, future research should look at whether online learning is still making the desired impact. Program administrators could also request that Research investigate whether these trends are district specific or if it is also observable in other school communities. If online learning for credit recovery is thriving in other communities, learning how they have been able to sustain their program might benefit HISD.

- There was a notable decline in Apex Learning enrollment at a particular campus and school office in the recent school years. Program administrators may want to investigate whether that decline was an isolated dip in numbers due to a one-time program or faculty change on the campus or if the campus has decided on a long-term change.
- With more students taking online courses for original credit purposes, and fewer taking them for credit recovery, program administrators may consider reviewing how best to promote online courses so that more students can benefit from this resource.

## Introduction

In January 2010, as part of the Houston Independent School District's (HISD) strategic plan of reducing the dropout rate and improving the graduation rate, it launched the Apex Credit Recovery Initiative. The initiative placed Apex Learning software into high school computer labs, which offered a digital curriculum with individualized instruction to address students' specific learning needs. This provided students who needed to complete their credit requirements for graduation an alternative method of meeting those requirements outside of the traditional classroom instruction. The first semester of the Apex Credit Recovery Initiative offered Apex Learning courses to all high school students while targeting senior high school students who required credit recovery courses in order to meet graduation requirements (HISD Research and Accountability, 2011). In the following years, course offerings expanded to include middle school courses.

By the 2018–2019 school year, Apex Learning has become the largest provider of secondary online curriculum in the Houston Independent School District (HISD). For the past several years, Apex Learning has offered students in grades 7–12 online courses for credit recovery and original credit, including Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses. In the 2018–2019 school year, program administration decided to offer fewer courses to middle schools.

The purpose of this report is to provide program administrators and district leaders with information on the utilization and impact of online courses, specifically Apex Learning courses, among secondary students in 2017–2018 and in 2018–2019. This report includes online course enrollment and completion rates of students district wide and among special student populations.

## Methods

### Data Collection and Analysis

- Online course enrollment and completions were drawn from Chancery and saved as Historical Grades files for the corresponding year. Courses completed during the academic year and the following summer are included in the counts of courses. Apex Learning courses include those designated as Apex (Apex Learning) and Apex-IS (Apex Learning Instructor Supplemented).
- Courses for original credit, credit recovery, and dual credit were counted using local course names from Chancery. AP courses were counted using state numbers that began with "A" from Chancery.
- Graduates are defined as the count and percentage of students who graduate from any HISD high school at some time during the school year. The total for each respective year includes summer graduates, all students in grade 12 who graduated, graduates from other grades, and students served by special education who graduate. This report does not include the four-year longitudinal graduation for the percentages of students from a class of students beginning in ninth grade who graduate, remain enrolled, and receive a Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE).
- STAAR/EOC retesters were identified through an indicator on the EOC file for the given year. Students marked with an "R" under the indicator "First\_Time\_Tester\_Retester\_Info" were considered retesters for that test administration.

### Data Limitations

In some cases, duplicate course listings were found in the list of online course completions. Duplicates were identified as observations in which the student, course, and final grade were entered more than once. Duplicates may have occurred if the system automatically documented course completions and the completions were also manually entered at the school level. Duplicate listings were excluded from the analysis by selecting the entry that had the highest final grade percentage.

Numbers reported for the 2017–2018 school year on this report vary slightly from the numbers shared in the previous year’s report after clarifications were provided on the definition of “completed courses.” A course is considered complete when the “Final Grade” indicator on the Historical Grades file is marked as “1”; in previous reports, a course was considered complete if the “Final Grade” and the “show on transcript” indicators were both marked as “1.”

Unless otherwise specified, information reported as “Apex Learning” combines Apex and Apex-Instructor Supported (Apex-IS) data.

## Results

**What was the course enrollment and completion rates in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 by provider and purpose? Of all the Original Credit courses completed, how many were Advanced Placement (AP) courses?**

- **Table 1a** and **Table 1b (p. 5)** show the breakdown of online course enrollment and completion, respectively, by online provider. There was a 23% decrease in total online course enrollment from 11,261 in 2017–2018 to 8,615 in 2018–2019. A similar decreasing trend was observed in total online course completion from 11,247 in 2017–2018 to 8,610 in 2018–2019. Online course enrollment is recorded in Chancery when a student is enrolled in a course during the academic year and the following summer. A course is considered “complete” when a Final Grade is entered in Chancery.
- The largest decline in enrollment and completion was among the providers grouped together as “Other Providers.” The difference in online enrollment under these providers (N=1,450) is more than half (55%) the total difference across all providers (N=2,646) between 2017–2018 and 2018–2019.
- Apex Learning online course enrollment declined by nine percent between 2017–2018 (N=8,036) and 2018–2019 (N=7,291).

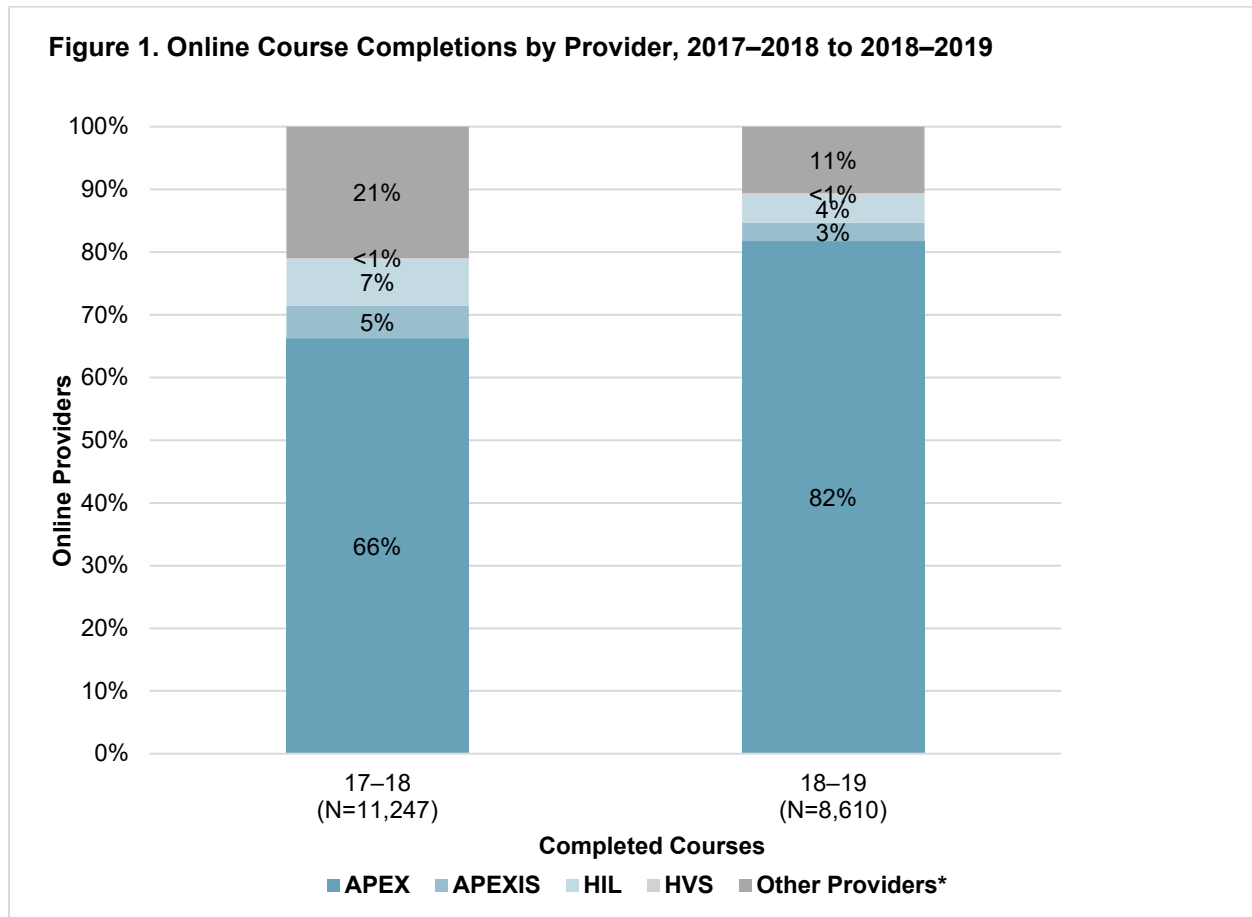
Provider	2017–2018		2018–2019	
	N	%	N	%
Apex	7,450	66%	7,039	82%
Apex-IS	586	5%	252	3%
HIL	838	7%	372	4%
HVS	19	<1%	34	<1%
Other Providers*	2,368	21%	918	11%
<b>Total Online Course Enrollment</b>	<b>11,261</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,615</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Includes Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, Texas Tech Distance Learning Program (Texas TechD), Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN StU), University of Texas (UT DL), and other online providers.

Table 1b. Online Course Completion by Provider				
Provider	2017–2018		2018–2019	
	N	%	N	%
Apex	7,449	66%	7,039	82%
Apex-IS	586	5%	252	3%
HIL	834	7%	370	4%
HVS	19	<1%	34	<1%
Other Providers*	2,359	21%	915	11%
<b>Total Online Course Completion</b>	<b>11,247</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,610</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Includes Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, Texas Tech Distance Learning Program (Texas TechD), Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN StU), University of Texas (UT DL), and other online providers.

- **Figure 1** shows the proportion of completed online courses, by Apex, Apex-IS, or other providers, from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019. Most of online courses during both school years were completed through Apex Learning (66% and 82%, respectively).



Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Includes Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, Texas Tech Distance Learning Program (Texas TechD), Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN StU), University of Texas (UT DL), and other online providers.

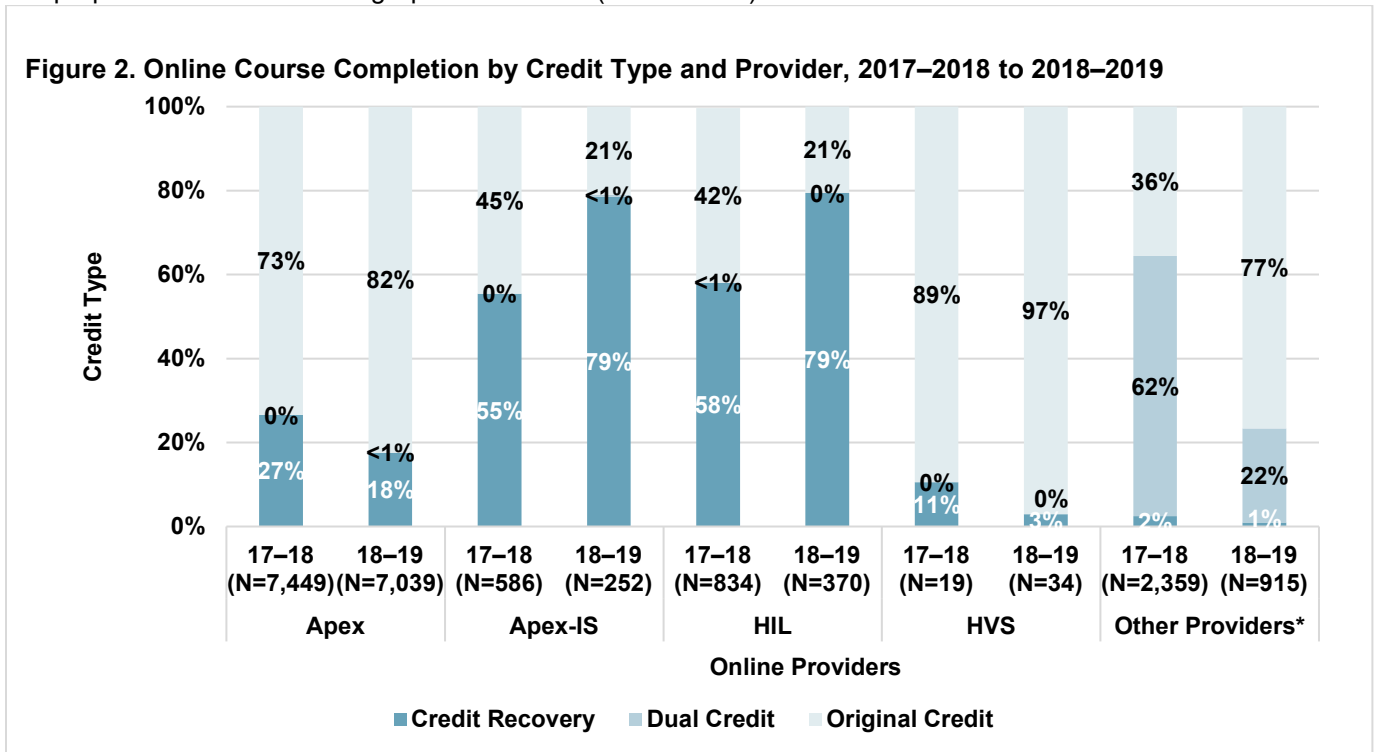


- **Table 2** shows the number of completed online courses disaggregated by credit types and provider type. In both 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, students completed Apex or Apex-IS courses mainly for original credit, while students utilize Other Providers primarily for dual credit courses.
- Between 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, there was a 39 percent decrease in students completing online courses for credit recovery purposes, an 86 percent decrease in students completing dual credit courses, but only a four percent decrease in students completing online courses for original credit purposes.

Table 2. Online Course Completion by Credit Type and Provider												
	Apex		Apex-IS		HIL		HVS		Other Providers*		Total Completed Courses	
	17–18	18–19	17–18	18–19	17–18	18–19	17–18	18–19	17–18	18–19	17–18	18–19
<b>Credit Recovery</b>	1,976	1,238	325	198	484	294	2	1	58	9	2,845	1,740
<b>Dual Credit</b>	0	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	1,462	205	1,465	208
<b>Original Credit</b>	5,473	5,799	261	53	347	76	17	33	839	701	6,937	6,662
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,449</b>	<b>7,039</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2,359</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>11,247</b>	<b>8,610</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Includes Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, Texas Tech Distance Learning Program (Texas TechD), Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN StU), University of Texas (UT DL), and other online providers.

- **Figure 2** shows the proportion of completed online courses by credit type, across providers. Although the proportion of Apex courses for credit recovery fell by nine percentage points (27% to 18%) this proportion increased among Apex-IS courses (55% to 79%).



Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Includes Aventa, Houston Community College (HCC), Penn Foster, Texas Tech Distance Learning Program (Texas TechD), Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN StU), University of Texas (UT DL), and other online providers.

- **Table 3** summarizes the number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes among courses completed online for original credit purposes in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. AP courses may only be taken for original credit and accounted for less than one percent of all completed original credit courses taken online during both school years.

	AP Courses	Original Credit	Percent of AP courses
2017–2018	61	6,937	0.9%
2018–2019	48	6,662	0.7%

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019

**What were the Apex Learning course enrollment and completion rates of all students in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, by subject, by grade level (with middle school grades combined), by campus, and by school office?**

- **Table 4** shows the enrollment and completion of Apex Learning online courses by subject in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. Completion rates between the two years are comparable indicating that, with rare exceptions, students taking Apex Learning online courses are successful in completing the course. Comparing enrollment by subject, it is notable to observe the two largest decreases between the school years were in the subject areas of PE/Health, where there was a drop of 27 percent (N=318), and in Social Studies/History where the difference accounted for 20 percent (N=415) of the enrollment in 2017–2018.

Subject	2017–2018			2018–2019			Difference in enrollment between school years (N)
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	
ELA	765	765	100.0	618	618	100.0	-147
Languages other than English	2,728	2,728	100.0	3,123	3,123	100.0	+395
Math	605	605	100.0	431	431	100.0	-174
PE/Health	1,171	1,170	99.9	853	853	100.0	-318
Science	657	657	100.0	484	484	100.0	-173
Social Studies/History	2,003	2,003	100.0	1,588	1,588	100.0	-415
Other	107	107	100.0	194	194	100.0	+87
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,036</b>	<b>8,035</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-745</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019

- **Table 5** (p. 8) shows the enrollment and completion of Apex Learning online courses by grade level, with combined observations for middle school. Enrollment declined among middle school students due to the decrease in course offerings for these grades. The largest decrease was among the 12<sup>th</sup> graders where a 15 percent (N=639) drop was observed from the previous year's enrollment.

Table 5. Apex Learning Online Course Enrollment and Completion by Grade Level							
Grade Level	2017–2018			2018–2019			Difference in enrollment between school years (N)
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	
Middle School	117	116	99.1	33	33	100.0	-84
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	632	632	100.0	553	553	100.0	-79
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1,056	1,056	100.0	1,230	1,230	100.0	+174
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	2,087	2,087	100.0	1,970	1,970	100.0	-117
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	4,144	4,144	100.0	3,505	3,505	100.0	-639
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,036</b>	<b>8,035</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-745</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019

- **Table 6** shows the enrollment and completion of Apex Learning online courses by School Office. There were two campuses (Jordan HS and Victory Prep South) included in 2017–2018 that were no longer district campuses in 2018–2019. As previously stated, completion rates remained stable across the two school years observed. However, a decrease in enrollment was noteworthy among campuses under the West school office with a 21 percent drop (N=773) in enrollment from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019. The large drop in enrollment under the West school office is almost all due to the decrease observed at Lamar HS (N=742). Enrollment and completion rates, as well as difference in enrollment at the campus level can be found in **Table A1** (Appendix A, p.14).

Table 6. Apex Learning Online Course Enrollment and Completion by School Office							
School Office	2017–2018			2018–2019			Difference in enrollment between school years (N)
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	
Achieve 180	1,164	1,164	100.0	1,034	1,034	100.0	-130
East	1,443	1,443	100.0	1,437	1,437	100.0	-6
Northwest	1,357	1,357	100.0	1,576	1,576	100.0	+219
South	394	394	100.0	361	361	100.0	-33
West	3,656	3,655	99.9	2,883	2,883	100.0	-773
Closed schools	22	22	100.0	-	-		-22
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,036</b>	<b>8,035</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>7,291</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-745</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
Notes: Jordan HS and Victory Prep South offered Apex Learning online courses in 2017–2018 but were no longer HISD campuses in 2018–2019.

### What was the online course enrollment and completion rates among special populations in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, by provider?

- **Table 7** (p. 8) shows online course enrollment and completion among at-risk, secondary students in the district. Among students identified as at-risk, there was a 17 percent (N=1,229) decrease in the utilization of online courses across all providers between 2017–2018 and 2018–2019.

Table 7. Online Course Enrollment and Completion Rates among At-Risk Students by Provider						
	2017–2018			2018–2019		
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate
<b>Apex</b>	5,321	5,321	100.0	4,963	4,963	100.0
<b>Apex-IS</b>	507	507	100.0	221	221	100.0
<b>HIL</b>	646	6,44	100.0	260	259	99.6
<b>HVS</b>	4	4	100.0	12	12	100.0
<b>Other Providers</b>	681	680	99.8	474	474	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,159</b>	<b>7,158</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>5,930</b>	<b>5,929</b>	<b>99.9</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019; Chancery Student Demographics-06-04-18, Chancery Student Demographics\_May2019

- **Table 8** shows online course enrollment and completion among gifted and talented, secondary students in the district. Although online course enrollment numbers may not be high among this population, the 41 percent decrease in enrollment from the previous year is noteworthy because it is approaching twice the overall decrease across the district (23%).

Table 8. Online Course Enrollment and Completion Rates among Gifted and Talented (GT) Students by Provider						
	2017–2018			2018–2019		
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate
<b>Apex</b>	812	811	99.9	737	737	100.0
<b>Apex-IS</b>	37	37	100.0	20	20	100.0
<b>HIL</b>	97	97	100.0	41	41	100.0
<b>HVS</b>	13	13	100.0	9	9	100.0
<b>Other Providers</b>	634	633	99.8	125	123	98.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>1,591</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>99.8</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019; Chancery Student Demographics,06–04–18, Chancery Student Demographics\_May2019

- **Table 9** (p. 10) shows online course enrollment and completion among English Learner, secondary students in the district. English Learners (ELs) were the only population where online course enrollment increased in 2018–2019. The six percent increase (N=114) may not be as remarkable as the reduction rates among other populations, but it may be noteworthy to investigate how online courses are assisting EL students.

Table 9. Online Course Enrollment and Completion Rates among English Learners (ELs) by Provider						
	2017–2018			2018–2019		
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate
<b>Apex</b>	1,255	1,255	100.0	1,518	1,518	100.0
<b>Apex-IS</b>	79	79	100.0	35	35	100.0
<b>HIL</b>	170	170	100.0	38	38	100.0
<b>HVS</b>	2	2	100.0	3	3	100.0
<b>Other Providers</b>	161	161	100.0	187	187	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,781</b>	<b>1,781</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019; Chancery Student Demographics-06-04-18, Chancery Student Demographics\_May2019

**How many students who graduated in 2017 and 2018 completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course at any point in grades 9–12, by campus and by school office?**

- **Table 10** shows the number of graduates who completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course at any point in grades 9–12 by school office. There was a decrease in numbers across all school offices but most notably under the Achieve 180 office.
- There were 11,064 graduates from the 2017–2018 school year. Among those, 3,291 (30%) completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course in grades 9–12. In comparison, there were 11,293 graduates from the 2018–2019 school year. Among those, 2,868 (25%) completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course in grades 9–12. **Table A.2** (Appendix A, p.16) shows the number of graduates who completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course at any point in grades 9–12 by campus.

Table 10. Apex Learning Online Course Completion of Graduates by School Office			
School Office	2017–2018 (N)	2018–2019 (N)	Difference between school years (N)
<b>Achieve 180</b>	511	350	-161
<b>East</b>	497	496	-1
<b>Northwest</b>	694	655	-39
<b>South</b>	234	197	-37
<b>West</b>	1,264	1,169	-95
<b>Closed schools/ Special Ed*</b>	91	1	-90
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,291</b>	<b>2,868</b>	<b>-423</b>

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019; Graduates file 2017–2018, 2018–2019  
 \*Jordan HS and Victory Prep South offered Apex Learning online courses in 2017–2018 but were no longer HISD campuses in 2018–2019; one graduate from HCC Lifeskills completed a course in 2018-2019.

### What were the graduation rates in 2017 and 2018 of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course compared to those who did not complete any Apex/Apex-IS course?

- **Table 11** compares the graduation rates of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who completed at least one Apex Learning online course during grades 9–12. From 2017–2018 to 2018–2019, there was a two-percentage point decrease in graduation rates among 12<sup>th</sup> graders who completed at least one Apex or Apex-IS course during grades 9–12.
- In 2018–2019, there were 12,458 12<sup>th</sup> graders; 9,373 did not complete any Apex/Apex-IS course while 3,085 completed at least one Apex/Apex-IS course during their 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grades. Among those who had no Apex/Apex-IS courses, 8,182 graduated (87%) while among those who completed at least one Apex/Apex-IS course, 2,650 (86%) graduated.

Table 11. Graduation Rates of 12 <sup>th</sup> Graders Who Completed At Least One Apex Learning Online Course						
	2017–2018			2018–2019		
	12 <sup>th</sup> Graders	Graduates	Graduation Rate	12 <sup>th</sup> Graders	Graduates	Graduation Rate
<b>Completed at least 1 Apex/Apex-IS course</b>	3,455	3,036	88%	3,085	2,650	86%
<b>Did not Complete any Apex/Apex-IS course</b>	8,759	7,631	87%	9,373	8,182	87%

Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019; Graduates file 2017–2018, 2018–2019

### In 2018–2019, what were the STAAR outcomes among Apex students who were STAAR/EOC retesters?

- **Table 12** shows re-testing results of Apex students by STAAR/EOC subject area. In 2018–2019, there were 574 students who had completed at least one Apex Learning online course related to a STAAR/EOC exam. Among these, 70 were identified as retesters with 28 (40%) of the students retesting English II.
- While English II was the most retested subject area, it also had the lowest passing rate with only 39% students meeting the passing standard at re-test. Biology, the least retested subject area (N=5), had the highest passing rate with 80% of the re-testers meeting the passing standard.

Table 12. Apex Learning Students by STAAR/ EOC Re-test Outcomes				
EOC Subject Area	Did Not Meet Passing Standard (N)	Met Passing Standard (N)	Total Number of Apex Student Retesters (N)	Percent Passing
<b>Algebra</b>	5	5	10	50%
<b>Biology</b>	1	4	5	80%
<b>English I</b>	5	7	12	58%
<b>English II</b>	17	11	28	39%
<b>US History</b>	5	10	15	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>53%</b>

Sources: Historical Grade File 2018–2019; STAAR/EOC file 2018–2019

## Discussion

Online course enrollment and completion continues to decline in HISD. Between 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, there was a 23 percent decrease in online course completion across all providers serving district students. Similarly, credit recovery course enrollment continues to decline. In 2018–2019, there was a 39 percent decrease in the number of students taking online courses for credit recovery purposes compared to 2017–2018. These results continue a trend documented in previous reports (HISD Research and Accountability, 2019).

Apex Learning was brought into the district in 2010 as an alternative means for students to recover course credits, with focused efforts on seniors who needed the credits to meet graduation requirements. By 2018–2019, only 20 percent of all completed Apex Learning courses were taken for credit recovery purposes. Apex Learning enrollment among 12th graders saw the largest decline among high school students between the past two years. Reasons for these decreasing trends are unclear. Are students relying on other resources to recover credits to meet graduation requirements? Is there still a sizable population of students in the district who need the online learning platform to complete credit requirements on time? Further research on these issues and how Apex Learning is promoted within the district may provide insight into these decreasing trends.

Among special populations in the district, the downward trend in online course enrollment and completion continued to be evident among the at-risk and gifted and talented students. However, among ELs, there was a slight increase in online course enrollment and completion. These results correspond with the increase in enrollment and completion of courses classified as “Languages Other Than English” (LOTE) which in 2018–2019 were ninety-eight percent Spanish language courses (**Table A3**, Appendix, p.15). Online LOTE courses may be perceived as a convenient way to complete foreign language credits required for high school graduation. If senior leadership regard this as a benefit for students, program administrators might consider promoting LOTE online courses to more students in the general population.

Course completion among graduates also reflect the decreasing trend. In 2018, 30 percent of graduates completed at least one Apex Learning online course in grades 9–12 while in 2019 only 25 percent of graduates had the same accomplishment. Breaking down the decrease in numbers among school offices, the largest decrease in online course completion among graduates were enrolled at Achieve 180 campuses in their senior year.

Twelfth graders who completed at least one Apex Learning course were just as likely to graduate as their peers who did not take any Apex Learning course during their four years in high school. A lack of differentiation between students who complete an Apex Learning online course and students who do not will likely continue; with 80 percent of online courses being taken for original credit, completing an online course may no longer immediately translate into graduation.

Apex Learning has been a valuable resource for HISD for the past decade, providing opportunities for students to complete credit requirements outside of the traditional classroom. Despite the decreasing numbers of students completing online courses, compared to other online providers, Apex Learning is still the leading provider of online courses in the district. As such, it is in a position to create a meaningful impact on the district’s online course offerings for secondary students.

## References

HISD Research and Accountability. (2011). APEX Credit Recovery Initiative, 2009–2010. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School District.

HISD Research and Accountability. (2019). APEX Learning Online Instruction, 2017–2018. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School District.



## Appendix A

Table A-1. Apex Learning Online Course Enrollment and Completion by Campus							
SCHOOL_NAME	2017–2018			2018–2019			Difference in enrollment between school years (N)
	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	Enrolled	Completed	Completion Rate%	
Austin HS	361	361	100.0%	232	232	100.0%	-129
Bellaire HS	414	413	99.8%	217	217	100.0%	-197
Carnegie HS	42	42	100.0%	28	28	100.0%	-14
Challenge Early College HS	1	1	100.0%	11	11	100.0%	+10
Chavez HS	81	81	100.0%	128	128	100.0%	+47
East Early College HS	7	7	100.0%	27	27	100.0%	+20
Eastwood Academy HS	97	97	100.0%	41	41	100.0%	-56
Energy Institute HS	2	2	100.0%	18	18	100.0%	+16
Furr HS	376	376	100.0%	617	617	100.0%	+241
Heights HS	131	131	100.0%	119	119	100.0%	-12
High School for Law and Justice	157	157	100.0%	48	48	100.0%	-109
Houston Academy for International Studies	52	52	100.0%	67	67	100.0%	+15
Houston Center for Math, Science & Technology	528	528	100.0%	603	603	100.0%	+75
Jones HS	106	106	100.0%	112	112	100.0%	+6
Kinder HS for Performing and Visual Arts	5	5	100.0%	3	3	100.0%	-2
Lamar HS	2245	2245	100.0%	1503	1503	100.0%	-745
Liberty HS	328	328	100.0%	373	373	100.0%	+45
Long Academy	77	77	100.0%	128	128	100.0%	+51
Madison HS	74	74	100.0%	24	24	100.0%	-50
Mickey Leland College Prep Academy for Young Men	30	30	100.0%	35	35	100.0%	+5
Middle College HS at HCC Fraga	115	115	100.0%	110	110	100.0%	-5
Middle College HS at HCC Gulfton	143	143	100.0%	129	129	100.0%	-14
Milby HS	148	148	100.0%	183	183	100.0%	+35
Mount Carmel Academy	18	18	100.0%	27	27	100.0%	+9
North Forest HS	4	4	100.0%	-	-		-4
North Houston Early College HS	2	2	100.0%	-	-		-2
Northside HS	331	331	100.0%	229	229	100.0%	-102
Scarborough HS	125	125	100.0%	311	311	100.0%	-186
Secondary DAEP	1	1	100.0%	76	76	100.0%	+75
Sharpstown HS	491	491	100.0%	469	469	100.0%	-22
Sharpstown International School	2	2	100.0%	4	4	100.0%	+2
Sterling HS	57	57	100.0%	55	55	100.0%	-2

Table A-1. Apex Learning Online Course Enrollment and Completion by Campus (continued)							
Waltrip HS	86	86	100.0%	77	77	100.0%	-9
Washington HS	15	15	100.0%	7	7	100.0%	-8
Westbury HS	182	182	100.0%	172	172	100.0%	-10
Westside HS	278	278	100.0%	421	421	100.0%	+143
Wheatley HS	26	26	100.0%	22	22	100.0%	-4
Wisdom HS	433	433	100.0%	485	485	100.0%	+52
Worthing HS	102	102	100.0%	59	59	100.0%	-43
Yates HS	198	198	100.0%	104	104	100.0%	-94
Young Women's College Prep Academy	22	22	100.0%	17	17	100.0%	-5
<b>Total</b>	<b>8036</b>	<b>8035</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>7291</b>	<b>7291</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>-745</b>
Sources: Historical Grade Files, 2017–2018, 2018–2019							

<b>Table A-2. Apex Learning Online Course Completion of Graduates by Campus</b>			
<b>School Name</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Austin HS	156	94	-62
Bellaire HS	183	140	-43
Carnegie HS	23	25	+2
Challenge Early College HS	2	12	+10
Chavez HS	74	75	-1
DeBaKey HS	4	-	-4
East Early College HS	10	25	+15
Eastwood Academy HS	24	19	-5
Energy Institute HS	16	14	-2
Energized for STEM Central HS	3	2	-1
Energized for STEM West HS	2	-	-2
Furr HS	122	123	+1
Houston Academy for International Studies	31	44	+13
HCC Lifeskills	-	1	+1
Heights HS	112	63	-49
Houston Math Science & Technology Center	193	201	+8
High School for Law and Justice	38	45	+7
High School for Performing and Visual Arts	21	11	-10
Jones HS	74	36	+38
Jordan HS	71	-	-71
Kashmere HS	1	3	+2
Lamar HS	614	541	-73
Leland YMCPA	28	30	+2
Liberty HS	42	32	-10
Long Academy	35	47	+12
Madison HS	56	20	-36
Middle College HS - Fraga	39	38	-1
Middle College HS - Gulfton	44	39	+5
Milby HS	28	65	+37
Mount Carmel Acad HS	6	12	+6
North Forest HS	22	13	-9
North Houston EC HS	2	-	-2
Northside HS	117	121	+4
Scarborough HS	81	98	+17
Sharpstown HS	188	143	-45
Sharpstown Intl	21	27	+6
South EC HS	21	22	-1
Sterling HS	41	39	-2
Texas Connections Academy	3	-	-3
Victory Prep South	20	-	-20
Waltrip HS	60	40	-20
Washington HS	16	10	-6
Westbury HS	82	86	+4
Westside HS	216	262	+46
Wheatley HS	49	22	-27
Wisdom HS	146	113	-33
Worthing HS	59	39	-20
Yates HS	75	68	-7
Young Women's College Preparatory Academy	20	8	-12
<b>Total</b>	<b>3291</b>	<b>2868</b>	<b>-423</b>

**Table A-3. 2018–2019 Completed Apex Learning Courses in Languages Other Than English**

Course Name	Frequency	Subject Area
AP SPAN LA A DLOC	16	Spanish
AP SPAN LA B DLOC	3	Spanish
FREN 1A DLCR	2	French
FREN 1A DLOC	6	French
FREN 1B DLCR	2	French
FREN 1B DLOC	7	French
FREN 2A DLOC	15	French
FREN 2B DLCR	3	French
FREN 2B DLOC	17	French
FRENCH 2A CR	1	French
SPAN 1A DLCR	74	Spanish
SPAN 1A DLOC	594	Spanish
SPAN 1B DLCR	103	Spanish
SPAN 1B DLOC	519	Spanish
SPAN 2A DLCR	76	Spanish
SPAN 2A DLOC	650	Spanish
SPAN 2B DLCR	102	Spanish
SPAN 2B DLOC	615	Spanish
SPAN 3A DLOC	173	Spanish
SPAN 3B DLOC	135	Spanish
SPANISH 1A	1	Spanish
SPANISH 1A CR	1	Spanish
SPANISH 1B CR	1	Spanish
SPANISH 2A	1	Spanish
SPANISH 2A CR	2	Spanish
SPANISH 2B	1	Spanish
SPANISH 2B CR	1	Spanish
SPANISH 3A CR	1	Spanish
SPANISH 3B CR	1	Spanish
Total	3123	