

# Talladega County Schools Drive Innovation with Mobile AR/VR Lab

Talladega County School District, home to 16 schools with 7,100 students, is renowned for more than just the Talladega Superspeedway. The district is making waves in education through project-based learning and technological innovation, achieving remarkable success with the introduction of a mobile AR/VR lab.

With 71% of its student population qualifying for free and reduced lunch and all schools eligible for Title I funds, the district's mission statement emphasizes student-focused innovation and authentic learning experiences. This mission fueled a groundbreaking initiative to enhance learning across the county through immersive AR/VR technology.

## The Challenge

Increase student engagement in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and CTE (Career and Technical Education) across the district.

## The Solution

Create a mobile zSpace lab that travels from school to school, providing hands-on, immersive STEM and CTE experiences.

In 2019, the district took its first step into the AR/VR realm by installing one zSpace unit in each school's media center. These initial units showcased the potential of immersive technology to enhance learning. Inspired by a visit to a neighboring school with a zSpace lab, district leaders envisioned a mobile lab that could bring these deep learning experiences to every school.

Dr. Brooke Morgan and Emily Nester from the Talladega County Schools Technology Department spearheaded the innovation. With support from Superintendent Dr. Suzanne Lacey and local resources, their vision quickly took shape. Leveraging an old bus from the district and various funding sources, including ESSER funds, they transformed the idea into reality.

In the spring of 2023, the zSpace Immersive Playground (ZIP) made its debut, impressing the League of Innovative Schools with its groundbreaking approach.



## Keys to Success

### 1. Funding and Expertise:

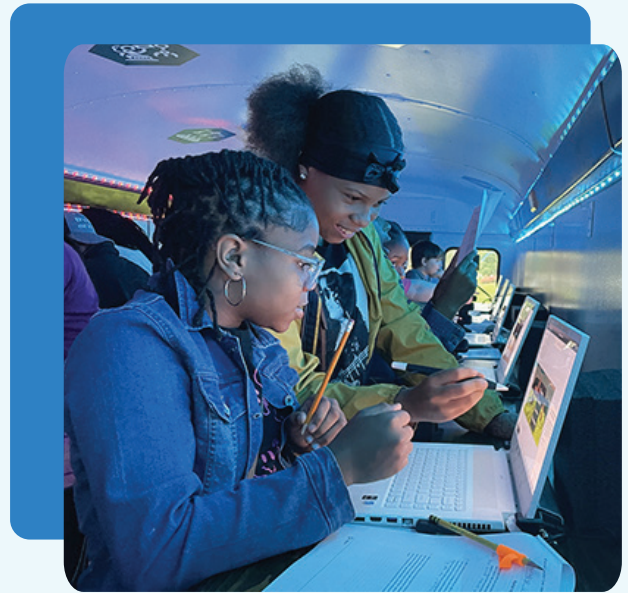
The project utilized diverse funding sources, materials, and expertise. An unused district bus was repurposed, with CTE construction students providing the labor to gut, design, paint, and wire the bus. ESSER funds were used to purchase the AR/VR devices and licenses. Maintenance and transportation staff ensured the bus had power sources and accessibility features.

### 2. Build Capacity:

Dedicated leaders and experts at each school received training to support the mobile lab. Media Specialists and Technology Services staff at each site collaborated with teachers to plan and prepare for the bus's arrival, ensuring smooth integration into the curriculum.

### 3. Create a Schedule:

ZIP operates on a two-week rotation, allowing schools to pre-plan and maximize their time with the lab. This advanced scheduling ensures effective use of the AR/VR technology from day one.



Emily Nester, Educational Technology Specialist, praised the zSpace team's contribution to their success: "zSpace provided open lines of communication and support." The partnership facilitated the district's training needs, offering valuable insights and connections with experts.

"Knowing our purpose helped us utilize resources available, allowing us to lean on experts and think outside the box for funding and connections," Nester added.



Dr. Brooke Morgan emphasized the importance of expertise and collaboration: "To be successful, experts in each building, technology coaches, and teachers must really know how to use the technology to co-plan lessons. Teachers have the support they need to create engaging and purposeful lessons to deepen student understanding."

The Talladega County School District's innovative approach is setting a new standard for education, demonstrating that with vision, collaboration, and technology, transformative learning experiences are possible for all students.