GEAR UP 101:
An Overview of the National GEAR UP Program
National Council For Community & Education Partnerships (NCCEP)

• Non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to assisting students in becoming eligible for and academically successful in higher education.

• Serve as the national technical assistance provider & lead advocacy agency for GEAR UP Programs

• Founded by the Ford and Kellogg Foundations to foster K-16 partnerships among: colleges/universities, K-12 schools, parent groups, businesses, government agencies, foundations, and CBO’s
Presentation Goals

• Provide new GEAR UP professionals with an overview of the GEAR UP program and its theory of change;

• Discuss common GEAR UP program strategies, interventions and activities; and

• Explore GEAR UP program outcomes and best practices for preparing lower income students for postsecondary education.
Increasing Access and Readiness: An Overview of GEAR UP
While Students Have High Expectations . . .

• Percentage of 10th-graders who expected to attain various levels of education

The Education Pipeline is Leaking . . .

- Of 100 8th Graders in 1988:

- Enrolled as 8th grader in 1988: 100
- Graduate from high school: 78
- Enroll in postsecondary education: 53
- Persist from first to second year: 48
- Earn a degree within 12 years: 35

What We Know About College Readiness

• By the 8th grade, significant gaps exist in the academic achievement of student groups.

• Low-income students are less likely to be enrolled in a college-prep curriculum (28%).

• African American and Hispanic students are far more likely to drop out than their White peers.

• Minority and low-income students are less likely to receive a BA degree.
Building College Readiness

• GEAR UP is a holistic program that:
  
  – diagnoses the root causes of student barriers to higher education;

  – facilitates the completion of a rigorous college preparatory curriculum;

  – provides intensive academic and social support to students;

  – engages students and families about the value of education; and

  – guides students and families through the college search, application, and enrollment process.
The Objectives of GEAR UP

• Increase the academic preparedness of GEAR UP students for postsecondary education

• Increase the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in postsecondary education

• Helping GEAR UP students and families navigate the college enrollment and financial aid processes
What Makes GEAR UP Unique

• Holistic program rooted in early intervention
  – *Beginning no later than 7th grade*

• Provides whole grades with sustained programs
  – *Programs follow students as they mature (cohort approach)*

• Applies research-based practices to local efforts
  – *Applications require deep analysis of local needs and resources*

• Community and education partnerships
  – *Legislation requires K-12, postsecondary, and community partners to work towards common goals*

• Leverages local assets and resources for sustainability
  – *Dollar-for-dollar match requirement*
GEAR UP Grants

State Grants

• Competitive, six-year grants
• Awarded to a organization appointed by Governor
• Must spend 50% of funds to provide scholarships to GEAR UP students
• Provide early intervention and services to cohorts of students, or alternatively, priority students
• Annual budget is limited--new applicants were limited to $3 million
• Dollar-for-dollar match requirement

Partnership Grants

• Competitive, six-year grants
• Awarded to a school district or college/university
• Provide early intervention and services to cohorts of students, in specific feeder patterns
• Annual budget is limited to $800 per student served
• Dollar-for-dollar match requirement
Scope of GEAR UP Program

• Active grants in 47 states, DC, PR, Palau, American Samoa

• 5,263 schools served

• Serving approximately 640,000 Students

• Per student federal investment of $474

• Highly competitive: 10.4% of applicants funded in 2006 with a cut-off score of 97.3

• 8.5% of applicants funded in 2008
Racial and Ethnic Composition of Students Served by GEAR UP (April 2007)

N = 639,423

- 37% White
- 30% Hispanic / Latino
- 3% Asian
- 22% African American
- 5% American Indian / Alaskan Native
- 1% Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- 2% Not Reported
What We Know Works – Characteristics of Successful Practice

• Comprehensive information
  – to students & parents
  – about local school system processes & community resources

• Comprehensive services
  – to students and parents
  – to address academic & social issues

• Comprehensive integration
  – of the K-12 and postsecondary school systems
  – of the school systems and the community
  – of community needs, program goals, program evaluation, & program improvement
How GEAR UP Works

Renegotiating Relationships

Quantity of Instruction

Quality of Instruction

Quality of Student Engagement
How GEAR UP Works

- Raise College Awareness
- Increase Academic Aspirations
- Strengthen Academic Achievement
What is GEAR UP doing?

Academic Achievement

– Professional development for teachers, counselors, administrators, and school staff

– Curriculum development and alignment

– Supplemental academic offerings
  • after-school, weekend, and summer academic programs

– Academic mentoring and tutoring

– Academic counseling
What is GEAR UP doing?

Academic Aspirations

– Student, family and community outreach programs
– College visits and tours
– Career counseling, mentoring, and internships
– Student leadership, service learning, and motivational programs
– Scholarships, financial awards, and reduced tuition
What is GEAR UP doing?

College Awareness

– Student, family, and community educational programs about the college search, application, and enrollment process

– College counseling, mentoring, SAT/ACT prep, and application services

– Financial literacy activities for students and families
What is GEAR UP doing?

K-16 Partnership Development

– Development of shared agenda and action plan to improve college readiness in local communities

– Increased collaboration, joint programming, and local policy initiatives among partnership members

– Collaborating with community-based partners to provide a wealth of supplemental services to students and families outside of “school time”
Why Partnerships?

= Education Initiatives

Education Improvement
GOALS
GEAR UP = Strategic Alignment

In an aligned education partnership . . .

Student Achievement System Performance GOALS

... improvement efforts are integrated and results-oriented

Original Source: Pinellas County Schools & National Alliance of Business
The Truth About GEAR UP Success

• While the strategies that GEAR UP provide are essential . . .
  – GEAR UP is about people
  – GEAR UP is about leadership
  – GEAR UP is about relationships
The Evolving Role of the GEAR UP Professional

• GEAR UP requires skill sets above and beyond content expertise:
  – Program Administration and Grant Compliance
  – Change Management
  – Advocacy and Public Policy
  – Community Relations and Communication
  – Fundraising and Partnership Building
Increasing Access and Readiness:  
A Summary of GEAR UP Outcomes
GEAR UP’s Structure and Data

• **Data about what?**
  – *Postsecondary education enrollment rates*
    • High school graduation rates
    • College preparation academic behaviors
    • College-going behaviors

• **Data about whom?**
  – Students, parents, teachers, school systems

• **Data about which level?**
  – National-level (federal and non-federal)
  – State/local partnership levels
Comparison of Postsecondary Enrollment Rates

GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; National

Comparison of High School Graduation Rates

GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; National

GEAR UP Student Algebra Completion by 9th Grade - Actual vs. Target

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Prealgebra Completion Rate (%)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; National

GEAR UP Students with Knowledge of Necessary Academic Preparation for College - Actual vs. Target

Source: U.S. Department of Education
GEAR UP Parents with Knowledge of Necessary Academic Preparation for College - Actual vs. Target

Source: U.S. Department of Education
GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; Local

Washington State GEAR UP College Enrollment, 2005-06

- GEAR UP High School Graduates: 79%
- All High School Graduates: 56%
GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; Local

New Jersey State GEAR UP
Average SAT Scores 2002-03

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Math Score</th>
<th>Average Verbal Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEAR UP</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>418</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
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<td>Comparison Schools Non-GEAR UP Seniors</td>
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<td>361</td>
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GEAR UP Outcomes – Students; Local

Fairmont State, WV GEAR UP
Course Enrollment or Completion, 2004-05

Algebra II  Trigonometry  AP Math  AP English  AP science

GEAR UP Students  Non-GEAR UP Students
GEAR UP Outcomes – School System; Local

Santa Ana, CA GEAR UP

Partnership schools in the Santa Ana GEAR UP program have increased the rigor of their high school exit standards by aligning them with The University of California/California State University entrance standards. GEAR UP initiated this school-wide reform that impacts both GEAR UP and non-GEAR UP students.
Being a seventh grader, one does not think about the road to college. College itself seems unreachable. GEAR UP helped me realize that college is within reach. I recently was selected to receive a $100,000 scholarship to attend the University of Michigan. Thank you GEAR UP!

- Ben Ruano
First-generation College Student,
GEAR UP High School Graduate,
College Student
For More Information

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