

About Graduation Alliance Curriculum

Graduation Alliance has made a commitment to providing a differentiated curriculum for students who have had a disrupted educational experience. This means that not only do we align to state standards and national best practices, but we designed for our specific population of students who are returning to school after a period away or who are on the brink of dropping out. It is essential that students see themselves in this curriculum, that it is relevant and culturally responsive, and that it provides a intrinsically motivating experience for them.

Curriculum Source and NCAA Approval Status

Course Code	Course Name	Curriculum Source	NCAA Status
1001310	English 1	Proprietary	Approved
1001340	English 2	Proprietary	Approved
1001370	English 3	Proprietary	Approved
1001400	English 4	Proprietary	Approved
1200310	Algebra 1	Proprietary	Approved
1206310	Geometry	Proprietary	Approved
1200330	Algebra 2	Proprietary	Approved
2102372	Personal Financial Literacy	Proprietary	
2000310	Biology 1	Proprietary	Approved
2001310	Earth/Space Science	Proprietary	Approved
2000350	Anatomy and Physiology	Proprietary	
2003340	Chemistry 1	Proprietary	Approved
2001340	Environmental Science	Proprietary	Approved
2100310	United States History	Proprietary	Approved
2109310	World History	Proprietary	Approved
2106310	United States Government	Proprietary	Approved
2102310	Economics	Proprietary	Approved
1501300	Personal Fitness	Proprietary	
0800310	Health 2 - Personal Health	Proprietary	

0100320	Art in World Cultures	Proprietary	
1300300	Music Theory 1	Proprietary	
0101300	Two Dimensional Studio Art	Proprietary	
0107410	Film 1	Proprietary	
0708340	Spanish 1	Proprietary	Approved
0708350	Spanish 2	Proprietary	Approved
1007305	Speech 1	Proprietary	
8500375	Blueprint for Professional Success	Proprietary	
0800350	Adolescent Health Problems	Proprietary	
8500310	Child Development	Proprietary	
8909020	Human Growth and Development	Proprietary	
1006375	Social Media 1	Proprietary	
8417110	Health Science Foundations	Proprietary	

Curriculum Research and Best Practices

The following strategies have been proven over time to be effective with returning dropouts and are foundational to our instructional approach:

Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) - The use of ILPs increases relevance for a population that has to balance their desire to complete their education with competing and complex life issues. ILPs allow students to map their education and chart their progress toward completion, increasing ownership, motivation, and self-efficacy.

Guided Independent Study - this approach allows each student to spend the time on the areas of a course where they need additional help or skill development and to move more quickly through the sections that they have already mastered, which is key to managing the disrupted academic background and variations in skill of returning dropouts.

Modified Block Scheduling - Students take two courses at a time in 4 week blocks. The sprints provide time boundaries that are manageable and can be easily subdivided into 1 week segments allowing us to provide timely intervention when students show signs of disengagement. Additionally, this modified block schedule allows students to earn .5-1 credit of transcriptable credit every 4 weeks, providing successful academic experiences early and often, which builds academic self-efficacy and motivation, both of which have been demonstrated in research to lead to better resiliency.

360 Degrees of Support - We provide individualized proactive academic and social interventions from a team of individuals - teachers, tutors, academic coaches, and local advocates. Interventions are based on data and analytics aligned with a set of Graduation Alliance's proprietary algorithms that have been demonstrated to improve student performance and persistence. Interventions are performed by teachers, Academic Coaches, and Local Advocates.

Student Rewards Program - Students who take positive steps toward and meet performance targets earn points that can be redeemed for gift cards. Through this program students connect their hard work to their ability to provide for their basic needs like food and transportation.

Related Research: ILPs, Guided Independent Study, Modified Block Scheduling, 360 Degrees of Support, Student Rewards:

The *Dropout Recovery Resource Guide*, published in 2009, was commissioned by the Texas Education Agency and is based on best practices derived from more than 400 dropout recovery programs and a review of the national literature. The *Guide* identifies 21 principles of best practice ranging from program administration, recruiting and student tracking, individualized education programming principles, connecting education to career and post-secondary preparation, and mentoring. The practices of personalized learning plans, guided independent study, modified block scheduling, 360 degrees of support, student rewards, and career programming are all directly connected to the best practices identified in this seminal research.

Effective Dropout Recovery Practices and the Graduation Alliance Approach is a third party evaluation of Graduation Alliance's practices by the authors of the *Dropout Recovery Resource Guide*. It connects these strategies and practices listed above to the body of research on dropout recovery.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network's *15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention* identifies 15 strategies that research identifies as instrumental for engaging at-risk students. Among them relevant to the strategies above are mentoring/tutoring, alternative schooling, after-school and out-of-school opportunities, active learning, educational technology, individualized instruction, and CTE.

"Promoting Quality Individualized Learning Plans Throughout the Lifespan: A Revised and Updated "ILP HOW TO GUIDE 2.0"" by Solberg, Will & Osmon (2012). Per their research: "At last count, a total of 44 states, and the District of Columbia require or encourage the use of individualized learning plans (ILPs) for all students in K-12 education. Higher education is also beginning to look at ILPs as a strategy for increasing college completion rates and helping adults understand how to use their educational opportunities in ways that advance them towards their career and life goals. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) has embraced a personalized career development process that extends the relevance

of ILPs to adults and youth with and without disabilities who seek support from American Job Centers (also known as One Stop Centers) and/or vocational rehabilitation agencies.”

Career Programming - Research shows that providing tangible connections to the world of work through career training programs has the potential to dramatically increase academic engagement for at-risk students. Graduation Alliance provides opportunities for every student to participate in professional skill acquisition coursework, including employability skills, digital literacy, financial literacy, workplace safety, and career exploration and planning, career training in one of ten Pathways, and work experience opportunities. Students work with their Academic Coaches to create an Individual Learning Plan that guides their course work and work experience opportunities through to graduation and beyond.

Related Research - Career Programming:

Solberg’s “*A Review of Literature: The Link Between Academic Resiliency and College and Career Readiness*” connects the use of college and career readiness intervention to improved persistence outcomes for at-risk students.

The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) has developed a number of best practice profiles from Association of Builders and Contractors (ABC) chapters that have worked with high school students to provide NCCER training and certification opportunities. Two profiles in particular, the ABC Pelican Chapter and ABC/Greater Michigan Chapter, provide compelling data around program retention, training advancement, and post-training employment opportunities for high school students participating in the NCCER training programs through partnerships with their local ABC chapters.

The Ohio Department of Higher Education’s publication *Diploma to Career Pathways* connects the research on career programming coupled with high school completion programming for at-risk students to better engagement and ultimately better life outcomes for overage/under-credited students in Ohio.

Plank, et al.’s research published in “*Dropping Out of High School and the Place of Career and Technical Education*,” (National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, 2005) found that students who took one CTE course for every two academic courses were at decreased risk for dropping out.

Kulik’s research “*Curriculum Tracks and High School Vocational Studies*” (University of Michigan, 1998) indicated that high risk juniors and seniors were 8-10x less likely to dropout when enrolled in a CTE program.

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network has identified the 15 strategies that have the most positive impact on the dropout rate. These strategies include “career and technology

education.”(National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, “Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention.”

Deloitte’s *Boiling Point? The Skills Gap in U.S. Manufacturing* identifies key professional skills that middle skill employers desire and have a difficult time finding in employees. These identified skills are part of the skill acquisition and career programming.

Basis for and Frequency of Revisions

Course design and revisions are made according to the ADDIE model of Instructional Design. According to the ADDIE model, curriculum development begins with the **A**nalysis of student characteristics, needs, and objectives, **D**esign of the curriculum, **D**evelopment of the curriculum and learning objects, **I**mplementation of the curriculum, and on-going **E**valuation of its effectiveness. This systematic and cyclical approach in the curriculum design process is driven and tightly aligned to all identified learning outcomes and standards.

Courses are continually monitored by the Graduation Alliance curriculum department for accuracy and efficacy. Minor revisions are made as needed to provide enhancements in lesson presentation, update external links, correct mistakes, or clarify expectations or instructions as identified by teaching or support staff members or students. Major revisions are made when changes in standards requirements, instructional alignment, or in learning expectations occur. Courses are updated on an ongoing basis through teacher feedback, regular course reviews, and when relevant learning standards are revised. Continuous quality enhancements are informed weekly by teacher mentor data and monthly, using student end of course feedback.

Learner feedback is continuously collected via student input to instructors and academic staff, which is relayed to the curriculum team for review and course revisions. End of course surveys are also conducted biannually. This data is used to inform practices of instructors and the curriculum team.

Research Related to Effectiveness of Curriculum

Graduation Alliance subscribes to Quality Matters, a national third-party validator of best practices in online learning. In addition to putting its curriculum team through the Quality Matters training and using the rubrics to inform design, Graduation Alliance has contracted with Quality Matters evaluators to review and evaluate both its approach to instructional design and individual courses itself. Graduation Alliance’s curriculum template review resulted in a rare perfect score on first attempt.

Graduation Alliance has submitted a number of courses to the American Council on Education (ACE) for review against rigor of content and learning outcomes. Twenty nine of Graduation

Alliance's courses have been recommended by ACE for college credit, creating the opportunity for early college pathways for Graduation Alliance students.

Finally, we know that curriculum is one important part of a total system of education leading to outcomes that matter. *Effective Dropout Recovery Practices and the Graduation Alliance Approach* is a third party evaluation of Graduation Alliance's practices by the authors of the *Dropout Recovery Resource Guide* which was commissioned by the Texas Education Agency in 2009. It connects Graduation Alliance's programmatic strategies and practices to the body of research in best and promising practices on dropout recovery.

Evidence that Content and Assessments are Accurate, Free of Bias, and Accessible for Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficiency

The district partnering with Graduation Alliance is responsible for ELL assessment, placement, and services required for identifying and serving non-English Language Proficient students in accordance with state law, including, where necessary, translation services.

Graduation Alliance will work with the District to implement the program as a support to students gaining more fluency in English vocabulary. These supports include curriculum supports, communication supports, and mentoring support for students and families.

Curriculum Supports

Graduation Alliance subscribes to Quality Matters, a national third-party validator of best practices in online learning. In addition to putting its curriculum team through the Quality Matters training and using the rubrics to inform design, Graduation Alliance has contracted with Quality Matters evaluators to review and evaluate both its approach to instructional design and individual courses itself. Graduation Alliance's curriculum template review resulted in a rare perfect score on first attempt. Evaluators reviewing content assess for and confirm accuracy of content, freedom from bias, and accessibility of design following the principles of Universal Design of Instruction.

Graduation Alliance's practices as they relate to accessibility for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency include:

Multiple Means of Engagement:

- Each course includes a Course Success Strategies lesson with support resources and helpful instructions to help students engage with the material and assignments.

- Learning objectives are clearly stated in terms accessible to the students.
- Lessons include various displays of information and autograded activities for students to practice for example: flash cards, compare and contrast card sorting, tabbed information, videos, pop-up questions, etc.
- Assignments are written by our teachers to be authentic to our population
- Courses include class discussions for students to reflect and respond to each other
- Students are introduced to their instructor at the beginning of the course

Multiple means of Representation:

- Course content is provided using lesson text, images, videos, and articles
- Images are tagged with alternate text for accessibility with screen readers
- Videos include closed captions or alternate text is made available for students to access information
- Course content is scaffolded for students to build application of skills
- New terms and concepts are explained in the lesson or with interactive hover-over tooltips.
- Diverse avatar characters and other imagery of diverse learners appear throughout the courses

Multiple means of Action & Expression:

- Lessons include multiple options for navigation between pages
- Students receive immediate feedback for in-lesson pop-up questions as well as auto-graded quizzes
- Students demonstrate various application of skills by completing assignments that include essay writing, presentations, role-playing, audio and/or video recordings, and class discussions

Communications and Mentoring Supports

Additional supports for English Language Learners include translations of outreach materials in languages identified by the district. Bilingual outreach counselors and academic coaches are available to support Spanish speaking students and families.

