



BUILD Oakland

GAINING BUSINESS SAVVY THROUGH REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE

How do you provide underserved youth with the resources they need to succeed? BUILD decisively answers this question by delivering an after-school entrepreneurial program that empowers youth from at-risk communities. The catch: Students must participate for all four years of their high school career, maintaining an above-average GPA. The goal: Students will graduate from high school and enroll in college.

“Our students come from at-risk communities and are likely the first to go to college,” says Oakland Site Director Chantal Laurie. “BUILD teaches them optimism, perseverance and risk-taking – skills they can use in all areas of life.”

At BUILD, students are provided with mentors and academic support. They complete a 30-page business plan in their freshman year. By the second year, their business is financed and fully operating.

“You spend your entire freshman year writing, and it seems like such a big deal,” says Robin, 16, of Sprung Wear T-shirts. “Now that I’m a junior, it’s like, ‘Wow, we are actually selling stuff!’”

In addition to operating a business in their junior year, students visit college campuses, write personal statements and prepare for the SAT. Seniors sunset their businesses, and focus on selecting and applying to colleges. “They begin identifying themselves as leaders and CEOs, transferring their entrepreneurial skills like marketing and long-term goal planning to the college application process,” Laurie explains.

With the help of mentors and financial support from Clorox, BUILD has grown from a pilot in one school to a program serving close to 140 students in four Oakland high schools.

