



# BUILD UP

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Build UP is an early college workforce development model that enables low-income youth to develop career-ready skills while revitalizing their community and gaining homeownership.

## OVERVIEW

The Build UP model aims to empower and equip youth so they can overcome poverty and determine their own futures all while revitalizing their communities. Over the course of six years (following the 8th grade), students participate in a full-time, year-round program that supplants a traditional high school and college experience. Students spend half of their time in an academic setting, gaining knowledge that's directly applicable to their paid apprenticeships in the real estate and construction sectors. As apprentices, students also work to rehab blighted, abandoned homes into like-new units.

During the course of the six-year program, students earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree in their chosen field, which does not need to be related to construction or real estate. Once students complete the Build UP program and have secured a job, launched an enterprise, or are enrolled at a four-year university, they are also able to take over the deeds to two units they renovated as part of their training. Through zero-interest mortgages, graduates build wealth while also earning passive income through using units as rental properties. This helps build a social and economic safety net for students and the larger community.



Currently, Build UP partners with local Birmingham community organizations to protect historically Black neighborhoods from gentrification. The program is now operating in two neighborhoods: Ensley and Titusville. They offer a range of supports to expand their model through replication, retrofitting, or inspiration. [►Build UP Overview](#)

## What Makes This Model Innovative?



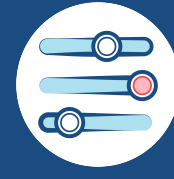
### Relevance

In the Build UP model, much of the learning happens through tackling real problems and doing authentic work, in the construction and real estate sectors.



### Social Consciousness & Action

Build Up works to create “equity through ownership” and disrupts multigenerational poverty at both the individual and community levels.



### Customization

Learning experiences are driven by students’ interests and career goals. Their learning paths are adjusted based on their knowledge demands, curiosity, genius, and learning purpose.

## DESIGN

### Goals

Build UP is designed to help students develop leadership and independence so graduates can pursue promising futures.

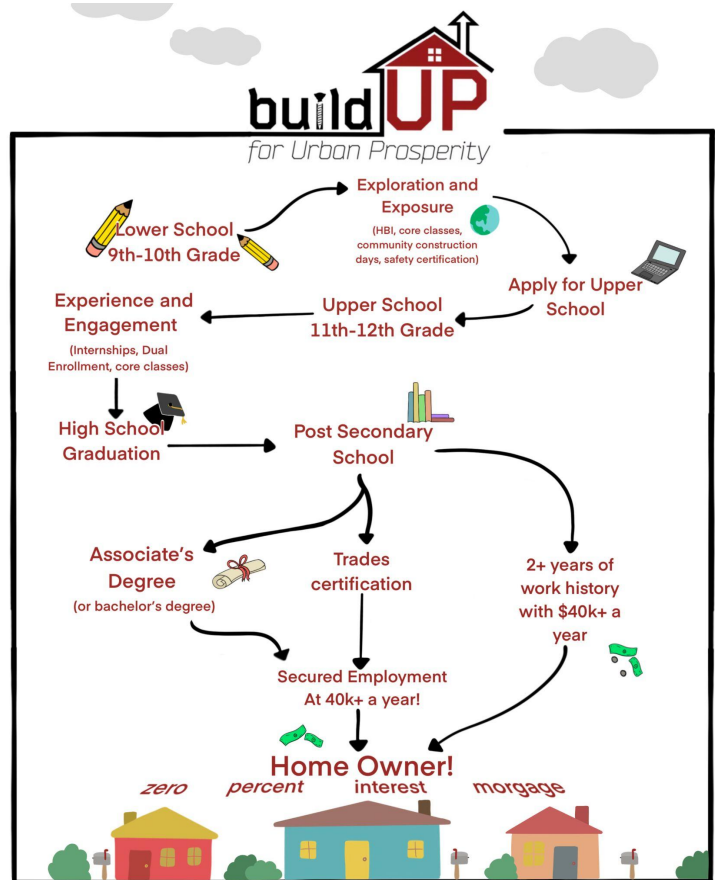
<b>Sense of Identity</b>	Students develop self-awareness, a sense of purpose, and a sense of belonging.
<b>High Character</b>	Students learn kindness and trustworthiness, and gain a strong work ethic. They demonstrate persistence and unwillingness to give up.
<b>Independent Learner</b>	Students exhibit critical thinking and problem-solving skills and have ownership over their own learning.
<b>Cross-Cultural Competence</b>	Students value diversity and are open-minded and able to easily adapt to different social and cultural settings.
<b>Civic-Minded</b>	Students become contributing citizens, are justice-oriented, and have a community mindset.
<b>Career-ready</b>	Students are career-ready and have skills in homeownership. They can also earn a high school diploma and associate’s degree, and attain gainful employment.

## Experience

The Build UP model is guided by four Core Philosophical Pillars that underpin the model. These are equity equals ownership, quality career focused education, catalytic cross-sector partnerships, and local leadership equipped for local solutions.

[Core Philosophical Pillars](#)

The Build UP model also entails multiple components that support student learning both academically and for the real world. Students spend approximately half their time in classrooms and the remaining half learning through other ways, including fieldwork and on job sites. Even when in the "traditional classroom," learning isn't "traditional." All learning at Build UP is aligned and relevant to students' work-based learning experiences. For example, the humanities class addresses ELA and social studies standards through contextualized learning about Black American history. In math classes, students learn about financial literacy, including personal budgeting and investments. Through these, students experience enriching and hands-on learning while creating wealth opportunities through homeownership.



## Core Academics

Build UP students often start the program four to five years behind in math and reading. To support accelerated learning, the Build UP model addresses core academic skills through engaging multi-subject coursework, and uses blended learning and a Response to Intervention (RTI) system. The combination of these elements makes it possible to create a personalized, student-driven model that better meets the students' individual needs.

**Academic Skills:** Build UP's core curriculum aligns to the Alabama College and Career Ready standards. Standards are addressed through engaging multi-subject coursework that allows students to create space in the schedule for additional linked learning and work-based learning opportunities. For example, Humanities is taught as one course that covers both ELA and social studies standards. Additionally, Build UP offers 5 total math credits by integrating geometry and entrepreneurship and finance courses into linked learning and work-based learning components. Where needed, additional core standards are covered through dual enrollment with local community colleges. [Dual Enrollment Equivalency List](#)

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**Blended Learning:** Blended learning involves incorporating the best elements of traditional schooling with transformative elements of online learning to create a personalized student-driven model that better meets the individual needs of students, particularly those who start the program with significant academic deficits. Build UP leverages a station rotation approach in which students move through different stations as cohorts, allowing for individual control over the time, pace, place, and path of their learning. It combines online learning with classroom or teacher-led instruction to ensure a balanced and effective program. In addition, Build UP uses TransFR VR—a rich virtual-reality curriculum—to teach career readiness and vocational skills. [TransFR VR](#)

**Response to Intervention:** Build UP's Response to Intervention approach identifies and supports students with learning and behavioral needs through a multi-tiered approach that provides increasingly intensive interventions for struggling learners. Essential components include ongoing student assessment through universal screening and progress monitoring using Map Assessments, tiered instruction with interventions matched to student needs, and parent involvement. Intervention coursework and electives are selected as part of individualized learning plans based on each student's assessment data, in-class performance, and interests. Build UP also provides parents with information about their child's progress, the instruction and interventions used, the staff delivering the instruction, and academic or behavioral goals for their child.

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## Linked Learning

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At Build UP, Linked Learning courses are designed to integrate traditional academic learning with real-world application. Students go on learning excursions, engage in project-based initiatives, and take career-readiness courses all aimed at developing multidisciplinary skills that prepare them to be successful in their internships and beyond. Students spend approximately half their time in classrooms, and the other half learning through projects, work, or excursions.

**Learning Excursions:** Students engage in new experiences through targeted learning excursions that introduce them to challenging topics in an accessible and relevant manner. Students also experience community-based field learning with various trips to historical sites, museums, conferences, private industry, and learning forums. They are challenged to apply their academic knowledge to the physical world, creating a range of projects based around their current coursework.





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**Geometry in Construction (GIC) and HBI (formerly Home Builders Institute):** GIC and HBI instruction prepares students with the skills and experience they need for successful careers through pre-apprenticeship training, registered apprenticeships with an industry partner, job placement services, mentoring, career credential and certification programs, textbooks, and curricula. [📄Geometry in Construction Curriculum](#) [📄HBI Curriculum Dashboard](#)

**Alabama Career Essentials:** Alabama Career Essentials (ACE) is a training course offered by the Alabama Community College System to equip students with the relevant employability skills needed to succeed in the state's workforce. The program is free and must be completed before or concurrently with dual enrollment. ACE includes a Career Coach assessment, and after completion, students can enroll in free, short-term, virtual training programs for high-demand jobs in Alabama called Mobilizing Alabama Pathways (MAPs). The MAPs program is geared toward industries such as healthcare, transportation, logistics, information technology, manufacturing, and construction, with the goal of providing students with credentials in less time than other college programs. [▶ACE Course Overview](#)

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## Workforce Development

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Build UP's six-year program helps students transition from building awareness of the world of work to exploring jobs they are interested in or passionate about, and ultimately engaging in hands-on workplace learning experiences through internships and apprenticeships alongside industry experts. Students gain practical experience and knowledge to prepare them for success in their chosen careers. Skills they develop from their Linked Learning courses are directly applied to projects within their school or community.

### Career Exploration and Exposure:

Throughout a student's career at Build UP, they are exposed to a variety of career paths, including blue collar, white collar, and no collar (entrepreneurial). Students work with and observe leaders in these fields, gaining hands-on experience which provides a foundation of understanding for multiple career avenues. Examples of these include plumbers, architects, interior designers, construction managers, professional house flippers, YouTube and social media content creators, bankers and financial planners, site safety professionals, industrial executives, and entrepreneurs.



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- **Work Fridays:** While 11th and 12th graders are placed in internships (see more below), 9th and 10th graders engage in community projects that help them gain experience and prepare for future internships. Work for 9th and 10th graders is restricted to school-supervised environments, with clear goals and target timelines. Guest instructors from the construction industry are brought in to supplement instruction and provide real-time feedback to students, with a focus on reinforcing math skills and connecting projects to the HBI curriculum. For example, in Linked Learning, students utilize their math and technical skills to calculate the required amount of paint to cover a wall, and subsequently put their knowledge into practice on Work Fridays by painting the wall as part of a school or community project. [📄Work Fridays](#)
  - **Career Declaration:** Students complete and present the Career Declaration Form as an important step in helping them plan their career and guiding them through decision-making. Students must complete the form by November of their 11th grade year and present it to their community. [📄Career Declaration Form](#)

**Workforce Experience and Engagement:** Build UP's program includes pre-apprenticeships and internships that teach students foundational building and construction skills, as well as professional work etiquette, while building a social network.

- **Pre-Apprenticeships:** As a registered pre-apprenticeship program, students are introduced to professional work etiquette while teaching them the foundational building and construction skills needed for future growth throughout the Build UP program. Students begin learning the basics, such as identifying tools properly, safety policies, and proper workplace professional behavior. As they master these basics, they matriculate through the learned skills tree, gaining knowledge in all areas of the industry.
- **Internships:** Internships are also an important part of the program, as they allow students to gain valuable experience in different fields and build a network with local businesses. The program has partnership agreements with local businesses to pay \$500 per student per nine-week rotation, and students must complete five rotations to graduate from the program.
- **Credentials:** Over time, as students develop skills and better understand how their passions may align with future employment hopes and dreams, they can earn credentials and certifications that suit their pursuits and will better prepare them to be hired into a specific field or vocation. Some examples of student-earned Build UP industry credentials include OSHA 10 Occupational Safety Certification, HBI Carpentry 1, and NCCER Core Training in Construction.



## Character Development

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The Build UP model is intentionally designed to support students in developing a range of character skills including self-awareness, agency, and problem-solving through an advisory model and a robust identity curriculum, as well as mentorship and counseling supports.

**House System:** Each Build UP student is initiated into a multi-age House, which is a small advisory group that meets daily and helps build team culture and identity. Each House consists of around 6-10 students across the Upper and Lower school and an adult house leader—a tight-knit group which will stay together throughout the students' Build UP progression. By creating a safe space for students to grow and develop together as peers, students feel secure and comfortable reaching out to their advocates in times of distress.

**Identity Curriculum:** Build UP focuses on developing character skills in students by exploring various themes over the course of four years through its Identity Curriculum. In year one, the focus is on identity, and students are encouraged to research powerful individuals and historical figures they identify with. Additionally, an artistic expression project is assigned to allow students to express their identity creatively. In year two, students focus on developing their voice through activities such as debates and argumentative research projects. In year three, self-advocacy is emphasized through a capstone project that explores issues related to not being able to choose where one lives, such as budgeting, health insurance, and food deserts. Finally, year four focuses on civic action, where students engage in a capstone project on environmental racism and learn about policy-making, data analysis, financial impact, and historical significance. Students develop essential character skills such as self-awareness, communication, advocacy, and civic engagement.

**Mentorship:** Build UP supports the whole child and works to develop character and soft skills through strong mentorship, which serves as a source of support and guidance for students. Mentorship is provided in the House System, which meets daily and consists of around 10 students and an adult mentor. Students are also mentored by the professional industry leaders they are exposed to on a daily basis.

**Counseling:** Students also receive support from full-time, licensed, professional counselors and a supervised team of interns that provide individual and group counseling to students in need. Build UP partners with a non-profit organization of African-American mental health professionals to help destigmatize mental health supports in the community, identify student challenges through assessment and surveys, and address student needs through targeted services.

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## Homeownership and the Postgraduate Student Success Program

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A critical piece of the student experience is being able to understand and practice homeownership. As students construct houses, they also learn about property management

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and have the opportunity to own and rent properties at the conclusion of the program. Putting students on a pathway to postsecondary success is essential, and each student is paired with a Student Success Coach to help them on their journey beyond the Build UP program.

**Preparing for Homeownership:** The Build UP program allows students to practice homeownership in a controlled manner. As problems arise, students use their established skills to assess, plan, and solve issues. Students practice common tasks such as landscaping and basic home maintenance, while also tackling more complex challenges such as replacing a faulty light fixture or patching a hole in the drywall. Build UP supports students when needed, but first encourages them to exhaust all other resources in order to overcome the challenges they face as a future independent homeowner.

**Home and Rental Property Ownership:** Upon graduation, youth are eligible to take ownership of an owner-occupied unit (that they are most likely already living in) and a rental property. Through zero-interest mortgages, graduates build wealth because 100 percent of each payment contributes to principal and equity. They also earn a passive income through their rental properties. Two-property ownership also allows for graduates to have twice the impact on the community. Not only are students taught how to market their rental property effectively to ensure they receive full market rate, they are also taught the skills of landlordship to ensure quality tenants and support the community's longer-term revitalization.

**Postgraduate Trade Certifications:** Based on a student's career declaration and chosen vocational pathway, graduates accumulate industry-valued skills towards stackable credentials and trade certificates that provide a path to employment. Credentials range in duration and skill degree towards attainment. Students gain valuable skills in specific trade or industry fields through partnerships with postsecondary educational institutions or trade associations and related registered apprenticeships that provide these credentials.

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## Supporting Structures

Implementing the Build UP model requires significant shifts across various elements of school, such as curriculum and instruction, adult roles, partnerships, and more.



**CURRICULUM,  
INSTRUCTION, &  
ASSESSMENT**

### **Curriculum and instruction must enable personalization and integrate foundational academics with work-based learning.**

The academic programming is competency-based and each student has an individualized learning plan. All students receive high-quality, research-based instruction in the general education classroom. Universal screening and progress monitoring provide information about a student's learning rate and level of achievement, both individually and in comparison with the peer group. A multi-tier approach is used to efficiently differentiate instruction for all students. The model incorporates increasing intensities of



instruction offering specific, research-based interventions matched to student needs.

The coursework aligns with work-based learning and is immediately applied on the job site. Courses can be taken in person or online with support from in-person guides. Students select which courses to take based on their career interests. A community college partnership offers college courses, which expands the range of options for students. Because Build UP is accredited, coursework transfers to postsecondary institutions.



### **SCHOOL COMMUNITY & CULTURE**

#### **Restorative justice practices are leveraged to create a safe and healing community.**

At Build UP, restorative justice (RJ) is used to build a safe and respectful community, address behavior issues, and deal with the root causes of harm, including the absence of strong relationships and emotional safety within the school. Critical components of RJ include Restorative Circles, which are used to invite all parties harmed by an event to voice their pain, confront the student responsible, and collaboratively work towards mutually agreed-upon next steps to repair the harm done.



### **ADULT ROLES, HIRING, & LEARNING**

#### **Instructional staff include teachers, tutors, industry partners, and trained peers to support the building of job-specific skills.**

Build UP staff is made up of a combination of certified teachers, tutors, peers, and industry experts, who lead instruction. The teachers at Build UP have backgrounds in both academic content and specific industries, such as construction, real estate, architecture, or landscaping. Their role is to integrate content, support students' individualized needs and plans, and work alongside students in their industries of interest.

A critical element of the Build UP model is having a highly successful and exceptional level of teaching talent. Hiring focuses on setting clear goals for what talent to attract, clarifying the message and the mission, reaching and inspiring a growing network of applicants, and investing in and developing staff for leadership.

As the industry shifts and changes, work-based learning staff and faculty should attend regular training and professional development to stay relevant. Applicable professional development consists of instruction in PBL (project-based learning), use of instructional technology, familiarization with emerging construction technologies, and curriculum implementation such as the Home Builders Institute (HBI).



## SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

**Flexible scheduling is needed to facilitate the completion of academic coursework and paid on-site apprenticeships.**

Students have individualized learning plans that map the standards they need to learn on any given day or week, which dictates the apprenticeship hours they can spend at worksites. Because apprenticeships are paid, students are motivated to be on track academically so they can have more time at worksites.

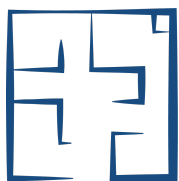


## FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

**Community and workforce partnerships are an integral part of the model for learning, and support stabilization and revitalization.**

Build UP is deeply embedded in the community and has a range of partners to support the implementation of the model. These partnerships include local agencies, non-profits, trade partners, and community colleges, which serve to invest in community revitalization as well as provide student support services, work-based learning opportunities, and dual-enrollment courses.

- **Local Agency Partnerships:** Organizations like Navigate Affordable Housing Partners provide partnerships to increase resident ownership and investment in neighborhood improvements.
- **Non-Profit Partnerships:** Local non-profits provide student supports such as counseling services, or reliable transportation to and from internship and dual-enrollment programs, to reduce the financial risks of participating in the program.
- **Trade Partnerships:** Build UP participates in local Home Builders Board and Industry Advocate Associates organizations to identify industry partners. These partnerships offer real-life training and develop lasting relationships with students to help them find apprenticeships or jobs after completing the Build UP program.
- **Community College Partnerships:** Partnerships with local community colleges provide dual enrollment to address core standards and pathways to postsecondary degrees and credentials.



## SPACE & FACILITIES

**Spaces should be well-kept for safety and to emulate the industry at large.**

Equipment and technology should emulate what is being used in the industry at large. Given the restrictions of funding for certain machines used in major production, field trips can be taken to gain an understanding of those machines and equipment. Tools and facilities should be kept organized and methods of organization should be reinforced daily for faculty, staff, and students to observe. If the systems and processes are not highly organized, equipment can become lost, stolen, or in disrepair; unsafe

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working conditions may arise; and students will not be conditioned to see the dignity and meaning in daily work.

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## TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Students should have access to virtual reality headsets, which provide instruction in necessary trade skills.**

While much of Build UP's instructional technology follows similar school structures, including 1:1 devices, a unique and important aspect of the model is access to Oculus Virtual Reality Headsets, to train students with virtual trade skills instruction. A range of education technology programs, such as Flocabulary and IXL Math, should be used as intervention resources and to personalize learning.

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## BUDGET & OPERATIONS

### **Funding is needed to support construction and subsidize school tuition for students.**

Build UP uses a combination of funding streams to meet the needs of its under-resourced student body, including funding from earned revenue, donated materials, philanthropy, and competitive grants. The majority of student tuition is covered by tax-credit scholarships, school transfer credits, and other subsidized funds, enabling families to contribute a minimal monthly amount. Build UP has also launched a non-profit construction entity to help subsidize school tuition and move construction projects forward. By utilizing multiple funding sources, Build UP aims to sustainably operate with less than 15 percent philanthropic need once it has reached its full capacity.

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# IMPLEMENTATION

## Supports Offered

[Build UP](#) offers the following supports to implement its model.

### **Replication Site Support**

*Cost Associated*



Replication Site support is part of the model expansion and includes working with local communities and funders to expand the model within a specific region leveraging the Build UP name. A licensing agreement between the non-profit and school would be established and Build UP would support the development and implementation of the program at a new site.

[Get in Touch](#)

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## Retrofit Site Support

*Cost Associated*



Retrofit Site support is ideal for existing schools and vocational training programs that want to add all of Build UP's core components and philosophical pillars to their current model. This type of support begins with asset mapping and getting to know the context. It's customized based on the organization's needs and will provide in-depth transition support for establishing the new model.

[Get in Touch](#)

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## Inspired Site Support

*Cost Associated*



Inspired Site support is aimed at organizations and communities that want to launch a similar model and would like to do a site visit of Build UP. This includes bringing a team of people over the summer for a week-long training and coaching institute on the Build UP model. Customized ongoing supports are also available.

[Get in Touch](#)

## Reach

76

Students

2

Communities

100%

BIPOC Students

## Impact

As a six-year program launched in 2018, Build UP has not yet had its inaugural graduating class. Graduates are expected to finish with a high school diploma, an associate's degree or industry credential, and a middle-wage full-time job. In addition, upon completion of the program, students earn the opportunity to own a home or become the landlord of a rental property.

Through rehabilitating abandoned homes into like-new, affordable units, Build UP is revitalizing communities.

- Build UP has enabled 15 first-time homebuyers in the community to begin building generational wealth.
- Build UP has contributed 30 completed affordable homes to the housing supply and has 50 more in inventory to complete.
- Build UP was awarded the 2022 Ivory Prize for Innovations in Affordable Housing.



Students learn employability skills and also develop a sense of pride in community revitalization.

- *"Build UP gives me a lot of hope for the future because I am getting rid of the blight in my neighborhood. I see it as an opportunity."* - Khristian Billingsley (Build UP student)

## Contact

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# RESOURCES



### [Build UP Overview](#)

A video overview of the Build UP model in action



The Build UP model is guided by four Core Philosophical Pillars that underpin the model. These are:

### [Build UP Core Philosophical Pillars](#)

Build UP's four Core Philosophical Pillars of program design



### [Build UP Pathways Visual](#)

Build UP's student pathways to homeownership graphic

**DUAL ENROLLMENT—HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENT EQUIVALENCY LIST 2019-2020**

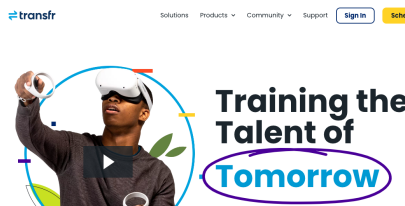
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

The following ACEs Writer Consortium member day courses are approved as credit-equivalent options that satisfy the English Language Arts graduation requirement(s) for the Alabama High School Diploma.

Course Code	Course Prefix	ACE Course Name	HS Graduation Requirement	HS Credit
903201	ENG 101	ENGLISH COMPOSITION I	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0
903202	ENG 102	ENGLISH COMPOSITION II	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0
903203	ENG 201	AMERICAN LITERATURE I	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0
903204	ENG 202	AMERICAN LITERATURE II	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0
903205	ENG 201	ENGLISH LITERATURE I	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0
903206	ENG 202	ENGLISH LITERATURE II	English 11 and/or English 12	1.0

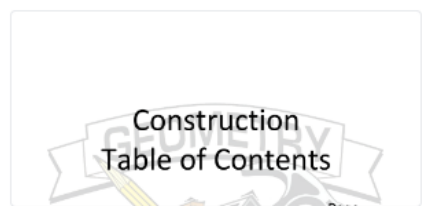
### [Dual Enrollment Equivalency List](#)

Alamba's list of dual-enrollment equivalency courses



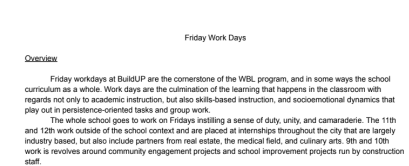
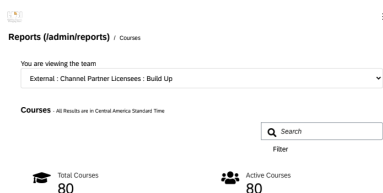
### [TransFR VR](#)


TransFR VR uses VR training solutions for workforce development



### [Geometry in Construction Curriculum](#)

Geometry in Construction curriculum packet



<a href="#">HBI Curriculum Dashboard</a> A sample dashboard report of online HBI curriculum modules	<a href="#">ACE Course Overview</a> An overview of the Alabama Career Essentials courses	<a href="#">Build UP Work Fridays</a> An overview of Work Fridays for each grade
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Build UP</b> <b>Model Components</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">^</p>	
<a href="#">Build UP Career Declaration Form</a> The Career Declaration Form students submit in their 11th-grade year	<a href="#">Build UP Model Components</a> A comprehensive guide to the Build UP model components	