

Texas GEAR UP: Beyond Grad

Annual Project Outcomes Report

Evaluation of Year

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Acronyms and Abbreviations²

Overview

As a strategy to overcome the college achievement gap for many low-income students, the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP): Beyond Grad State Grant (referred to as “GEAR UP” in this report) serves approximately 9,000–10,500 students from six Texas school districts (12 middle schools and high schools) in rural communities in West Texas, East Texas, and the Coastal Bend. GEAR UP provides services for the following two groups of students:

- The grant provides *targeted services* to a grade-specific primary cohort of students who were in Grade 7 during the 2018–19 school year (i.e., the **class of 2024**) through their first year of postsecondary education.
- The grant also provides *basic services* to **priority cohort** students consisting of all other students in Grades 9–12 attending participating high schools during each year of the 7-year grant (i.e., from school years 2018–19 to 2024–25).

The GEAR UP program team established nine goals and 31 corresponding project objectives (POs) to track the implementation and outcomes of this federal grant. This report provides an overview of program performance regarding the relevant goals and POs during the 2018–19 (Year 1) and 2019–20 (Year 2) academic years. Program performance regarding Year 2 POs was substantially complicated by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent March 2020 school closures that disrupted all aspects of schooling. Many GEAR

To indicate whether the project objective was fully met, partially met, or not met, the following symbols were used throughout the report as applicable:²



² Criteria for determining projective objectives as fully met, partially met, or not met were based on a combination of the following factors and informed by programmatic knowledge of the field: 1) The individual district performance (i.e., how many districts met the objective); 2) the percent of the total number of students that met the objective, regardless of the results of the districts (this was used when an objective was significantly missed); and 3) the impact of COVID-19 on a district's plans to meet an objective (i.e., a campus or district may have otherwise been on track to meet the objective but plans were cancelled or delayed due to COVID-19).

Project Goal 1: Increasing Access to Rigorous Courses in Order to Reduce the Need for Remediation

“One of the other things that...we are working very hard to meet [is] the Algebra I threshold goal in the eighth grade. And we've made strides toward that goal, but we do still have some work to do.” – Year 2 curriculum director (PO 1.1)

“So, right now we're also in the process of kind of reframing how the tutor is going to move forward to next year...in

Project Goal 3: Providing Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs



“Yes. So we’ll do professional development for the whole high school and part of the junior high, middle school, and sometimes district-wide we share some of the same strategies that we’re doing PD [professional development] with the secondaries, so if elementary wants to know about that as well” – Year 2 curriculum director (PO 3.1)

Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).



“[TNTP] puts everything together for you [for vertical teaming sessions]. Everything. I mean, word for word. If you don’t understand something, they put everything together for you.” – Year 2 GEAR UP coordinator (PO 3.2)

Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.

Year 1

Year 2

5/6 Districts Met Goal

Project Goal 3 (cont.): Providing Educator Training and Professional Development for Rigorous Academic Programs

"I do have a sense [that] the teachers are open [to educator coaching]. We have a lot of first year teachers, so, they're actually very open to the suggestions that [TNTF is] making. They take the constructive criticism well...they're taking it on. They know exactly what some of the issues are, and they're open to learning their craft."

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Project Goal 5: Supporting Participation in Postsecondary Education And Career Preparation

"I don't think we ever provided access to an online PSAT program as early as we have now. So, for example, we've already started putting [a] PSAT prep course together for freshmen for next year's PSAT— it's going to appear on campus soon— and just to get them kind of in that mindset of this is what we do. We have supports in place and the expectation is that you utilize them so that way you find success (he)Jem on a 6/79 -1.14-2.227

Project Goal 6: Providing Postsecondary and Career Preparation Information to Students and Families

“I think that GEAR UP has done a very good job with preparing [students] as far as for registration purposes. So, talking about the endorsements that we offer, the career pathways, kind of helping them to explore before the high school counselor has to go and sit down with them and do a four-year plan. So it’s like they know about that information before they get to us.” – Year 2 high school counselor (PO 6.1)

Objective 6.1: Each year in ninth grade, students will receive information about the school’s high-quality pathways and programs of study that align to postsecondary programs and high-demand careers available to them.

Year 1

Year 2

Objective 6.2: Each year, students and parents will receive

“Well, increased parent participation, which is a problem district-wide with or without GEAR UP. Getting the information out to parents on the importance of GEAR UP and what it’s doing for the community.” – Year 1 GEAR UP coordinator (PO 6.5)

Appendix A: GEAR UP: Beyond Grad Project Goals and Objectives

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) established the following goals and objectives for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP):

Project Goal 1: Increase access to rigorous courses in order to reduce the need for remediation

- ▶ Objective 1.1: By the end of the class of 2024's second year (Grade 8), 30% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I. By the end of the class of 2024's third year (Grade 9), 85% of class of 2024 students will complete Algebra I.⁶
- ▶ Objective 1.2: By the end of the class of 2024's fifth year (Grade 11), 60% of class of 2024 students will complete a Pre-Advanced Placement (AP), Pre-International Baccalaureate (IB), AP, or IB course.
- ▶ Objective 1.3: Each year, 90% of class of 2024 students who receive a failing grade on a progress report will receive targeted academic tutoring.

Project Goal 2: Graduating prepared for college and career

- ▶ Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's sixth year, 60% of class of 2024 students will be eligible to earn college credit through achievement of a passing score on the AP exam, IB exam, or completion of a rigorous dual credit course.
- ▶ Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of class of 2024 students graduating on the Foundation High School Program with an endorsement and/or receiving the Distinguished Level of Achievement will meet or exceed the baseline state average.

Project Goal 3: Provide educator training and professional development for rigorous academic programs

- ▶ Objective 3.1: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).
- ▶ Objective 3.2: Each year, teams of educators and administrators (middle school, high school, and institutions of higher education) will complete at least five days of vertical teaming in order to align curriculum and reduce the need for remediation at the postsecondary level.
- ▶ Objective 3.3: Each year, 50% of high school core content teachers will participate in professional development that supports a rigorous curriculum (e.g., project-based learning, advanced instructional strategies, teacher externships, student engagement, etc.).

- ▶ Objective 7.1: Each year, 75% of class of 2024 students will attend at least one college visit.
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Appendix B: Data and Analysis Methods

Data for the report were collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from six participating school districts, including six middle schools and one K-12 school with the class of 2024 cohort of Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) students (Grade 7 in 2018–19 and Grade 8 in 2019–20), and five high schools and the same K-12 school with the priority cohort of GEAR UP students (Grades 9–12 in 2018–19 and 2019–20). For the class of 2024, data were collected at the individual level and the data elements included student demographics, advanced courses participation, student services received, student/family events provided and attended, and professional development events for teachers. The priority cohort data were collected through a school survey in which each participating school reported aggregated information on student demographics, services received, and event attendance.

TEA analyzed data for the purposes of submitting the GEAR UP Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education. ICF used these metrics and added additional contextual data based on some of the qualitative data collected for the Years 1–2 Annual Implementation Report.⁸

⁸ For more information about this report, please see <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/program-evaluations/program-evaluations-middle-school-high-school-and-college-preparation/program-evaluation-middle-school-high-school-and-college-preparation-initiatives>