



Annual Implementation Report #1

# Texas GEAR UP State Grant Evaluation

September 30, 2013

Submitted to:  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78701

Submitted by:  
ICF International  
9300 Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22031



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For additional information about ICF, please contact:

ICF International  
9300 Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22031-1207  
USA  
Phone: 1.703.934.3603 or 1.800.532.4783  
Fax: 1.703.934.3740  
E-mail: [info@icfi.com](mailto:info@icfi.com)

### ***Contributing Authors***

Barbara O'Donnel, Ph.D.  
Ashley Briggs  
Charles Dervarics  
Thomas Horwood  
Jing Sun  
Allison Alexander  
Jessica Zumdahl  
Jackie Rhodes

### ***Prepared for***

Texas Education Agency  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78701-1494  
Phone: 512-463-9734

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## List of Acronyms

AVID	Advancement Via Individual Determination
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AP	Advanced Placement
APR	Annual Performance Report
AR	Academic rigor
CIS	Communities In Schools
DDI	Data-driven instruction
ELA	English language arts
EWDS	Early Warning Data Systems
EYL	Emerging Youth Leaders
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
GEAR UP	Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs
HB	House Bill
HBCU	Historically Black College and University
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institution
IRB	Internal Review Board
ISAS	Integrated Statewide Administrative System
LEP	Limited English Proficient
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NOGA	Notification of Grant Award
PBL	Project Based Learning
PD	Professional Development
PEIMS	Public Education Information Management System
PSM	Propensity score matching
QED	Quasi-experimental design
SG	State Grant
SSS	Student support services
STAAR <sup>®</sup> /	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness <sup>®</sup> /
STAAR <sup>®</sup> EOC	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness <sup>®</sup> End-of-Course
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
TG	Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
T-STEM	Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Centers
TAKS	Texas Assessments of Knowledge and Skills
TEA	Texas Education Agency
THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
USDE	United States Department of Education
UT-IPSI	The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives



## Executive Summary

In fiscal year 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Through the Texas GEAR UP state grant (SG), participating schools are providing services to a cohort of students and their families from Grade 7 (2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (2018–19 school year). Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact teachers through the provision of professional development (PD) and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor. Finally, the Texas GEAR UP SG is intended to make a statewide impact through the widespread provision of coordinated information and resources for students and their families regarding postsecondary opportunities.

### Evaluation of Texas GEAR UP SG

The evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG program is being conducted to examine implementation and outcomes, as well as the relationship between implementation and outcomes, and to identify potential best practices over the seven-year grant period. This first implementation report focuses primarily on formative feedback regarding early Year 1 implementation. Most outcome data are not yet available, limiting additional types of analyses. This report was informed by interviews with TEA and its partners on the grant, review of grantee action plans, GEAR UP federal annual performance reporting (APR) data, student and parent surveys, and qualitative site visit data.<sup>1</sup>

Understanding the shortened period for Year 1 implementation is critical to interpreting the report findings. TEA first applied for the grant in July 2011 with plans for implementation to begin in the 2011–12 school year. Based on this application, USDE awarded the Texas GEAR UP SG in April 2012 during a second cycle of awards. TEA had experienced staffing changes during this period, and there were leadership changes at some of the districts and schools that had agreed to participate in the program when the application was first submitted. Ultimately, awards were made to the four districts participating in the Texas GEAR UP SG in October 2012.<sup>2</sup> Actual implementation did not begin at campuses until November/December 2012. In addition to beginning implementation in November/December 2012, APR data that is central to understanding implementation were collected in April 2013 but only reflected implementation through March 31, 2013. Additional data included in this report were collected through site visits to schools and surveys administered to students and parents in May 2013. Additional Texas GEAR UP SG Year 1 implementation activities will occur through summer 2013. In other words, the Texas GEAR UP SG had only been implemented for approximately six months before data collection was completed for this report. Readers are cautioned to keep this Year 1 implementation context in mind while forming ideas about the program based on the report.

### Key Findings

Key findings to date presented here are organized as being related to implementation or as related to students' and parents' survey responses. Findings were also considered key if they

<sup>1</sup> TEA's partners on the Texas GEAR UP SG include the Texas GEAR UP Support Center staffed by personnel from The University of Texas at Austin's Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), TG (formerly Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation), the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (T-STEM) Centers, College Board, and AMS Pictures.

<sup>2</sup> The districts identified seven middle schools to participate in the program beginning in the 2012–13 school year. Schools are identified by letter in order to protect confidentiality.

were aligned to program goals set by TEA (see Appendix A). Interested readers are guided to the full report for additional information on all key findings. Overarching evaluation questions that are addressed in the report include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?
- What were students, parents, teachers, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to date?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
- What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- What are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college expectations and aspirations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 1?

## Implementation

### Key Takeaway:

Level and mix of implementation varied significantly across schools in the first six months of Year 1. School G appeared to have made the most progress on implementing the wide range of GEAR UP practices as designed/intended, although at least three schools (School B, School E, and School F) appeared to make excellent Year 1 progress at implementing a range of practices as well. The remaining three schools implemented a smaller range of activities.

The national GEAR UP program encourages grantees to engage in a wide range of implementation practices in order to support program goals, referred to here as mix of implementation. Table ES.1 provides a high-level overview of the range of implementation activities engaged in to any extent by the seven middle schools in the 2012–13 school year. There was a large amount of variation in the range of the number of implementation strategies implemented. While it is unclear at this point if any particular implementation activity or mix of implementation activities was or will be related to outcomes, School G clearly made the greatest progress toward implementing the wide range of practices intended in the short time period available and was the only school to provide counseling/advising and job site visit/job shadowing opportunities to students in Year 1.



**Table ES.1. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, 2012–13**

Implementation Strategy	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SSS <sup>a</sup> : Tutoring	X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>	X <sup>b</sup>	X	X (mathematics only)	X (mathematics only)	X
SSS: Mentoring					X		X
SSS: Counseling/ Advising							X
SSS: Other Activities (After School Mathematics Program)					X	X	
College Visit	X	X		X			X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing							X
Student Workshops/ Events	X	X	X		X	X	X
Parent Events		X	X		X	X	X
Teacher PD <sup>c</sup>				X	X	X	X
Community Partners		X	X	X			X
Use Statewide Services					X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report, April/May 2013 site visit data.

<sup>a</sup> SSS=student support services. An additional SSS, financial advising, had not been implemented by any schools at the time of this report.

<sup>b</sup> School A, School B and School C each indicated in the APR that students had participated in virtual tutoring relatively extensively. However, during the site visit, the actual level of tutoring was reported to be minimal. Still, given that tutoring had occurred to some extent, the schools were credited with having implemented tutoring.

<sup>c</sup> PD= professional development. For this table, attendance at the national GEAR UP conference was not included in PD. All schools sent staff to the conference.

Texas GEAR UP SG has a Year 2 goal of at least 75% of Grade 8 students being involved in student support services (SSS), including comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring. Across all schools, 39% of Grade 7 students had been involved in these SSS in Year 1. However, School A, School B, and School C will all need to make significant adjustments in order to achieve this Year 2 goal. In Year 1, 34% of students or fewer were participating in SSS at these schools. At School D, School E, and School F, more than 75% of students were already engaged in SSS in Year 1, primarily through tutoring. At School E, almost all students (91%) were participating in both tutoring and mentoring. School G, while providing the broadest mix of SSS, had 66% of student participating in at least one SSS implementation activity in Year 1. It will need to make only small adjustments in Year 2 to achieve the goal. Tutoring occurs at School G although to a lesser extent than at several other schools. It is unclear if the differences in level of implementation across schools is related to school perceptions of which SSS may be helpful to students or if it differs due to a need for schools to develop better strategies to identify students requiring SSS or to increase their capacity to provide the services to students.

When mix of implementation includes workshops/events, family events, a college visit or other academic support, 81% of students across schools in Year 1 had participated in some Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity. At School G, 34% of students had participated in three or more activities, and only 8% of students had not participated in any activity. At the other end

of the scale, School C lagged significantly in level of implementation—only 33% of students had participated in one activity and 3% in two activities, with the remaining 64% of students not participating in any activity at this point in Year 1.

### ALGEBRA I: ADVANCED COURSE TAKING, TUTORING, AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

**Key Takeaway:**

While schools are focused on helping students to succeed in mathematics and, ultimately, to achieve Texas GEAR UP SG Algebra I goals, execution of plans for summer 2013 mathematics enrichment programs may be critical to helping schools achieve the Year 2 Algebra I goal.

Successful completion of Algebra I is a key early outcome, with goals of 30% of students by the end of Grade 8 and 85% of students by the end of Grade 9 expected to achieve this outcome. Participation in an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7 may indicate the potential for students to successfully complete Algebra I within these timeframes.<sup>3</sup> Grade 7 students' enrollment in an advanced mathematics course averaged 22% and ranged from 18% (School G) to 29% (School D). Based on this, it is unclear if sufficient percentages of students will be prepared to successfully complete Algebra I in Grade 8. That is, student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 7 fell below 30% at all schools and was well below this at two of the schools (School C and School F).

Tutoring efforts in Year 1 also emphasized mathematics tutoring, which is likely to support the Algebra I goals. Across schools, 47% of students were tutored in mathematics. As of March 31, 2013, the number of hours of tutoring in mathematics differed significantly by school. Average hours of mathematics tutoring exceeded 40 hours per participating student at two of the schools (School E and School F). School G provided significantly fewer hours of tutoring in mathematics (2.8 hours average per student) than all other schools. It is not known if any given school was implementing an appropriate number of hours of tutoring to support students or if some schools lacked capacity to increase the number of hours of tutoring to a level that might better support students. In addition to enrolling students in an advanced mathematics course and providing tutoring in mathematics, two schools (School E and School F) engaged in an afterschool mathematics enrichment program. All schools indicated in their spring 2013 site visits that they were planning summer 2013 mathematics enrichment programs.

### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WITH TEXAS GEAR UP SG

**Key Takeaway:**

Family engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG activities was low in Year 1 and no school achieved the goal of at least 50% of parents participating in at least three events as of March 31, 2013. The limited number of family events provided by schools and relatively low family attendance in those activities likely contributed to the low level of awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG expressed by parents and family members during evaluation site visits.

Across the seven schools, 12 family events were offered, with only 4.5% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort families attending an event. While it did not count as participation in a family event,

<sup>3</sup> Student enrollment in advanced courses in Grade 7 is considered baseline data as participating schools could not typically change student course placements in the middle of the school year when Texas GEAR UP SG programming began. Advanced courses are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-Advanced Placement (AP) courses are considered advanced.

School G mailed all parents information regarding the Texas GEAR UP SG program and parent knowledge of the program was higher at this school than other schools. At School B, the school reported that 17% of parents participated in an event, the highest percentage at any school. School E and School F launched a three-part series of workshops for parents and families later in spring 2013 and noted that these events were successful, with higher numbers of parents attending the Texas GEAR UP SG family events than other meetings or events held at the school.<sup>4</sup>

### TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND VERTICAL TEAMING

#### Key Takeaway:

The November/December 2012 start of the Texas GEAR UP SG program likely contributed to low levels of program related teacher PD because schools had already planned teacher PD schedules before the beginning of the school year. School G was the primary exception, engaging in a broad range of teacher PD by May 2013. This included training on project based learning that occurred with a vertical team of teachers from the middle school and high school.

Most schools already had designed and scheduled their teacher PD activities for the 2012–13 school year prior to being awarded the Texas GEARUP SG and were not able to easily change plans. It may be that School G had already planned teacher PD that was easily aligned to Texas GEAR UP SG goals or that School G was better able to revise its planned teacher PD. Teachers who participated in focus groups expressed an interest in both PD on project based learning and pre-AP training for teachers. Teachers participating in focus groups at all schools also reported that few vertical teaming activities had occurred, although they indicated they valued such opportunities. During site visits, staff at all schools indicated plans for summer teacher PD related to Texas GEAR UP SG goals.

### Student and Parent Surveys

#### Key Takeaway:

Across the range of information provided on the parent and student surveys, there were clear indicators that Texas GEAR UP SG could make a difference to the students and parents it serves. Both parents and students had aspirations that exceeded their educational expectations, suggesting that they are concerned about achieving education dreams. Few students or parents perceive themselves as very knowledgeable, which can potentially be changed by participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities. Finally, there are multiple indicators that parents and students both need and want financial information as it relates to postsecondary education. With proper implementation of planned Texas GEAR UP SG activities, it is anticipated that students and families will gain knowledge and information about financial aspects of college and will view affordability as less of a barrier, increasing the likelihood that expectations and aspirations will be aligned.

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and parents were surveyed in spring 2013. In addition to learning about perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, the surveys provided important information about educational aspirations and expectations, knowledge of college financial issues, and knowledge of college related concepts.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed information regarding participation will be provided in future progress reports submitted by the schools and data will be presented in future reports.

## EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

For both parents and students, educational aspirations were significantly higher than educational expectations. School G, where the implementation mix was the most broad, had the highest percentage of students who indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities had positively influenced their decision to go to college (58%). That is, these students suggested that before Texas GEAR UP SG participation they were not committed to attending college but now expected to do so. Across schools, the greatest percentage of students who do not plan to go to college selected *concerns about cost* as a main reason for not continuing onto postsecondary education (48%).

## KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

Texas GEAR UP SG has targeted an appropriate group of schools where the parents and students need additional information and support in order to become extremely knowledgeable about postsecondary education. Sixty percent of students indicated that they consider parents to be a key source of such information. Thus, supporting parents in gaining information may be critical. Across a range of college related terms (e.g., SAT, FAFSA), the majority of parents and students indicated they were either slightly knowledgeable or knowledgeable, with few indicating they were extremely knowledgeable. Additionally, nearly three-fourths of parents indicated they feel they do not have enough information about college entrance requirements, and a similar percentage indicated that no one from school or Texas GEAR UP SG had talked with them about these requirements.

## FINANCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF COLLEGE

Perhaps one reason that parents and students were concerned about cost is that they tended to overestimate how much college will cost as compared to the actual state average. One in four parents and 12% of students indicated they have no knowledge about college financial aid. Parents on average considered themselves to be only slightly knowledgeable about financial terms. In the absence of knowledge, parents (69%) and students (93%) expressed at least some concern about being able to afford college.<sup>5</sup> While Texas GEAR UP SG cannot impact the actual cost of college, it can provide parents and students with better information regarding actual costs and about financial supports to assist in paying for college, including scholarships and loans. In addition, since parents' fears are high but lower than students' fears, parents may need to be supported and guided to have frank conversations about financing college with their children.

## PERCEPTION OF TEXAS GEAR UP SG ACTIVITIES

At School G, where the broadest range of implementation activities occurred, student overall satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG was highest, with 41% of students indicating they were very satisfied. While implementation appeared to be relatively high at School E and School F as well, less than 25% of students at these schools reported being very satisfied. This suggests that factors other than the range of implementation activities may impact satisfaction.

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<sup>5</sup> These percentages are of all parents/students responding to how sure they were that they could afford college. As noted, the main reason selected for not attending college by students who do not currently anticipate attending was cost.

## Key Facilitators and Barriers: Implementation

### Grant Coordinator Time Commitment and Support from Campus/District Administration

#### Key Takeaway:

The most salient difference between School G, where range of implementation activities was high, and the other schools, was the time commitment of the grant coordinators. School G was the only school with a coordinator who was located at the school and who had a 100% time commitment to implement the grant at the school. Coordinators who had other responsibilities or were responsible for implementation at more than one school appeared to be challenged to find the time to initiate such a broad range of new activities across such a broad range of stakeholders.

School G, where the greatest range of implementation activities occurred, was the only school to have a Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator who was located at the school and was committed 100% to implementing the project at that school. School E and School F, where implementation mix was also high, had a coordinator with a significant time commitment for Texas GEARUP SG. At the remaining four schools, all with lower levels of implementation, the coordinator was responsible for a range of other programs, and in some cases was responsible for implementation at more than one school, therefore having less time to commit to Texas GEAR UP SG. The grant coordinator's level of time commitment to single school implementation was the most obvious difference between the schools and explains in part the varying levels of implementation. In addition, at School E, School F, and School G there were more obvious signs of support from both campus and district administrators, further supporting the high level of implementation at these schools. At these three schools, office space that was centrally located at either the campus or district was provided to the coordinator and the coordinator was actively involved with other staff implementing programs.

### Improved Academic Rigor

A potential barrier identified during site visits was concern about the need to improve academic rigor in advanced courses. Teachers at several schools who participated in focus groups noted that while they have students in advanced courses, the content was not as rigorous as needed to facilitate success. Schools have leeway in identifying a course as advanced by indicating it as Honors or pre-AP. If the course content is less rigorous than teachers who participated in focus groups thought it should be, it may be less likely that students in the advanced courses will ultimately be successful academically, particularly as they enter postsecondary education. It will be important to examine this perception of academic rigor over time as Texas GEAR UP SG is implemented.

### Parents' Perceived Facilitators and Barriers

#### Key Takeaway:

Parents reported that engagement in activities is facilitated when topics are of interest to them, when events are held at times appropriate for their schedule, and when their student is also engaged.

Parents who responded to the survey indicated they were more likely to be engaged in family event activities held at the school when their students encouraged them to be engaged. This suggests that schools may benefit from working with students on involving parents, which can be difficult at the middle school level. Parents also identified picking a topic that was of interest to them as critical to their engagement in the activity. The greatest percentage of parents (49%) and students (28%) indicated college financing as a topic of interest. One-fifth of parents also



indicated they were interested in more information about the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Not surprisingly, parents most commonly identified time/schedule conflicts as a barrier to participation.

### **Other facilitators and barriers**

Other facilitators to implementation included building on existing programs within the school, existing relationships with universities, and support from the Texas GEAR UP Support Center. Barriers included the need to increase the number of parent events and teacher professional development opportunities and increasing the receptivity of cohort schools/districts to opportunities provided by TEA partners.

### **Potential Promising Practices**

While it is early in implementation (first six months) and any links between implementation and outcomes are not yet known, there were three activities about which a range of stakeholders were enthusiastic. Given the level of enthusiasm, the activities are suggested as potential promising practices for other schools to engage in and future examination of their impact is warranted. These activities are afterschool mathematics programs, enhanced college visits, and family events.

#### **Afterschool Mathematics Programs**

School E and School F had begun afterschool mathematics programs, targeting students who were expected to take Algebra I in Grade 8, if supported. The schools estimated that approximately 25% of students participated in the programs. Teachers at these schools who participated in focus groups indicated that the lessons used in the afterschool programs were often more challenging and more hands-on than in a typical mathematics class. In site visit focus groups, students who attended the program were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Facilitators identified as contributing to the programs' success included providing dinner and bus transportation home after the program.

#### **Enhanced College Visits**

School G tied classroom activities to college visits. For example, in one activity students researched colleges for a paper in English class. Students also wrote and decorated college brochures. Linking these visits to classroom practice may increase development of a college-going culture at the school.

#### **Family Events**

Family engagement was relatively low in Year 1, in part because schools had offered a relatively small number of family events during the brief six months of implementation reported on at the time of this report. During site visits, School E and School F reported success with a three-part series of family engagement workshops. The schools reported feeling successful at engaging parents in the series, as compared to previous experiences with engaging parents. The schools used flyers, personal calls from teachers, and "robo-calls" to build parent awareness and interest in the events. They provided free childcare to parents and Spanish translation for parents with limited English skills. The schools were optimistic that they could build on their successes in the future and attain the goal of 50% attendance at three events.

### **Recommendations/Next Steps**

Based on the range of data that have been analyzed to date, several key recommendations or next steps with regard to program implementation in Year 2 can be made. These include the following:

- **Summer 2013 Implementation. During spring 2013 site visits,** all schools indicated that they would be implementing both summer mathematics enrichment programs (to support the Algebra I goal) and summer teacher PD. Summer 2013 implementation will be considered as Year 1 implementation. It is anticipated that successful summer implementation will be crucial to achieving success on Texas GEAR UP SG goals regarding Grade 8 student enrollment in Algebra I and teacher participation in PD. Concern was expressed during site visits that teacher PD may continue to present a challenge over the summer. Some schools indicated that planning for teacher PD in a given school year, including the summer, occurs at the start of the school year. Texas GEAR UP SG Year 1 implementation did not begin until November/December 2012, and changing the teacher PD plans even into summer 2013 was sometimes difficult. More generally, it is recommended that each school work on plans for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in the upcoming year over each summer.
- **Year 2 Texas GEAR UP SG Outreach Activities.** Given the relatively low or uneven visibility of the program across stakeholders in Year 1 and given that some new students will join the school (and thus the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort), it is recommended that subrecipients be encouraged to consider engaging in additional “kickoff” type of activities at the start of the 2013–14 school year. These activities should include students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- **SSS Decision Making.** The Texas GEAR UP SG encourages subrecipients to place students in SSS based on both teacher/counselor input and available data. Currently, only School G reported engaging in this practice. Going forward, all schools report that they are working on an early warning data system (EWDS), which will likely increase using data to drive decision making. Overall, it is recommended that schools revisit their decision making for providing SSS to students in order to facilitate the right students receiving the right supports as early as they can..
- **Increased Number, Timing and Content of Parent Events to Support Family Engagement.** To meet the goal of 50% of parents participating in at least three events each year, it is recommended that schools consider delivering more than three events or delivering one type of event at multiple times to facilitate parent attendance. In addition, parents reported that they are more likely to be engaged when the content aligns with areas where they have concerns. The most common focus across site visits and survey data would be for schools to consider family events that address the range of financial related topics—financial literacy, college costs, and scholarships. Those schools that have high percentages of parents who are limited English proficient (LEP) may want to consider engaging these parents by supporting their development of English skills, as at least some parents indicated an interest in such opportunities. Subrecipients are also encouraged to broaden their range of strategies used to recruit families.
- **College Preparation Advisors.** In Year 2, each school will have a College Preparation Advisor who has been trained in the Texas GEAR UP SG goals, school characteristics, student success strategies, and college access and readiness strategies. The College Preparation Advisor will be assigned to the school for 100% of her or his time. While grant coordinators will continue to lead in implementing the broad range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, College Preparation Advisors will identify issues and be responsible for keeping students on track to graduate high school and be successful in college by providing individualized student support. It will be critical for schools to provide the College Preparation Advisors with appropriate and timely access to all the stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators, and provide them with timely and relevant data for them to succeed in their roles. To further support a college-going culture at the school, it is also hoped that schools will provide these College Preparation Advisors with a dedicated physical space for individual work with students.





# 1. Introduction and Overview of Texas GEAR UP

In April 2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The broad purpose of the federal GEAR UP program is to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Through the Texas GEAR UP state grant (SG), participating schools will provide services to a cohort of students from Grade 7 (2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (2018–19). Texas GEAR UP SG services are intended to impact individual students and their families, as well as to impact teachers through the provision of professional development (PD) and schools/districts through changes in academic rigor. In addition, the Texas GEAR UP SG is intended to make a statewide impact through the widespread provision of coordinated information and resources for students and their families regarding postsecondary opportunities. Additional detail regarding the Texas GEAR UP SG is contained later in this chapter.

TEA contracted with ICF International to provide an external, third-party evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG, including annual implementation reports. This chapter provides a brief overview of relevant research literature on student success and college readiness, along with an understanding of these issues in the context of the state of Texas. This chapter also provides an overview of planned implementation for the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation.

## 1.1 The College Readiness Challenge

### 1.1.1 Research on Supporting College Readiness

Conley (2007) defines college readiness as “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (p. 5). In Texas, large percentages of students do not meet this definition of college readiness, with 41% of students enrolled in postsecondary education in fall 2010 requiring developmental education coursework in one or more content area education (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2012). Community and technical colleges are particularly likely to enroll students with needs for developmental education courses. According to the THECB (2012) report, in fall 2010, 55% of students enrolled in Texas community and technical colleges and 16% of students enrolled in four-year public institutions were not college ready. The impact on students in terms of time, money, and outcomes is significant when developmental education courses are required. For example, Texas students who did not require developmental coursework were twice as likely as students who did to have graduated with a degree (THECB, 2012).<sup>6</sup>

The federal GEAR UP program is focused on supporting college readiness for at-risk youth. Only 7% of low-income youth attain a college degree by age 26, compared with 51% of students from the highest socioeconomic status quartile (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006). Nationally, in 2010, 52% of high school completers from low-income families immediately enrolled in college, as compared to 67% of students from middle-income families and 82% from high-income families (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012a). The percentage of Hispanic youth immediately enrolling in college (60%) was also significantly lower in 2010 than either White or Black youth (71% and 66% respectively). According to the Pew Hispanic Center

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<sup>6</sup> Twice as likely to have graduated with a degree from a community college within three years and twice as likely to have graduated from a four-year institution within six years. Data reflect graduation in 2009 for community college and 2010 for four-year college graduation.

(2012), Hispanics represent about one-quarter of all public school students nationwide but make up 16% of those in higher education. Postsecondary graduation rates also lag for minority students. In 2010, 34% of Black youth who first enrolled in postsecondary education in 2004, as compared to 50% of Hispanic youth and 62% of White youth, had graduated college within six years (NCES, 2012b).

### 1.1.2 Texas Educational Context

Texas has taken a range of approaches to try to address challenges related to graduation and postsecondary success. Following a decade of work, THECB, in conjunction with TEA, released college and career readiness standards (2009). These standards were established by teams that vertically aligned secondary and postsecondary standards in the core content areas (i.e., mathematics, English language arts (ELA)/writing, science, and social studies). The college and career readiness standards are intended to involve educators across grade levels in preparing youth for postsecondary success. Texas is one of 24 states requiring exit exams to earn a standard high school diploma and is one of 38 states to have defined college and career readiness standards (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013).<sup>7</sup>

In June 2013, the Texas Legislature passed and signed into law House Bill 5 (HB 5, 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session), which made changes to both state testing requirements and graduation requirements. This bill was still in the process of being interpreted by TEA at the time of this report. Since HB 5 will be implemented in the 2013–14 school year, these changes will impact the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students. An overview of relevant HB 5 changes is provided here. To place the changes in context it is important to understand certain aspects of testing and graduation requirements that were not changed. First, in order to increase rigor of the assessment, Texas previously changed its standardized tests from Texas Assessments of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness<sup>®</sup> (STAAR<sup>®</sup>) and STAAR<sup>®</sup> End-of-Course (EOC) exams. STAAR<sup>®</sup> was first implemented in spring 2012. HB 5 is not expected to result in the creation of new standardized tests (although changes in the number of STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC described in the following paragraph will occur). In addition, Grade 8 students will still be required to pass STAAR<sup>®</sup> (achieving Level II or III performance) to be promoted to Grade 9. Schools must provide additional services to students who do not pass STAAR<sup>®</sup> on first testing with the intention of helping them to succeed on re-tests.

HB 5 mandated a reduction in the number of STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC exams required for high school graduation from 15 to 5. Required STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOCs will include Algebra I, Biology, U.S. History, and English I and II, which will combine reading and writing in a single day administration beginning in spring 2014. Students who do not satisfactorily pass these tests will be required to have accelerated instruction. HB 5 allows ‘satisfactory performance’ on any of a range of assessments including the ACT and SAT exams to replace the STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC exam (LegiScan, 2013; Legislative Budget Board, 2013; TEA, 2013a). Students with outstanding performance on one of the identified assessments will earn a performance acknowledgement in their transcripts.

With regard to graduation plans, HB 5 replaces the “minimum diploma requirements” with a “foundation plan.” Beyond courses required for the foundation plan, students have flexibility in course selection. Students will be required to declare an intent for an endorsement when entering Grade 9. Endorsements are broad areas of interest that will guide the students’ course selections through high school. The five endorsement choices are business and industry; arts and humanities; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); multidisciplinary studies; or public service. Students have the ability to opt out of any endorsements in Grade 10

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<sup>7</sup> Texas’ exit exams are the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness<sup>®</sup> End-of-Course exams.

with parental consent. HB 5 eliminated Texas' "four x four" system, which required that all students take four years of mathematics, science, English, and social studies to graduate. Instead, HB 5 defines graduation at a distinguished level of achievement and mandates students and families be informed about the benefits of graduating with this distinction. Students can graduate with a distinguished level of achievement under the foundation high school program by completing the requirements of the foundation program and at least one endorsement, while also earning four credits of science and four credits of mathematics, including Algebra II. Students who graduate as Distinguished and in the top 10% of their class would be eligible for automatic admission to a public Texas four-year college or university. Texas' GEAR UP SG programs must work on designing services and strategies for students in this statewide environment of increasing rigor, changing graduation requirements, and college readiness standards. The Texas legislature meets every two years, so additional changes in education requirements may occur over the lifetime of the grant.

Before HB 5, student performance on Algebra II and English III STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC, at Level III (Advanced Academic Performance) was defined as being well prepared for postsecondary success; Level II (Satisfactory Academic Performance) was defined as sufficiently prepared for postsecondary success. In other words, Level III on these two exams was considered a marker of college and career readiness. As these two exams were made voluntary under HB 5, it is unclear at this time if any STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC college and career readiness standards will be identified.

Recent data on the progress in Texas on state exams, graduation, Advanced Placement (AP) tests, and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) illustrate the need for programs such as the Texas GEAR UP SG. For example, scores from the spring 2013 STAAR<sup>®</sup> tests, in part, reflect student progress towards graduation and college readiness.<sup>8</sup> Progress is important as those students who graduate but struggled on STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC are likely to be placed in developmental education courses upon enrollment in postsecondary institutions. In 2013, student performance on STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC suggests that while progress has been made, a large subgroup of students continue to struggle on these exams (TEA News Release, 2013). Pass rates on STAAR<sup>®</sup> EOC exams for high school students in 2013 show that 82.1% passed Algebra I (down 0.6 percentage points from 2012), 70.1% passed English I reading (up 2.2 percentage points from 2012), and 54.3% passed English I writing (down 0.2 percentage points from 2012). In other words, approximately 18% to 46% of students struggle on any given exam.

Passage rates in reading scores were higher in 2013 for both Hispanic students (3.2 percentage point increase from 2012) and economically disadvantaged students (2.6% increase from 2012). Where passage rates are required for grade promotion, STAAR<sup>®</sup> passage rates for Grade 8 students were 77.2% for mathematics (up 1.5% from 2012) and 83.5% for reading (up 3.6 percentage points from 2012).<sup>9</sup> For Grade 5 students, where passage is also required for grade promotion, 75.1% passed mathematics (down 2.4 percentage points from 2012), and 77.1% passed reading (no change from 2012) (TEA News Release, 2013). This means that from 16% to 25% of subgroups of students in Grade 5 and Grade 8 do not pass a given assessment. GEAR UP was designed in part to facilitate the success of students such as those who are struggling in these early grades by providing student supports beginning in Grade 7.

Data based on the 2009–2011 American Community Survey indicate that 70.9% of Texas young adults 16 to 21 years old are in school (compared to 74.7% nationally), 8.6% are out of school and do not have a high school diploma (compared to 6.5% nationally), and 20.4% are out of school and have a high school diploma (compared to 18.9% nationally) (Editorial Projects

<sup>8</sup> All STAAR<sup>®</sup> passing rates reported here are for first time test takers only (i.e., no retest scores).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Following opportunities to retest on exams, the passage rate is anticipated to increase.

in Education Research Center, 2013). TEA (2013) reported that the average freshman graduation rate for 2009–2010 in Texas was 78.9%, as compared to 78.2% nationally.<sup>10</sup> The state-reported longitudinal graduation rate for Texas students in the Class of 2012 Grade 9 cohort was 87.7% (compared to 85.9% for the Class of 2011). The longitudinal graduation rates were 84.3% for Hispanic students (compared to 81.8% for the Class of 2011) and 85.1% for economically disadvantaged students (compared to 83.7% for the Class of 2011). Using the NCES dropout definition, the dropout rate for the Class of 2012 Grade 9 cohort was 6.3% (compared to 6.8% for the Class of 2011), 8.0% for Hispanic students (compared to 8.7% for the Class of 2011), and 7.8% for economically disadvantaged students (compared to 7.7% for the Class of 2011) (TEA, 2013).

While participation and success in AP courses by the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort will be more relevant in future reporting years, it is important to note statewide progress to date. The number of Texas graduates leaving high school having taken an AP exam increased by 122% from 2002 to 2012. In 2012, 35.5% of Texas graduates took at least one AP exam (compared to 40% nationally), and 18.1% of Texas graduates scored a three or higher on at least one AP exam (compared to 19.5% nationally). Texas had a 7.1 percentage point increase from 2002 to 2012 for graduates scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam during high school (compared to a 7.9 percentage point increase nationally). For Texas graduates from a low-income background, 45.3% took at least one AP exam, and 39.3% of them scored a three or higher on an AP exam. For Texas graduates who are Hispanic, 41% took at least one AP exam; 35.3% of these students scored a 3 or higher on an AP exam (The College Board, 2013; TEA, 2013b). Scoring a 3 on an AP exam is typically the minimum to be considered college ready and to receive college credit, although many postsecondary institutions only award credit for scores of 4 or 5 (with 5 being the highest score possible).<sup>11</sup>

In the 2011 NCES Mega-States report, Texas NAEP scores are compared to four other large states and the nation. Average scores in Texas reflected no significant difference between the state and the nation in Grade 4 reading or mathematics. For two separate subgroups of students in Texas—Hispanic students and students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch (a marker of low economic status)—the percentage who are at or above proficient in Grade 4 reading exams also did not differ as compared to the four states and the nation. In mathematics, however, the percentage of Grade 4 students at or above proficient for both Hispanic students and for students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch was significantly higher than national averages. In Texas, average Grade 8 reading scores were significantly lower than the nation, and average mathematics scores were significantly higher than the nation. In reading, the percentage of Grade 8 Hispanic students in Texas at or above proficient was not significantly different from the nation but was significantly lower for Grade 8 students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch. In mathematics, the percentage of Grade 8 students at or above proficient for both Hispanic students and students eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch was significantly higher than national averages. Additionally, the average mathematics scores of Grade 8 Hispanic students in Texas increased by 38 points from 1990 to 2011; the average mathematics scores for Grade 8 students in Texas eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch increased by 17 points from 2003 to 2011 (NCES, 2013a).

It will be important to continue to watch how these trends in state data, as well as state compared to national data, over time are reflected in or depart from progress in Texas GEAR

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<sup>10</sup> TEA based this on primary data reported by the NCES (2013b).

<sup>11</sup> Each postsecondary institution sets its own requirements for when it will count AP exam performance for course credit; this can vary within an institution across courses.



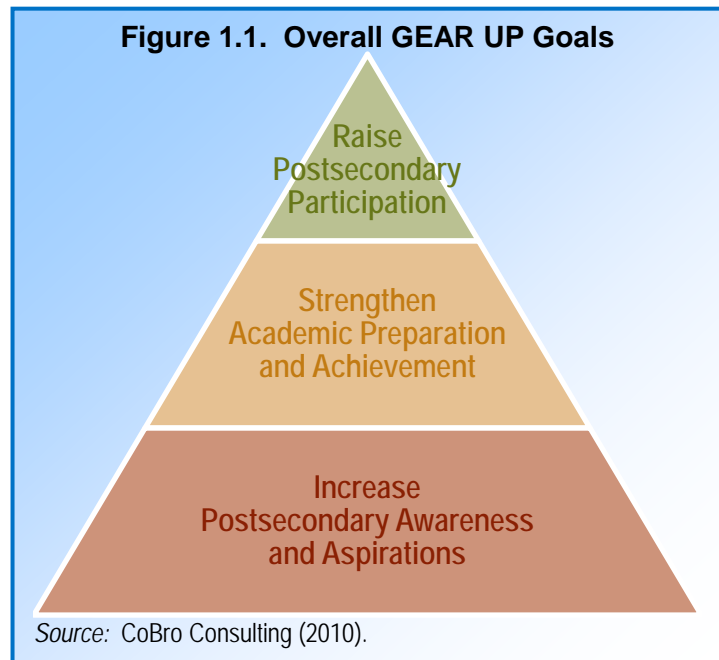
UP SG schools. Disaggregated data reflecting trends in key demographic groups served by Texas GEAR UP SG schools will be particularly important to watch.

### 1.1.3 About the Federal GEAR UP Program

The federal GEAR UP program seeks to improve postsecondary enrollment and completion for low-income students. The GEAR UP program addresses challenges faced by low-income students in attaining postsecondary success in an early and ongoing manner, providing services, activities, and resources to students from Grade 7 through the first year of college.

This first implementation report is one of many Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation reports that will assist TEA in informing the U.S. Department of Education about the progress made on achieving the three overarching goals set forth for GEAR UP programs. These goals can be visualized as a pyramid, with each goal building on previously attained goals (CoBro Consulting, 2010; see Figure 1.1). While the goals build on each other, strategies associated with each goal can occur throughout the implementation for GEAR UP (e.g., increasing college awareness and postsecondary aspirations implementation activities occur across grades). The goals include the following:

**1. Increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations.** This goal is focused on increasing GEAR UP students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation needed to succeed at the postsecondary level, and family financial literacy regarding postsecondary education. Ideally, aspirations and expectations for postsecondary education are aligned and influence decisions (e.g., to take Algebra I in Grade 8, to apply for postsecondary enrollment in Grade 12). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as offering college awareness workshops to all students and parents by the end of the project's first year, support this effort.



**2. Strengthening academic preparation and achievement.** This goal focuses on providing academically rigorous opportunities for students (e.g., achieving college readiness benchmarks on state/national tests, completion of college credit in high school). GEAR UP PD opportunities for teachers are made available to increase academic rigor in the classroom. Grantees monitor, and students can self-monitor, progress on achieving early and intermediate outcomes that indicate postsecondary readiness (e.g., timely progress towards meeting a plan for graduation at the distinguished level of achievement). Texas GEAR UP project objectives, such as students completing Algebra I by Grade 9 (85%) and completing an AP/pre-AP course by the fifth year (60%), reflect this overarching goal.

**3. Raising postsecondary participation.** Finally, GEAR UP seeks to improve high school graduation rates and enrollment in postsecondary education. This goal is at the top of the pyramid in part because it is the intended long-term outcome. However, implementation activities intended to aid grantees in meeting this goal also occur throughout the life cycle of the grant, including providing student support services (SSS) such as tutoring and

mentoring. The program anticipates that successful grantees will develop systems to identify students for such services early and at an appropriate level. TEA has indicated that summer transition programs are of particular interest for the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. Texas GEAR UP SG project objectives for participation in GEAR UP activities as well as graduating from high school with college ready skills in mathematics and English support this goal.

The services recommended by GEAR UP are consistent with research on effective strategies to promote college awareness and college enrollment among at-risk students. For example, research has suggested that completion of Algebra I by no later than Grade 9 is the strongest academic subject predictor of college enrollment (Bonous-Hammarth & Allen, 2005). However, the challenges facing at-risk youth often require more intensive services and interventions. Research has shown that at-risk youth participating in support and mentoring programs have better attitudes toward school and are often more likely to attend college (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). For low-income students unprepared for middle and high school, the need for more intensive services is essential if they are to achieve college readiness by high school graduation (Dougherty & Mellor, 2010). Research has long suggested the importance of supporting students in successfully transitioning from middle school to high school. In addition, there is growing focus on what has been referred to as the summer “melt,” in which high school seniors who have applied and been accepted to a postsecondary institution do not enroll in fall as planned (Castleman, Arnold, & Wartman, 2012). The evaluation will focus on transitions that occur throughout the life of the grant.

Texas GEAR UP SG’s emphasis on academic rigor reflects a body of research showing that participation in AP courses and exams is linked to college completion and represents a stronger indicator of success than socioeconomic status (Dougherty, Mellor, & Jian, 2006). The effects of rigorous coursework are found to be larger for low-income students and for students attending high-poverty schools (Long, Conger, & Iatarola, 2012). Finally, the college awareness activities inherent in the Texas GEAR UP SG approach are critical to overcoming the limited exposure to postsecondary education evident among low-income students and their families. While most parents and students grasp the value of postsecondary education, many low-income households lack information to help them plan for higher education and effectively deal with the application process (Cunningham, Erisman, & Looney, 2007; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010).

#### **1.1.4 Overview of Texas GEAR UP SG**

TEA was awarded a federal GEAR UP grant in April 2012 with a start date of July 2012. As described in TEA’s federal grant proposal, the Texas GEAR UP SG serves low-income and historically underserved students through two primary strategies: (1) a district intervention package, which supports the targeted districts’ college readiness and success initiatives; and (2) statewide initiatives, which provide guidance, information, and resources related to college access, readiness, and success for all Texas districts and communities. The Texas GEAR UP SG district intervention supports schools in four districts (seven middle schools and five high schools) with a high population of low-income youth. Within these schools/districts, Texas GEAR UP SG served a cohort of Grade 7 students in the 2012–13 school year and will continue to serve this cohort through the seven-year grant period, which will continue through students’ first year of postsecondary education in the 2018–19 school year. While Texas GEAR UP SG services in the district intervention are focused on the targeted cohort, one of the grant’s goals is that schools will be able to sustain at least some GEAR UP activities and services with additional cohorts. For the targeted cohort, Texas GEAR UP SG seeks to ensure that students are aware of postsecondary options, graduate from high school academically prepared for college, complete the higher education and financial aid application processes, and enroll in college with the support of their parents. As students move through this pipeline, staff at each Texas GEAR UP SG campus will provide services that support shorter-term objectives such as

successful completion of Algebra I by Grade 8 or Grade 9; identification for academic support and tutoring services to meet individual needs; participation in AP or similar courses; and awareness activities including college visits, financial aid information sessions, and workshops on the college admission process. While activities will be similar across grantees, natural variation based on local supports and local needs will occur and the implementation and evaluation reports will examine these differences.

In addition to campus Texas GEAR UP SG services, statewide series will be provided through existing and newly developed TEA college and career information services, which provide a rich array of resources and tools to help guide students and families toward postsecondary education.<sup>12</sup> Statewide availability of appropriate teacher PD opportunities is also planned.

### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AT TIME OF SELECTION FOR PARTICIPATION IN TEXAS GEAR UP SG

Selection of middle schools to participate in the Texas GEAR UP SG grant was based on data from the 2009–10 school year.<sup>13</sup> At that time, all seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools had greater percentages of economically disadvantaged students as compared to the state (see Table 1.1). Each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools exceeded the state average percentage of at-risk students, which are those students who have been identified as being at-risk for dropping out of school based on having one or more of 13 factors.<sup>14</sup> Most of the Texas' GEAR UP SG middle schools generally had higher than state average enrollments of Hispanic/Latino students. At the three schools with lower percentages of Hispanic/Latino students, the next largest subgroup of students in the 2009–10 school year was African American (ranging from 28% in both Decker and Manor, to 48% in Dunbar). Both Hispanic/Latino and African American students are historically underrepresented in higher education (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013; Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). Demographic data for students who participated in the Texas GEAR UP SG in the 2012–13 school year are presented in the appendix related to implementation findings (Appendix F). In the remainder of the report, schools will be identified by a letter in order to mask the school and maintain confidentiality that was promised for the site visits.

<sup>12</sup> This includes two statewide websites: [www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com) and [www.ownyourownfuture.com](http://www.ownyourownfuture.com).

<sup>13</sup> TEA first applied for the GEAR UP grant in July 2011 with plans for implementation to begin in the 2011–12 school year. Funding was awarded based on this application in a deferred award cycle (April 2012).

<sup>14</sup> The statutory criteria for at-risk status include each student who is under 21 years of age and who: 1) was not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more school years; 2) is in Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 and did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year or is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester; 3) did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student, and who has not in the previous or current school year subsequently performed on that instrument or another appropriate instrument at a level equal to at least 110% of the level of satisfactory performance on that instrument; 4) is in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or Grades 1, 2, or 3 and did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year; 5) is pregnant or is a parent; 6) has been placed in an alternative education program during the preceding or current school year; 7) has been expelled during the preceding or current school year; 8) is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release; 9) was previously reported through the PEIMS to have dropped out of school; 10) is a student of LEP; 11) is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year, been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official; 12) is homeless; or 13) resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.  
<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2011/glossary.htm>.

**Table 1.1. Profile of Texas GEAR UP SG Middle Schools, 2009–10**

GEAR UP Middle School	Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Percentage of At-risk Students	Percentage of Hispanic/Latino Students
Brentwood (Edgewood ISD)	90%	68%	98%
Decker (Manor ISD)	84%	56%	61%
Dunbar (Lubbock ISD)	90%	48%	51%
Garcia (Edgewood ISD)	82%	74%	98%
Manor (Manor ISD)	76%	50%	55%
Somerset (Somerset ISD)	82%	58%	86%
Wrenn (Edgewood ISD)	91%	62%	97%
<b>State average (all Texas schools)</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>49%</b>

Source: TEA, Division of Performance Reporting, *Academic Excellence Indicator System*, 2009–10.

### TEXAS GEAR UP SG PARTNERS

Texas GEAR UP SG is a collaboration between TEA and five partner organizations – the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center, the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG), the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Centers, the College Board, and AMS Pictures. The evaluation team spoke with TEA and each of the partners and reviewed any contracts or agreements between the two to understand the role of each partner. As of June 2013, TEA had partner contracts in place with The University of Texas at Austin’s Institute for Public School Initiatives (UT-IPSI), TG, and AMS Pictures and was actively engaged with the other partners. Here we briefly introduce each partner and planned implementation activities. In Chapter 3, differences between what was planned and what occurred will be introduced.

**Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center** is managed and staffed by the UT-IPSI’s office for College Access. Plans for the Texas GEAR UP Support Center to assist with the implementation of high-quality, coordinated, data-driven programming include the following supports:

- advisory services to the state regarding the need for and development of student, educator, and parent resources;
- assistance in the development of a comprehensive communication strategy;
- support in the state selection and district use of a participant tracking system;
- oversight and support (including direct feedback to the state) for district program planning and execution through full-time implementation coaches and part-time consultants, including leadership advisors and instructional support advisors;
- individualized student support from College Preparation Advisors, beginning in the 2013–14 school year, who will identify issues and keep students on track for high school completion and college success;
- support for districts in ensuring the data are input correctly;
- analysis to districts and to the state office regarding trends in participation prior to the end of each school year; and
- additional technical assistance tasks (communication with partners and non-GEAR UP Texas districts, conference planning and participation, and reporting).<sup>15</sup>

**TG’s** planned role is to offer resources to help Texas GEAR UP SG students and families plan and prepare for college, learn the basics of money management, and repay their federal student loans. TG will accomplish this by providing ongoing, comprehensive training around college

<sup>15</sup> TEA Texas GEAR UP SG proposal to U.S. Department of Education; UT-IPSI notification of grant award.



financing, financial literacy, and financial aid. TG will deliver its Financial Literacy Program to serve Texas GEAR UP SG students over a six-year period in participating middle and high schools through both in-person and online instruction. Specifically, the support provided through the TG Learning Center will include:

- One in-person visit per year to each GEAR UP district included in the project for orientation purposes (Years 1 and 2).
- Four in-person Train the Trainer events on the utilization of the TG Learning Center for high school faculty and staff (Years 3–6).
- Six in-person module instruction sessions for students (Years 3–6).
- Eight module instruction sessions for students utilizing the TG Learning Center (Years 3–7).<sup>16</sup>

**T-STEM Centers** will assist Texas GEAR UP SG in increasing academic preparation by focusing on supporting teacher PD related to providing advanced courses and increasing student performance on readiness exams. Plans to achieve this include:

- Confronting the traditional gap in female participation in STEM initiatives by providing PD on promoting gender equity and student activities effective in promoting female participation.
- Providing training in project-based learning (PBL) and innovative course design and the ability for secondary teachers to meet with higher education faculty.
- Providing training on instructional strategies that allows teachers in the middle grades to vertically align with teachers in the feeder high school.<sup>17</sup>

**The College Board** also seeks to increase academic preparation by focusing on advanced courses and high student performance on readiness exams. Plans to achieve this include:

- Developing a stable, high-quality advanced academic program that allows students to participate in advanced courses before their junior and senior year.
- Providing training on instructional strategies that allows teachers in the middle grades to speak and work with teachers in the feeder high school.
- Providing PD regarding quality advanced academics and vertical teaming strategies, as well as opportunities for early participation and preparation for college admissions exams.
- Providing score reports and analysis to teachers and administrators to assist in instructional, advising, and programming decisions.
- Sharing any necessary data with the project's evaluator.<sup>18</sup>

**AMS Pictures**, in collaboration with project partners, will support the creation of resources that are useful to the target audience and make these resources available statewide in a user-friendly way. AMS plans to assist districts and the state office in disseminating the GEAR UP message, including program outcomes, throughout the state by providing multimedia resources for the College Evaluation Approach Outreach and Readiness Plans and through expansion of the Own Your Own Future website.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2 Evaluation Objectives and Research Questions

The evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP SG program over the seven-year grant period focuses on accomplishing the following objectives:

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<sup>16</sup> TEA Texas GEAR UP SG proposal to U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> [www.ownyourownfuture.com](http://www.ownyourownfuture.com)

- Providing TEA with regular, formative feedback regarding implementation of the program.
- Exploring relationships between TEXAS GEAR UP SG implementation, timing of implementation, and implementation dosage on TEXAS GEAR UP SG outcomes.
- Exploring facilitators and barriers to TEXAS GEAR UP SG implementation.
- Identifying potential TEXAS GEAR UP SG promising practices and any possible needed areas of program implementation correction.

As outcomes become available, the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation will address the following additional objectives:

- Understanding the impact of participation in Texas GEAR UP SG on relevant student outcomes, including early, intermediate, and long-term indicators of meeting program goals.
- Understanding the impact of participation in TEXAS GEAR UP SG on relevant family, school, and community partnership outcomes.
- Describing opportunities provided through Texas GEAR UP SG at the statewide level.
- Evaluating the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG from a cost and sustainability perspective.

This first implementation report focuses primarily on formative feedback regarding early implementation and any early indication of promising practices. Outcome data are not yet available, limiting additional types of analyses. These analyses will be included in future reports. In the context of these objectives, this first report, as well as future reports, addresses a broad range of evaluation questions (see Appendix A). These questions are aligned with understanding the extent to which the overarching goals and objectives of Texas GEAR UP SG are being met (see Appendix A). Overarching evaluation questions that are addressed in this report include the following:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?
- What were students', parents', teachers', and school staff's perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to date?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
- What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- What are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
- How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 1?

Future implementation and comprehensive reports will focus on addressing the following additional evaluation questions:

- To what extent does implementation change over time?
- How are implementation and outcomes related to one another? Are certain "dosages" of implementation associated with more successful outcomes? Certain patterns of participation in implementation strategies?
- What outcomes are associated with participation in Texas GEAR UP SG?
- How do trends in outcomes for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students differ from the retrospective and follow-on cohorts?

- How do trends in outcomes at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools differ as compared to the state average and/or the comparison group schools?
- How do trajectories of outcomes differ based on exposure to implementation? For example, do students who participate in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in all grades (Grade 7 through first year of college) differ compared to students who enter Texas GEAR UP SG schools at a later grade level?
- Do students who achieve certain early markers of postsecondary readiness have different trajectories of outcomes than students who do not achieve the early marker (e.g., successful completion of an Algebra I course in Grade 8; successful completion of an Algebra I course in Grade 9)?
- What is the impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on families, schools, and community partners? On statewide access to information and strategies?
- What is the cost of providing Texas GEAR UP SG at the school and state level? To what extent are grantees able to sustain implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG with cohorts of students beyond the target cohort? What facilitators/barriers do grantees face to sustaining implementation?<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3 Evaluation Design and Methods

A longitudinal design will be utilized in order to evaluate the Texas GEAR UP SG over the seven years of the program in order to examine change over time in the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort of students.<sup>21</sup> In addition, a quasi-experimental design (QED) will be utilized in order to compare outcomes for students in Texas GEAR UP SG schools to outcomes for students in comparable schools. Throughout the evaluation, a mixed-methods approach will be taken. That is, both quantitative and qualitative data were and will be collected and examined. Data regularly collected by TEA will be used whenever possible (e.g., STAAR<sup>®</sup> results). APR data submitted by the schools regarding Texas GEAR UP SG provision of SSS, student and family workshops/events, teacher PD, and community partner activities was and will be a primary source of implementation data, supplemented by data collected during site visits to each school. In addition, student and parent surveys and site visits will provide information regarding perceptions of the program, knowledge about postsecondary education, and educational aspirations and expectations. Appendix B provides additional information regarding the evaluation design, methods, and. Appendix C provides an overview of data submitted into the APR, and Appendix D contains copies of all surveys and site visit protocols. Appendix E provides detailed summaries of the site visits conducted in spring 2013.

#### 1.3.1 Logic Model

The evaluation design was developed based on conceptualizing how change is likely to occur as a result of the Texas GEAR UP SG through the development of a logic model (see Figure 2.1). The logic model maps out the inputs, program implementation activities, and intended outcomes of the program to be delivered. The logic model will be evaluated and modified as appropriate over the course of the evaluation.

In the logic model, the first column on the left identifies important inputs for the program. These inputs are what the students, parents, and schools enter participation in the Texas GEAR UP

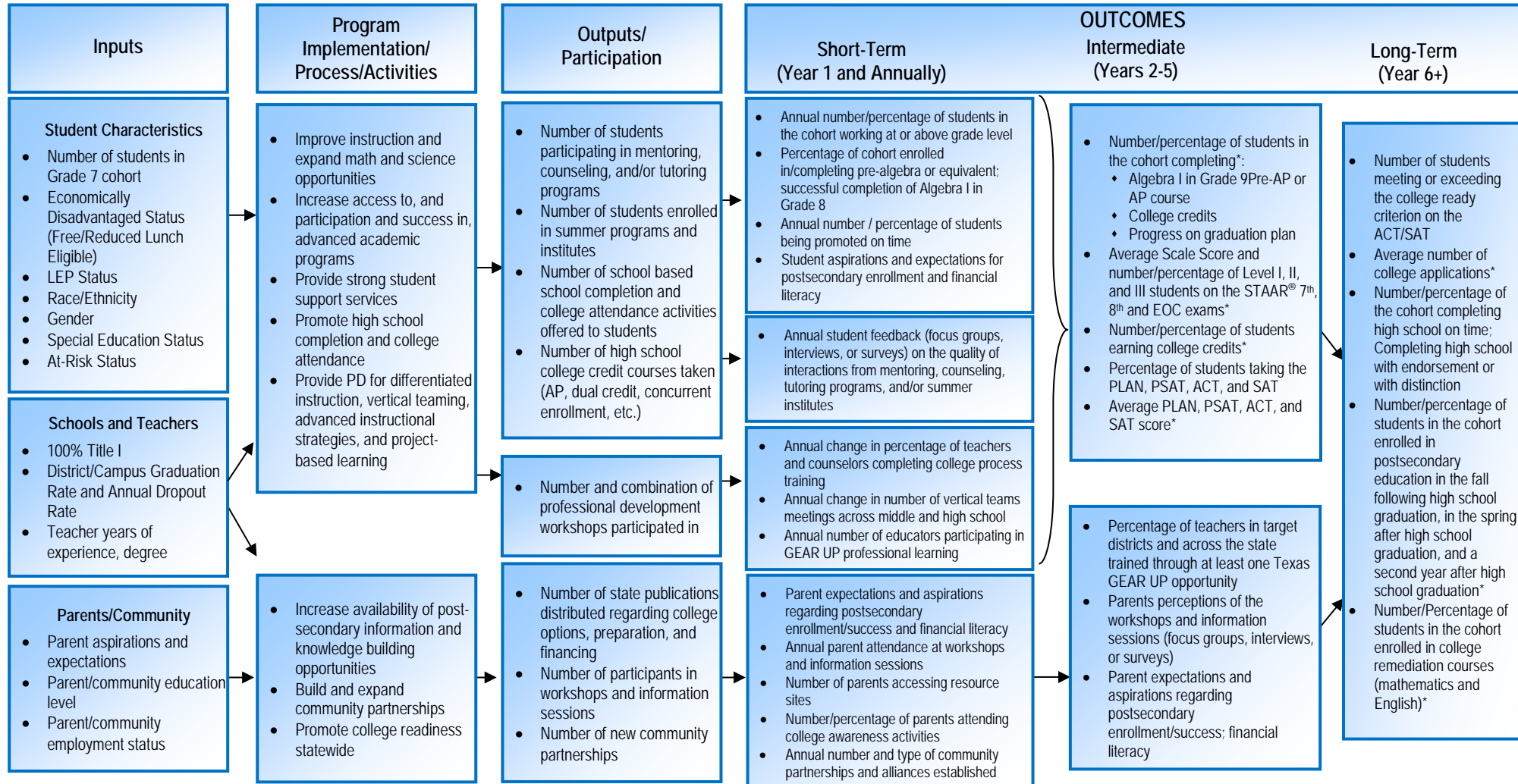
<sup>20</sup> Sustainability of successful implementation activities is one goal/requirement of the federal GEAR UP program. Some efforts may be easier to sustain than others. For example, increased academic rigor may be relatively easy to sustain with ongoing teacher PD. On the other hand, the cost of continuing to provide a broad range of student supports may be prohibitive.

<sup>21</sup> The cohort of students in Grade 7 in the 2012–13 school year was targeted for implementation activities. A longitudinal design means that this same group of students will be followed over time, in this case through their anticipated first year at a postsecondary institution.

SG with, many of which are not subject to change by the program (e.g., economic status, education level). Texas GEAR UP SG implements school-based activities with students, teachers, and parents, as well as developing materials for statewide distribution. Participation outputs are the extent to which individual students, parents, and teachers actually participate in such activities and the patterns of participation. Understanding what is implemented and what participation looks like will be critical to understanding the potential impact of such participation on outcomes.

Several outcomes of the project will be measured annually to establish changes in trends as a result of Texas GEAR UP SG activities. For example, student expectations and aspirations will be measured twice each year to understand changes both within a given year and over the course of the grant. These and other annual measures will inform the evaluation's longitudinal analyses. Teacher preparation and PD to support providing rigorous academic instruction in advanced courses will also be evaluated. While visually the model appears to be somewhat linear, new implementation activities are anticipated to occur throughout the life of the Texas GEAR UP SG. Similarly, early and intermediate outcomes, such as successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 8, are anticipated to impact eventual long-term outcomes (e.g., enrollment in college credit earning courses during high school).

**Figure 1.2. Texas GEAR UP Evaluation Logic Model**



**Assumptions**

**Program Implementation/Process/Activities** – The evaluation team assumes that processes and activities will change, will be ongoing, and will have varied impacts on project outputs and outcomes. As program elements and activities are implemented, evaluators will identify specific expected outputs and short- and long-term outcomes. This process will continue during each stage of the project.

**Outputs/Participation** – Evaluators will monitor changes in outputs as a result of project processes and activities. We will also assess, to the extent possible, the relationship between changes in outputs and short- and long-term outcomes.

**Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes** – Several outcomes will serve as annual measures of program success including, for example, STAAR<sup>®</sup> results, grade level performance, etc. Items marked with an asterisk (\*) will be compared to project goals, historical performance, matched comparison groups from like students and schools, or the state average performance on these measures. Successful attainment of short-term outcomes will also be considered in understanding successful completion of long-term outcomes.



## 1.4 Overview of Report

This annual implementation report addresses the evaluation objectives with respect to Year 1 implementation activities. Information regarding the first year of implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG is found in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides findings from Year 1 (spring 2013) surveys of Texas GEAR UP SG students and parents on issues regarding educational expectations and knowledge regarding postsecondary enrollment and costs. Chapter 4 provides descriptive information regarding Year 1 budgets. A summary of findings along with actionable recommendations including potential promising practices for TEA are provided in Chapter 5. Detailed case studies for each of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools/districts can be found in Appendix D. In reporting findings, school and district names have been masked.

### 1.4.1 Limitations and Next Steps in the Evaluation

There are several limitations to the findings provided in this report. Given these limitations, caution is urged in interpreting findings. Additional information related to Year 1 implementation and outcomes will be included in a future report, following the receipt and analysis of additional data.

#### LIMITED IMPLEMENTATION IN YEAR 1

While this report focuses on Year 1 implementation, additional Texas GEAR UP SG Year 1 implementation activities will occur through summer 2013. However, much of the data presented in Chapter 2 is based on grantee self-reported implementation of activities at the student and teacher level through March 31, 2013, in time to be included in TEA's APR to the federal government. The level of implementation at this point was likely impacted by the timing of the award of Texas GEAR UP SG to TEA and subsequent notification of grant awards (NOGA) to districts/schools. TEA applied for a GEAR UP grant in July 2011 and was not selected during that funding period. TEA was notified in April 2012 that the Texas GEAR UP SG was selected in a deferred award cycle, with funds available beginning in July 2012. TEA was able to establish sub award budgets for districts and partners by the start of the state fiscal year in September 2012. Subrecipients received NOGA in October 2012, with implementation beginning in November/December 2012. While at least one of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools began efforts in anticipation of grant awards, the other grantees began efforts soon after NOGA receipt and therefore may have made less progress in Year 1 than might have been expected. Year 1 implementation reported on here was restricted to November 2012 to March 2013.

The evaluation team conducted site visits to further understand implementation in May 2013, providing a slightly longer time frame of implementation. However, the site visit data are qualitative in nature, and no additional student or teacher level implementation data were collected during the visit. The site visit findings will be integrated as relevant, but as with the APR data, do not reflect implementation that occurred over summer 2013. Grantees will be providing implementation data for the remainder of Year 1 in fall 2013 and these data will be included in future reports.

#### OUTCOME DATA FOR YEAR 1

There is a time lag between the end of the school year and the availability of outcome data (e.g., successful course completion, promotion, STAAR<sup>®</sup> results). Data on student participation in advanced course taking, presented in Chapter 2, are considered baseline data rather than outcome data, as schools would have already assigned students to courses prior to NOGA. In addition, while enrollment in advanced courses was known, data on successful completion of courses (the outcome of interest) was not yet available. Student and parent survey data are presented as outcome data in Chapter 3. However, given the limited implementation time frame these data will be considered baseline in nature as well. Given the preliminary nature of the data and that only baseline survey data outcomes were available, this implementation report will

not examine connections between implementation and outcomes. Future reports will include these types of connections.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The next report, annual implementation report #2, will be published in August 2014. In addition, ICF will prepare comprehensive reports that include an examination of the activities conducted to date, key impact findings to date and interpretations of these findings, and cost and sustainability analyses. The comprehensive reports will also include spotlight analyses about students in transition years (from middle school to high school and high school to college). ICF will deliver these reports to TEA every other year, beginning in January 1, 2015 (covering findings through the end of the 2013–14 school year). If TEA chooses to exercise its option to extend the evaluation contract, a similar report will be submitted on January 1, 2017 (through the 2015–16 school year) and January 1, 2019 (through the 2017–18 school year).





## 2. Implementation of the Texas GEAR UP State Grant

This chapter focuses on the Year 1 implementation of the Texas GEAR UP SG overall and comparatively across the seven participating middle schools based on data submitted for the APR. Implementation findings are presented in the context of the federal GEAR UP recommendations for the types of implementation activities schools should engage in to support GEAR UP goals. The following evaluation questions related to implementation will be addressed:

- How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?
- What are students', parents', and staff's perceptions of SSS implementation strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of strategies?
- What potential best practices for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation can be identified? What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?

As discussed in Chapter 1, all findings should be considered preliminary given the shortened period of implementation in Year 1. Implementation reported here occurred primarily from November/December 2012 to March 2013. Additional implementation data from the site visits, which occurred in May 2013, are integrated where appropriate. Findings related to the implementation data should be interpreted with caution, although some early facilitators and barriers to implementation have been identified. The data available to date provide some early indicators of where Texas GEAR UP SG schools may have made early progress on working towards goals as well as some challenges faced by the schools. Tables with additional detail on the findings reported here, including significance level, can be found in Appendix F.<sup>22</sup> Throughout the rest of this report, the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools are identified by letter to protect confidentiality promised during the site visits. Additional implementation data from Year 1 will be collected in fall 2013 and will be presented in future reports, along with analyses of relationships between implementation and outcomes.

At this point in the evaluation, signs of progress on the following Texas GEAR UP SG goals/objectives are of particular interest as related to implementation to date:<sup>23</sup>

- **Algebra I.** By the end of the project's second year, 30% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students will have completed Algebra I in Grade 8. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I. An advanced mathematics course in Grade 7 may indicate the potential to successfully complete Algebra I within these timeframes.<sup>24</sup>
- **Advanced Course Pre-AP/AP Taking.** By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.
- **Strong SSS.** By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the Grade 8 students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.
- **Student and Parent Information/Workshops.** By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and their parents. Each year, at least 50% of Texas

<sup>22</sup> In using the term significant to discuss differences in this chapter,  $p < .05$  was minimum cut point. This significance level means that statistically there is only a 5% chance that the amount of difference occurred due to chance alone.

<sup>23</sup> A list of all project goals and objectives is provided in Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> Schools self-selected if a course was considered advanced based on the following definition. Advanced courses are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered advanced.

GEAR UP SG cohort parents, including parents of current and former LEP students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.

- **Teacher Professional Development.** In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning.
- **Vertical Teaming.** In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.
- **Community Partnerships.** All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration. Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.
- **Statewide Information Services.** By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.

## 2.1 Planned Implementation Activities

Table 2.1 summarizes implementation activities planned for in Year 1, either by the Texas GEAR UP SG schools or by TEA and its partners, related to each broad goal of the Texas GEAR UP SG.<sup>25</sup> Planning is of interest as the schools are unlikely to be successful, particularly at reaching long-term goals, if planning does not occur. It was clear from schools’ action plans and the site visits that Year 1 implementation activities have been planned for summer 2013. Specifically, all schools were planning the following summer 2013 activities: (a) summer mathematics programs for Grade 7 students, aimed at helping students/schools in meeting the goal of Algebra I success in Grades 8 (30%) and 9 (85%); and (b) teacher PD for the summer, including PD provided by T-STEM Centers and the College Board.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 2.1. Examples of Year 1 Planned Implementation Activities**

Texas GEAR UP SG Goal	Range of Planned Implementation Strategies, 2012–13
Improving academic performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summer Teacher PD opportunities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Pre-AP/AP PD through a vertical teaming approach (supported by College Board)</li> <li>♦ PD on delivering courses with increased academic (college-level) rigor and the use of differentiated instruction and project-based learning (supported by T-STEM Centers)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Preparation for use of EWDS to be used in Year 2</li> <li>▪ Local networks of SSS               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Tutoring</li> <li>♦ Mentoring</li> <li>♦ Counseling</li> <li>♦ Summer 2013 mathematics enrichment programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>25</sup> The evaluation team will code subrecipients’ planned activities for type and number planned more specifically in Years 2–7 to compare with actual implementation more closely.

<sup>26</sup> Lubbock in particular appears to be working with T-STEM Center and the College Board on PD. This may be due in part to Texas Tech University, which is located in Lubbock, representing the T-STEM Center in Year 1. Both T-STEM and the College Board indicated their intention to offer PD to all Texas GEAR UP SG teachers (and potentially to teachers statewide).

Texas GEAR UP SG Goal	Range of Planned Implementation Strategies, 2012–13
Increasing educational expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Texas GEAR UP SG workshops and teacher PD</li> <li>▪ Mentoring/Counseling (students and parents); College Preparation Advisor (Year 2)</li> <li>▪ Establish Campus College Centers</li> </ul>
Improving family knowledge regarding postsecondary education preparation and financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hold a Texas GEAR UP SG kickoff event/Mail parents Texas GEAR UP SG information packets</li> <li>▪ Texas GEAR UP SG family workshops</li> <li>▪ Providing resources (Spanish/English; online and in-person)</li> </ul>
Working to improve high school graduation and college enrollment rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Examination of six-year graduation plans</li> <li>▪ EWDS</li> <li>▪ SSS</li> <li>▪ Teacher PD</li> </ul>

Source: Analyses of subrecipient 2012–13 school year action plans and spring 2013 site visit data.

### 2.1.1 Introducing the Texas GEAR UP SG to the School Community

Teachers, parents, students, and administrators in School G all reported generally high knowledge of the program, suggesting that planned Texas GEAR UP SG kickoff activities had successfully occurred. At two schools (School E; School F), visibility was high among students, but teachers and parents were not yet familiar with the program.<sup>27</sup> At the remaining four schools, visibility was generally low although students did appear to have some knowledge of the program at two of these schools. While it is not necessary to know GEAR UP, it may be helpful in meeting program goals for students and parents to be aware of the project in general, including the goals of the project to improve student success and increase readiness for postsecondary education. Increasing visibility of the project/project goals in general remains a goal for Year 2 implementation.

## 2.2 Student Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities

Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools are encouraged to engage in a broad range of student focused implementation activities. These include having students enroll in advanced courses with presumed high levels of academic rigor, SSS (i.e., tutoring, mentoring, counseling), college visits, job site visits, and GEAR UP related events/workshops. Schools make decisions regarding which students will participate in which activities as well as the extent of participation expected. While it is not expected that all students will need to participate in all activities in order for the Texas GEAR UP SG to have positive outcomes, participation in a broad range of activities is generally encouraged.

#### Quotes from the Field: Texas GEAR UP SG Visibility to Parents, Spring 2013

A better understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG may alleviate some of the subtle concerns expressed by parents and students that were heard during site visits.

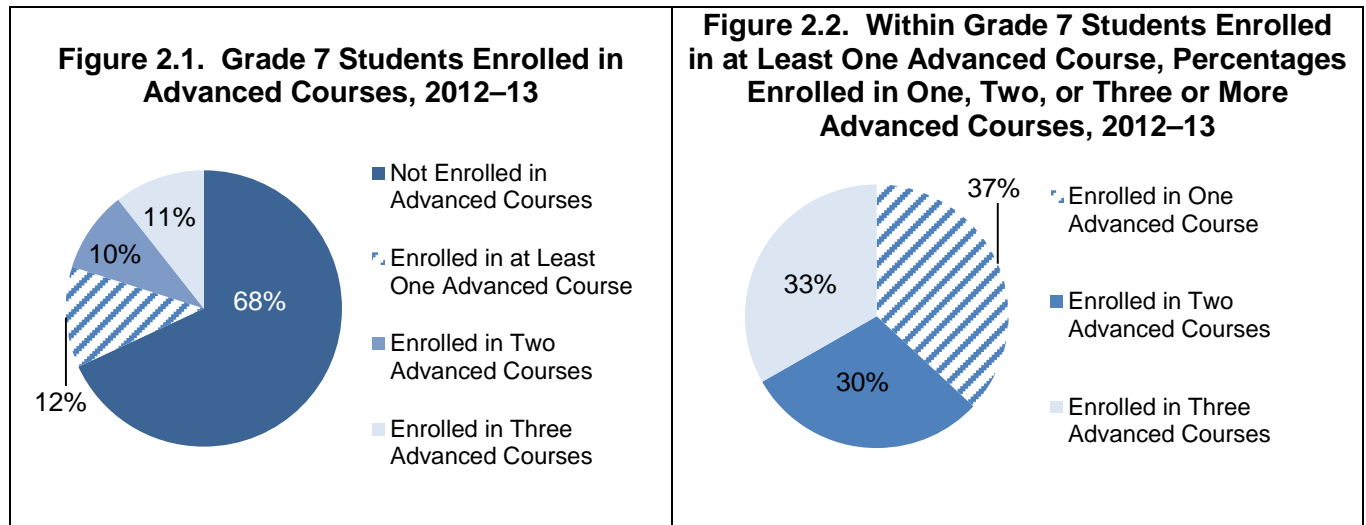
For example:

- “My daughter is doing well in school. Why is she in the program?” (parent)
- “Why is the program not available for all three grades (of Middle school)?” (parent)
- “Why is GEAR UP only in our school?” (student)

<sup>27</sup> At one of these schools, no parents attended the focus group, so parent knowledge is unknown although others at this school noted a sense that knowledge remains generally low among parents.

### 2.2.1 Student Enrollment in Advanced Courses

On average, Grade 7 Texas GEAR UP SG cohort student enrollment in advanced courses was moderate (32%, see Figure 2.1), although this varied by school.<sup>28</sup> It may be that some schools offered a smaller number of Grade 7 advanced courses than other schools, or it may be that schools differ on criteria for enrolling students in advanced courses. Students enrolled in at least one advanced course (Figure 2.2) were divided into approximately thirds on the number of advanced courses enrolled in, from one (37%) to three (33%). Assuming students successfully complete at least one advanced course, these percentages appear to be a good start toward achieving the goal of 60% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students successfully completing a pre-AP or AP course by the end of Year 5 of the grant. Student enrollment in advanced courses in Grade 7 is considered baseline data as participating schools could not typically change student course placements mid-year, when Texas GEAR UP SG programming began.



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

#### ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT BY CONTENT AREA

Figure 2.3 provides details about enrollment in advanced coursework by content area by school. Enrollment in an advanced mathematics course, enrollment in advanced ELA course, and enrollment in an advanced science course all varied significantly by school.<sup>29</sup> School E indicated that mathematics was the only content area in which Grade 7 students were enrolled in an advanced course. On all other campuses, Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students' enrollment in two or three advanced courses ranged from 20% (School A) to 39% (School D).

**Mathematics.** The extent of Grade 7 students' enrollment in an advanced mathematics course averaged 22% and ranged from 18% (School G) to 29% (School D; see Figure 2.3). It is unclear at this point if sufficient percentages of students will be prepared to successfully complete Algebra I in Grade 8. That is, student enrollment in advanced mathematics in Grade 7 fell below 30% at all schools and was well below this at School C and School F. Given the goal

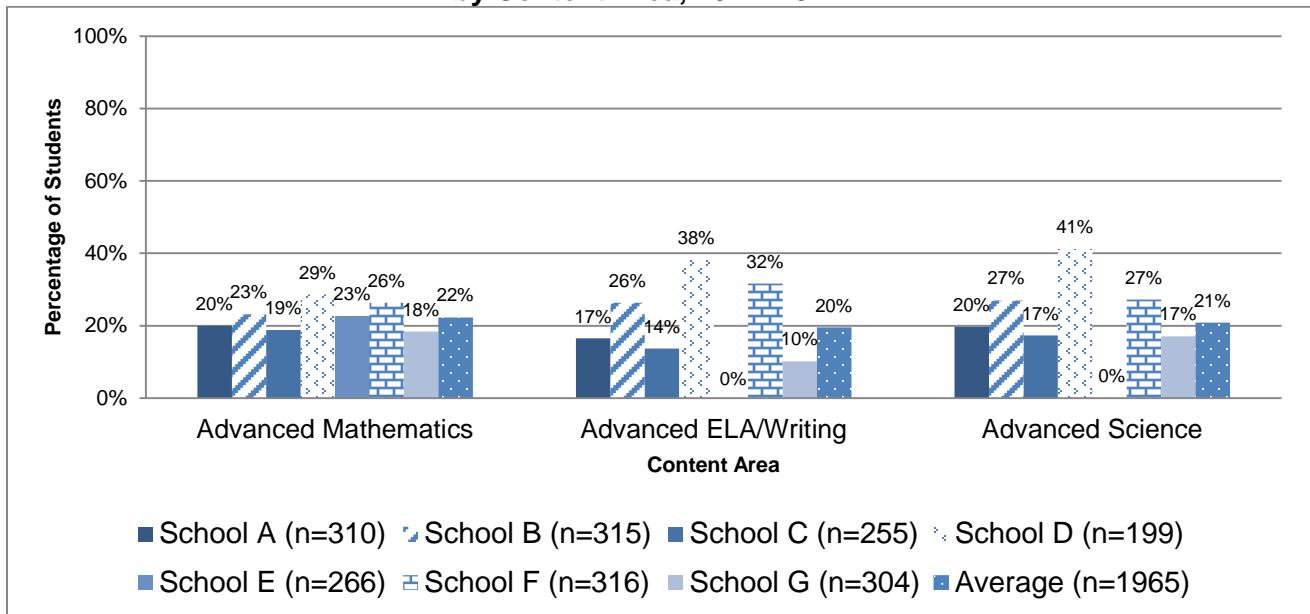
<sup>28</sup> Subrecipients were provided guidance on counting a course as advanced when providing their APR data as follows, "Advanced courses are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered Advanced." The schools reported a range of names for advanced courses (e.g., Honors Mathematics 7, Mathematics 7 pre-AP, pre-Algebra 7, pre-AP Mathematics). For the purpose of this report, advanced course taking within a given content area is collapsed across course name. Totals may appear to differ from figure numbers due to rounding.

<sup>29</sup> Advanced Mathematics:  $\chi^2(6) = 12.99, p < .05$ ; Advanced ELA:  $\chi^2(6) = 163.43, p < .0001$ , Advanced Science:  $\chi^2(6) = 139.74, p < .0001$

of at least 30% of students passing Algebra I in Grade 8, successful execution of plans for summer mathematics enrichment programs may be critical to helping schools achieve this Year 2 goal.<sup>30</sup> That is, the summer programs may help schools to bridge the gap between the percentages of Grade 7 students enrolled in an advanced course and the percentage of students identified in the goal.

**ELA and Science.** Schools differed significantly in the percentages of students enrolled in advanced ELA and science. As already noted, School E did not enroll any students in either of these two content areas. School D had significantly higher enrollments than all other schools in both ELA and science (Figure 2.3). School G (10%) was lower than other schools in enrollment of students in advanced ELA courses, with the exception of School E.

**Figure 2.3. Percentages of Students Enrolled in Advanced Course by Content Area, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

### 2.2.2 Student Support Services: Academic Tutoring, Mentoring, Counseling/Advising

One goal of Texas GEAR UP SG is to involve students (at least 75% of Grade 8 students) in a range of appropriate SSS including tutoring, comprehensive mentoring, and counseling.<sup>31</sup> According to APR and site data, resources identified to assist schools in providing these support services include Communities In Schools (CIS), Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Breakthrough, and partnerships with three universities and colleges (two at School D and one at School G), with additional student access to two universities for college visit field trips (one university visited by Schools A, B, and G, and another university visited by School G).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Information about who participates in and what occurs in the summer 2013 programs will be provided in the fall 2013 APR and in fall 2013 site visits.

<sup>31</sup> Schools were provided with standard definitions of all terms, including tutoring, mentoring, and counseling in order to complete the APR. These definitions can be found in Appendix C and were developed by the College and Career Readiness Evaluation Consortium and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (2013).

<sup>32</sup> CIS focuses on student success; AVID and Breakthrough each focus on college readiness. Additional information can be found at [www.communitieinschools.org](http://www.communitieinschools.org), [www.avid.org](http://www.avid.org) and [www.breakthroughcollaborative.org](http://www.breakthroughcollaborative.org).

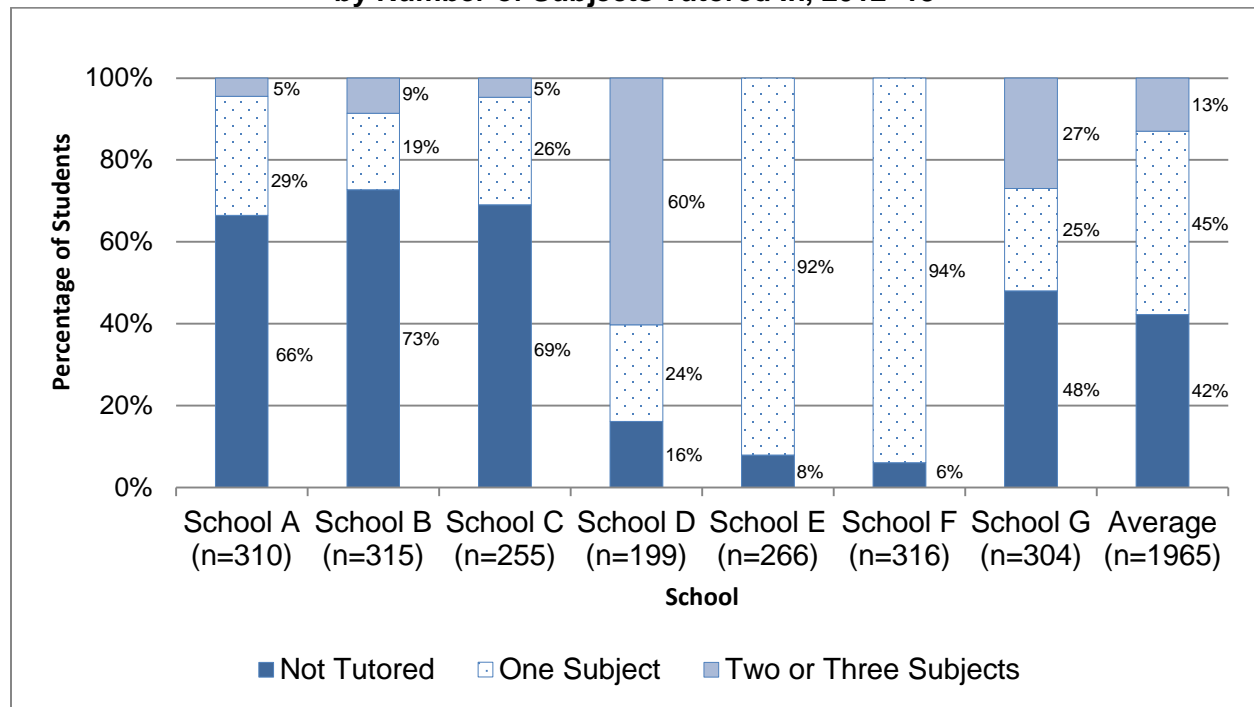


### STUDENT ACADEMIC TUTORING

The extent of student tutoring was varied across both school and course content.<sup>33</sup> The largest percentage of students received tutoring in mathematics (47%) and ELA (21%). Very few students (6%) were tutored in science, with most science tutoring occurring at School D and School G. School E and School F provided tutoring to almost every student in mathematics (92% and 94%, respectively), but did not provide tutoring in any other subject.

The number of subjects in which students were being tutored also differed by school.<sup>34</sup> As of March 2013, it was reported that on average 58% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students were receiving tutoring in at least one subject (Figure 2.4). Of the students who participated in tutoring, the majority received tutoring in one subject (78%), with an additional 18% tutored in two courses and 5% in all three content areas.<sup>35</sup> Tutoring was most limited at School A, School B, and School C (34%, 28%, and 31% were tutored, respectively). School G fell in the middle on tutoring, with 52% of students tutored. In the three remaining schools, the majority of students received at least some tutoring.

**Figure 2.4. Percentages of Students Participating in Tutoring by Number of Subjects Tutored In, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

NOTE: Percentages for School B sum to 101% due to rounding.

<sup>33</sup> Tutoring is used in this chapter, although in the definition it is referred to as tutoring or homework help. Tutoring in Mathematics:  $\chi^2(6) = 894.29, p < .0001$ ; Tutoring in ELA:  $\chi^2(6) = 488.19, p < .0001$ , Tutoring in Science:  $\chi^2(6) = 251.14, p < .0001$

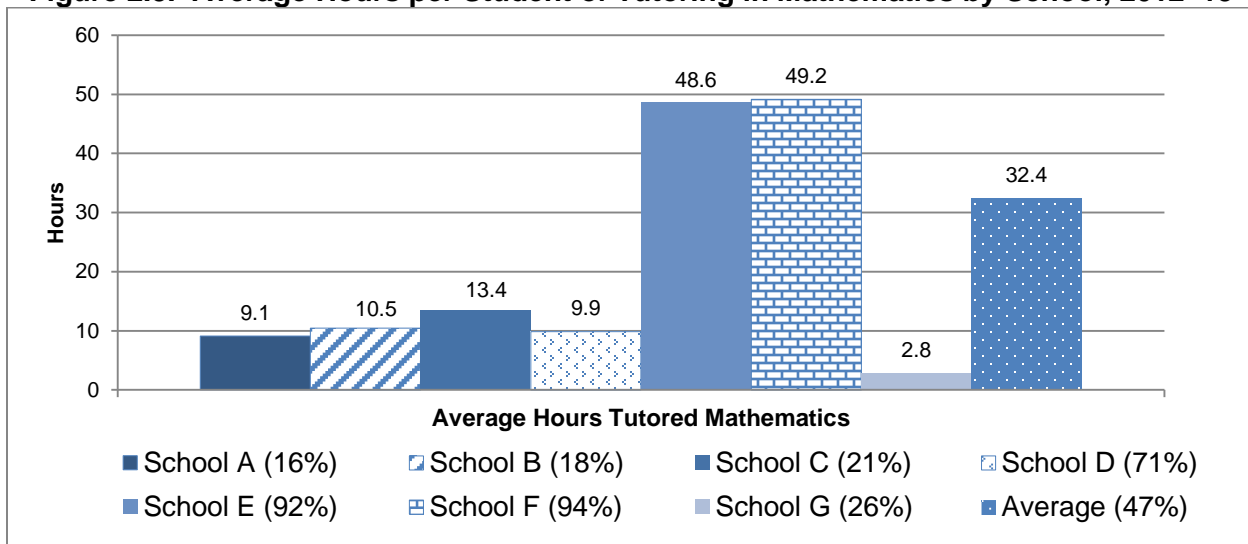
<sup>34</sup>  $\chi^2(12) = 1297.41, p < .0001$

<sup>35</sup> Of all students, 58% participated in tutoring in any subject. The percentages reported in the paragraph are within these 58% who received any tutoring. The figure provides information on all levels of tutoring. Given the small percentages of students tutored in all three subject areas, being tutored in two or three subjects was combined in the figure. School D was the exception with 15% of students receiving tutoring in three content areas.



**Algebra I.** The emphasis on mathematics tutoring may be related to school concerns about students’ success on STAAR mathematics as well as in their mathematics courses. That is, it may be that schools perceive more students to be struggling in mathematics than in other subjects. This focus on mathematics tutoring is also likely to support the short-term goal of success in Algebra I. In addition to greater percentages of students being tutored in mathematics as compared to other subjects, the average hours of tutoring provided in mathematics were also significantly higher as compared to ELA and science (average 32.4 hours, 10.4 hours, and 4.0 hours, respectively). Hours of tutoring in mathematics, however, differed significantly by school (Figure 2.5). Average hours of mathematics tutoring exceeded 40 hours per participating student at School E and School F. School G provided fewer hours of tutoring in mathematics (2.8 hours) than all other schools, a difference that was statistically significant.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 2.5. Average Hours per Student of Tutoring in Mathematics by School, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

Note: Average hours for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students within the school who received tutoring in mathematics.

### DECISION TO TUTOR

Generally, cohort schools are expected to provide tutors to cohort students who may be at risk of not succeeding in a course. Decisions regarding assigning the student a tutor differed by campus. At School A, School B, and School C the decision to place in tutoring was based on diagnostic data only. At School D, School E, and School F placement was primarily based on teacher/counselor input. At School G placement with a tutor was based on both teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data. One goal of Texas GEAR UP SG is to increase school capacity to use both input and data to make decisions, which is currently only being done at the one school.

### WHO PROVIDED TUTORING

In addition to the amount of tutoring provided, one feature of tutoring that may impact its effectiveness is how tutoring was provided and who provided the tutoring. This will be explored

<sup>36</sup>  $F(6,914)=1,798.5, p < .0001$ ; Subrecipients were asked to report on the number of hours tutoring was provided in-person and the number of hours tutoring was provided virtually. To facilitate reporting at this early stage of implementation, hours were totaled across in-person and virtual tutoring.

further in future reports. School A, School B, and School C reported that some tutoring was provided virtually, while at all other campuses only in-person tutoring was provided. However, during the site visit, the actual level of virtual tutoring was reported to be minimal. Future site visits will seek to better understand how virtual tutoring occurs at these schools and how the tutoring is provided. All other schools reported that tutoring was conducted in-person, although how schools provided tutors varied.

At School E and School F, tutors were paid through Texas GEAR UP SG funds two days a week and supported by AVID for another two days a week. Site visit focus groups with teachers and students indicated that this approach appeared to be effective, as the tutors possessed skills to help students and support teachers effectively. Texas GEAR UP SG in both School E and School F paid for PD training specifically on tutoring for the tutors.<sup>37</sup> The tutors were young adults who had graduated from college. Tutoring at these schools was provided to almost all students in mathematics.

Using Texas GEAR UP SG funds, School G hired a bilingual adult tutor to work in the classroom. While the tutor was available for all students, the primary focus was on English language learners (current/former LEP status) due to the tutor's Spanish skills. Students, teachers, and administrators gave this tutor high marks during the site visit. School officials believed the tutor was particularly effective in working with LEP students; one administrator noted that these students can "fall through the cracks" without the individual attention they received from the tutor. In many cases, the tutor also assisted the GEAR UP coordinator in reaching out to parents with limited English skills.

At School D, the Texas GEAR UP SG relied on undergraduates from a nearby college to provide tutoring services. According to the site visit reports, nine college students served as tutors, each scheduled up to 19 hours per week. The tutors were assigned to mathematics, reading, English, science, and social studies classes, as well as electives such as art and choir. Prospective college tutors were interviewed by school staff in the selection process to gauge their subject matter interests and availability; however, teachers noted that they perceived there was wide variation in tutors' performance. Tutors may have lacked specific skills (in mathematics, for example) to work effectively with some students, and some tutors had sporadic attendance due to academic commitments at their college. The school is planning modifications to the tutoring program for next year to address concerns about efficacy expressed by teachers.

### **STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COMPREHENSIVE MENTORING**

Mentoring as an SSS occurred far less frequently than tutoring did in Year 1. Across Texas GEAR UP SG schools, it was reported that approximately 15% of students were receiving comprehensive mentoring as of March 2013. The majority of students participating in mentoring came from School E, which reported that 96% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students had an in-person mentor. The mentoring that occurred here appears to have been closely related to relationships formed with students during tutoring, although this issue will need to be further explored going forward. School F and School G also reported students participating in mentoring and did so for much smaller percentages of students (2% and 15%, respectively). At School G, mentoring primarily occurred through an already established partnership with CIS. No schools reported any virtual mentoring.

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<sup>37</sup> Teachers at these two schools also participated in PD training on tutoring as reported in the April 2013 APR.

## STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN COUNSELING

None of the schools reported that Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students were participating in financial aid counseling/advising as of March 31, 2013. School G reported 42% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students received counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling. This type of counseling may be important for assisting students in beginning to plan/take steps for short- and long-term academic success. School G chose to build counseling into their model in Year 1 and identified a resource, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator, to provide the counseling.

### 2.2.3 College Visits

College visits are another strategy recommended by the federal GEAR UP program for grantees to engage in. College visits may be important, as students who visit a campus may begin to perceive college as a place that they will (or will not) fit in. School A, School B, School D, and School G had all completed at least one college visit by May 2013. Colleges visited by Texas GEAR UP SG students included Texas Tech University, the University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas A&M–San Antonio, and Palo Alto College. These visits typically consisted of a campus tour, often including lecture halls, cafeteria, and dorms, as well as a scavenger hunt in which teams of students walked through campus trying to locate certain items. In addition to offering college visits, School G linked these visits to specific classroom activities including writing exercises, discussions, and research projects. During site visit focus groups, students said they enjoyed the visits; they were particularly eager to learn about dorm life as well as campus organizations. Several said the visits had helped them learn the type of campus (large/small) at which they might feel most comfortable. One student said that he learned the difference in cost between public and private colleges. These self-reported insights suggest that actual visits to a campus may provide information to Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students that cannot be provided through classroom instruction.

At focus groups, three teachers noted that they were surprised by the depth of the questions students asked during the visits, including questions about college majors. Teachers who were chaperones on the college visits also indicated that they learned more about their students and Texas GEAR UP SG as a result of the trip. In one district, college visits were in the planning phase and the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator was seeking advice on how best to organize such visits. The coordinator was concerned about how to select students given that colleges set limits on the maximum number they can accommodate during a single visit. School G dealt with this issue by taking Texas GEAR UP SG cohort boys one day and Texas GEAR UP SG cohort girls another day. School E and School F planned to offer college visits over the summer if possible, and School D was making plans for an out-of-town trip to a college during Year 2.

### 2.2.4 Job-Site Visits/Job Shadowing

While none of the schools reported engaging in job-site visits or job shadowing in the APRs, School G was engaged in this activity by the time of the site visit. This activity was facilitated through the school's partnership with CIS. Small groups of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students participated in job-shadow activities at local headquarters of a large regional grocer, as well as at a local automobile plant. Students and staff at the school were particularly enthusiastic about an opportunity provided to students at the local city hall to role play as city council members discussing municipal issues. For the role play, students had to follow meeting rules, present arguments, and discuss issues collegially. Engaging in job-site visits is also a recommended federal GEAR UP strategy and may provide students with relevant information both about potential future jobs/careers and the education that is required to attain those jobs/careers.

## 2.2.5 Participation in Texas GEAR UP SG Student Workshops/Events

TEA has set an annual goal that information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and their parents. Appendix F provides descriptions of student events. Table 2.2 provides a general overview of workshops/events held by the schools. School D, which was high on advanced course enrollment and tutoring, had not yet held any student only events as of March 2013, although it had held one family event that students attended. School A, School B, and School C each reported two to three student events. School G had provided eight student events by the time data were collected in April 2013. Participation rates varied across events and sites. For example, 77% of cohort students participated in the Texas GEAR UP SG kick-off event at School F, while less than 1% of cohort students at School C participated in a college readiness session. Texas GEAR UP SG kickoff events at two of the schools were attended by approximately two thirds of cohort students. Not surprisingly, students at those campuses with high attendance at kickoff events were more aware of the program during site visits.

**Table 2.2. Number of Student Events/Workshops, Average Number of Participants and Average Event Length, by School, 2012–13**

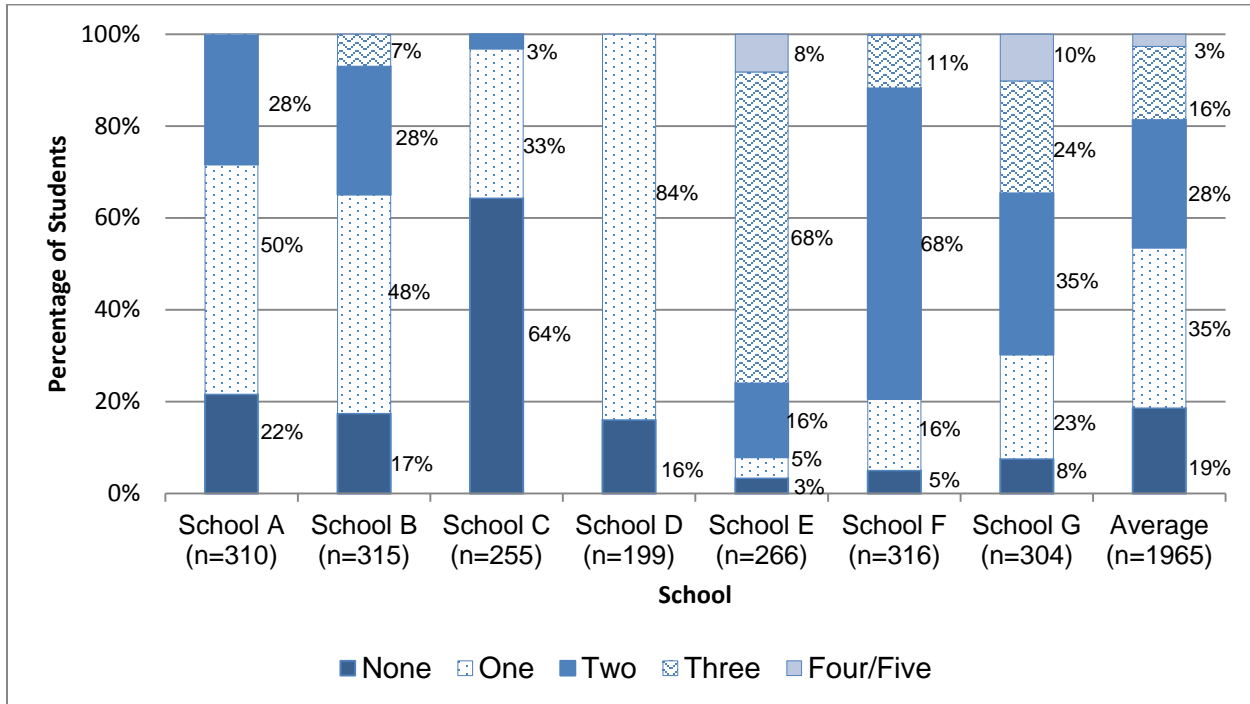
Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Events	Average Number of Participants (range)	Average Activity Length (in hours)
School A	2	113 (7–214)	3.0
School B	2	153 (54–252)	2.3
School C	3	8.6 (4–15)	2.3
School D	0	n/a	n/a
School E	4	73.8 (24–186)	1.1
School F	4	79.5 (23–244)	1.4
School G	8	53.8 (21–184)	2.2

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, March 31, 2013.

### COMPARISON BY SCHOOL

Figure 2.6 provides a comparison by school of level of student participation in workshops/events. On average across schools, as of March 31, 2013, 81% of students had attended at least one Texas GEAR UP SG student workshop/event, with most participating in only one (35%) or two (28%) workshops/events. In comparison, 7% of students across schools had attended a family/cultural event.

**Figure 2.6. Percentages of Students Participating in Workshops/Events by School, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

NOTES: This figure includes student participation in family events as well as student participation in student only workshops/events. Percentages for the “average” bar sums to 101% due to rounding.

As can be seen in the figure, schools varied significantly on percentages of students who participated in workshops/events. School E, School F, and School G reported the greatest percentages of students participating in at least one event. At School C there is cause for some concern, as 64% of students had not participated in any type of Texas GEAR UP SG workshop or event as of March 31, 2013. School E and School G are worth exploring further as each provided the broadest mix of student events and had the highest percentage of students attending three events (68% and 24%, respectively) and attending either four or five events (8% and 10%, respectively). Workshops/events held at School G included a Texas GEAR UP SG overview, an overview of a university program and the SAT, two events to learn about applying to and attending a summer engineering program, a STEM conference for girls, and a “Why College?” workshop for the entire Texas GEAR UP SG cohort.<sup>38</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG also sponsored a club at School G for students interested in taking on a leadership role at the school.

### STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN FAMILY CULTURAL EVENTS

In addition to workshops/events targeting students only, a small number of events included both parents and students. As of March 31, 2013, five of the schools had completed at least one family/cultural event. Overall, 7% of students had participated in a family event. School B

<sup>38</sup> The university and SAT event was actually two events, with 31 students participating in the day 1 overview and 27 of those 31 students taking the SAT on day 2. More broadly, this event provided an overview of a university program for gifted and talented students. This may explain why the number of students participating was relatively small as the school may have identified students who might be most appropriate for the program being overviewed.

reported that 17% of parents participated in an event, the highest percentage at any school. School E and School F each had 7% of students participate in a family event, while School A had 2% and School C had 5%. Parent participation in these events is described in the section on family engagement (Section 2.3). Family events may provide an opportunity for schools to support families in engaging with one another about postsecondary education.

### **2.2.6 Other Academic Support: Afterschool Mathematics Program**

To prepare more students for Algebra I in Grade 8, most sites had begun—or were planning to begin—mathematics-related supports for Grade 7 students by the spring 2013 site visits. For example, School E and School F had begun an afterschool mathematics program targeting students who, school officials believed, should be ready for Algebra I the following year. The schools selected students to participate by benchmarking results that identified the top approximately 37% of students based on mathematics scores.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, teachers helped to identify students who may be successful in the program. The afterschool mathematics program was focused on projects and game-based activities. Often, competition between groups was implemented to make the activities more fun for students. Teachers in the afterschool mathematics program indicated that the lessons were more challenging and hands-on than in a typical mathematics class. Overwhelmingly, students who participated in the focus groups said that they liked going to the afterschool mathematics program. During one of the site visits, evaluators informally observed classrooms in the afterschool mathematics program at around 5:30 p.m. and perceived students as highly engaged in activities. The program concludes with dinner, and bus transportation is available after the meal. Each school estimated that about 70 students regularly attended the program (approximately 25% of Grade 7).

### **2.2.7 Mix of Student Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation**

So far, data have been presented by category (e.g., tutoring, mentoring). One possibility that will be explored further in future reports is that any given specific type of implementation activity may be crucial to achieving a given Texas GEAR UP SG outcome (e.g., successfully completing Algebra I in Grade 8). It is also possible that some mix of implementation activities, rather than a given activity alone will be associated with outcomes. Two related strategies for understanding the mix of implementation across schools will be presented next. Preliminary steps in this process include the data presented in previous sections on number of advanced courses in which students were enrolled and number of subjects in which students have been tutored. In addition, while there has been a wide range of implementation activities to date, relatively low percentages of students participated in any given implementation activity. Specifically, large percentages of students have not yet participated in mentoring, counseling, or any student events. Following receipt of all data for Year 1 implementation additional efforts will be made to identify how implementation varies by student. In addition, knowing that a school engaged in an activity is not the same as knowing that the implementation occurred with a high level of quality that produced the desired outcome. Schools may be choosing to engage in a given activity based on their own perceptions of student needs, based on what they could implement most efficiently in the time frame, and/or based on what they perceived would have the greatest impact. Here the mix of implementation is considered to be a marker of the schools' success at implementing the range of implementation activities encouraged by the federal GEAR UP program.

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<sup>39</sup> It is unclear why 37% was the cutoff, but this may have been related to the enrollment that the schools felt best facilitated appropriate adult-student ratios.

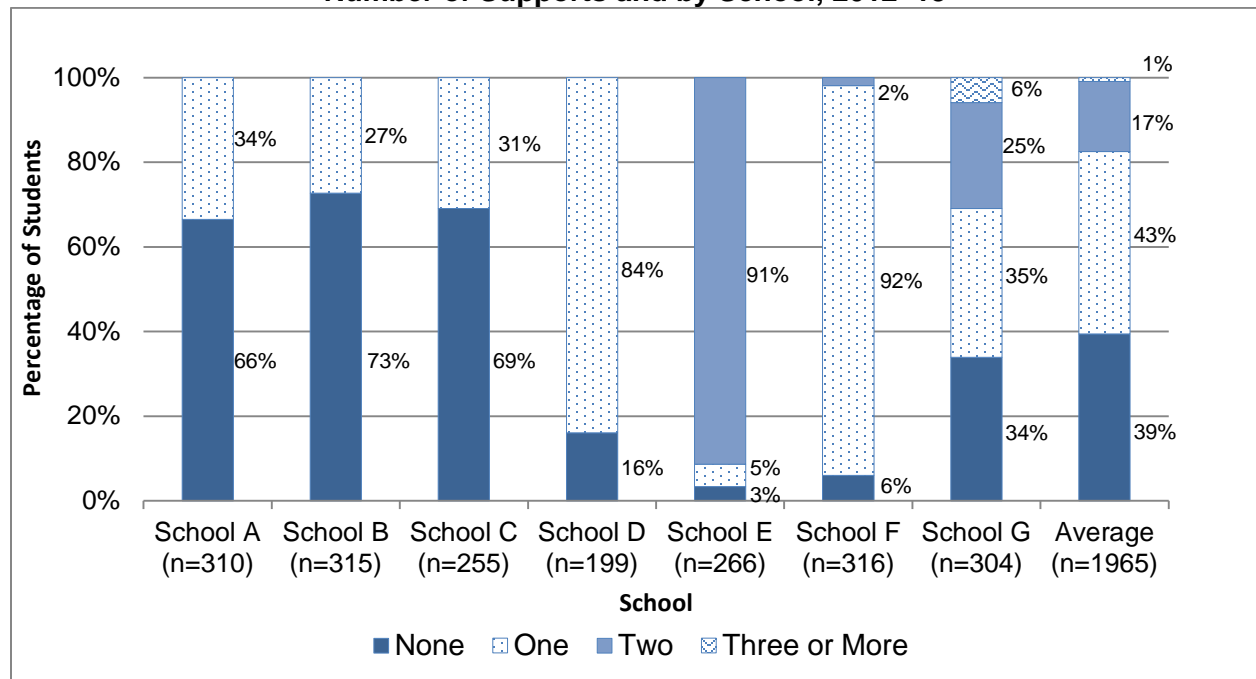


### STRONG STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The first strategy for understanding the mix of implementation is aligned with the following strong SSS Texas GEAR UP SG goal: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the Grade 8 students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data. As of March 31, 2013, on average schools were well on their way to achieving this goal with 61% of students participating in one or more these three types of SSS (Figure 2.7). Here again, the schools differed significantly. School A, School B, and School C will need to explore opportunities to engage in these activities in Year 2, as very few students are participating in SSS (34%, 27%, and 31%, respectively).

School G will need to make small adjustments in Year 2 as 66% of students in Year 1 were participating in SSS. While School G had not yet achieved the 75% goal, those students at this school who received SSS were more likely than those at most other schools to receive a mix of the three types of SSS—tutoring, mentoring, and/or counseling. That is, at School G, 25% of students participated in two of the three SSS and 6% received all three. School D, School E, and School F were already exceeding the Year 2 expectation in Year 1. At School E, almost all students (91%) were participating in both tutoring and mentoring.

**Figure 2.7. Percentages of Students Participating in Student Support Services by Number of Supports and by School, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

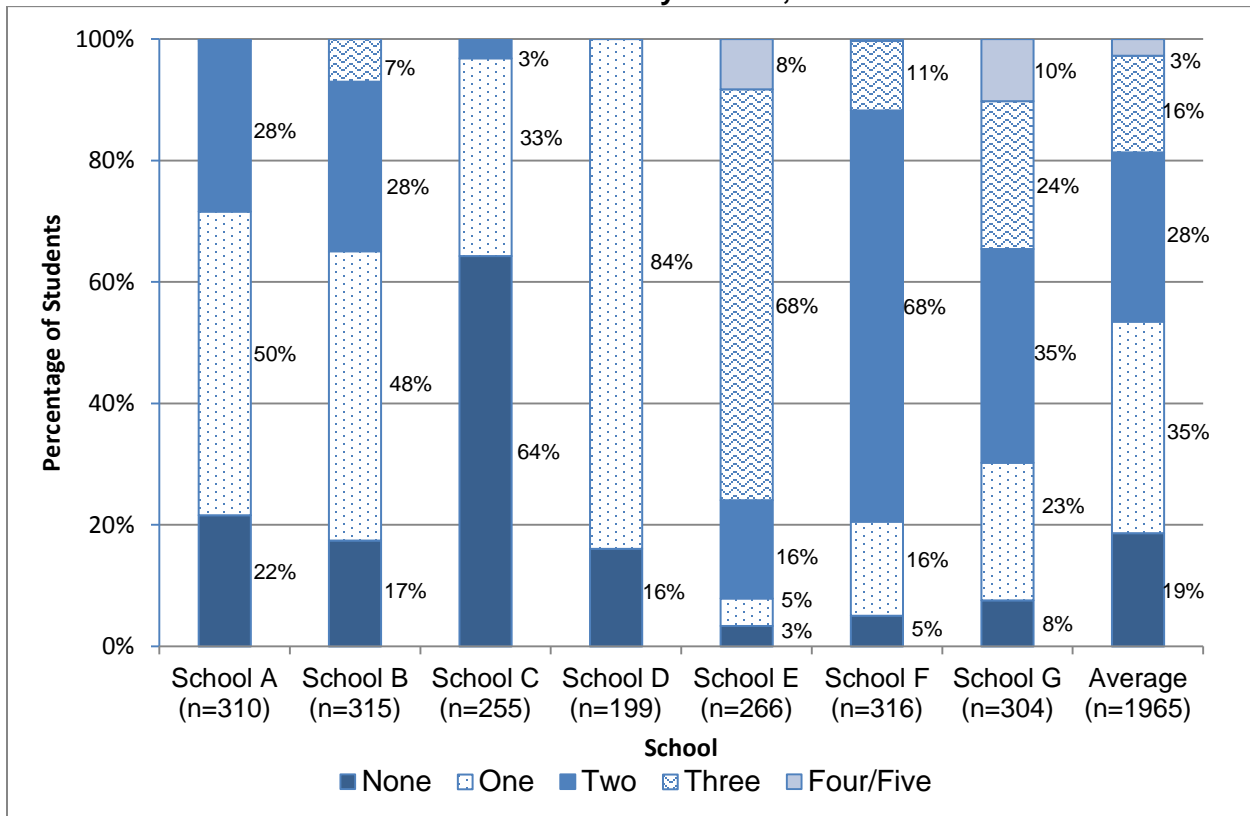
### STUDENT IMPLEMENTATION MIX OVERALL

The second strategy for exploring the mix of implementation activities participated in by students added four additional activities to the three in the first strategy. Specifically, students were coded as having participated or not participated in at least one workshop, at least one family event, a college visit, or other academic support. While 39% of students had not participated in a mix of SSS (see Figure 2.7 in earlier section), only 19% of students had not participated in

some type of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity overall (Figure 2.8). Across schools, students ranged in participation from no activities (3%–64%) to four or five activities (0%–10%).<sup>40</sup> School G, which provided the broadest range of implementation activities, had the largest percentage of students (10%) who participated in four or five implementation activities. School E was the only other school where students participated in four to five implementation activities (8%).

School C lagged significantly in the percentage of students who participated in a mix of activities. After accounting for all types of implementation strategies, 64% of students at School C had not participated in any activities, and the majority of the remaining students (33%) had participated in only one activity. It may be that how School C is targeting activities for the 33% of students who do receive services is making a difference, although in general the school is not yet engaging in as wide a range of activities as anticipated. Future reports will explore this (for all schools). School C may need additional guidance to assist them in improving student participation in Texas GEAR UP SG recommended activities in Year 2. In comparison, School E, School F, and School G all had fewer than 10% of students who had not participated in a Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activity (3%, 5%, and 8%, respectively).

**Figure 2.8. Percentages of Students Participating in Any GEAR UP Activity by Number of Activities by School, 2012–13**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013.

<sup>40</sup>  $\chi^2(24) = 1700.89, p < .0001$

### 2.3 Family Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities

Parent participation in GEAR UP activities is also encouraged in the GEAR UP model. The Texas GEAR UP SG performance target for family engagement is 50% of parents attending at least three events each program year. The APR data indicated that participating districts conducted outreach activities to ensure families were aware of the Texas GEAR UP SG program (through activities such as announcement mailings), and have offered resources such as bilingual programming, babysitting, and light meals. School G mailed information to 100% of its parents. Parents at this school participating in site visit focus groups were knowledgeable about the Texas GEAR UP SG program. However this school was generally high on providing a range of student and teacher events, which also may have contributed to increased visibility of Texas GEAR UP SG at the school. A kickoff meeting to explain the program was the most frequent parent activity offered at GEAR UP sites in the 2012–13 school year. Schools reported mixed success in attracting parents to the kickoff event. Two schools offered an additional workshop on [www.Bridges.com](http://www.Bridges.com), a college readiness program that allows students to learn about financial aid and college programs. Another school held a session in which Princeton Review provided an overview of college readiness issues.

In Year 1, no parent at any school had participated in three events as of March 31, 2013. Across the seven schools, 12 family events were offered (see descriptions of events in Appendix F). Although 89 parents in total had attended a Texas GEAR UP SG event as of March 31, 2013, this represented only 4.5% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort families. School D did not report any parent events in its APR; School B reported in the APR one family event with one parent present. In the APR, School C reported three events, each of which had between 4 and 15 parents. School E reported one event with 23 parents present in the APR. School F reported in the APR two parent events with 16 parents attending the first event and 13 parents attending the second. In the APR, School G reported fewer than 10 parents participate in in-person counseling sessions at each of two events. However, School G mailed all parents information regarding the Texas GEAR UP SG program, and parent knowledge at this school was high.

During site visits, School E and School F each reported having launched a three-part series of workshops for parents and families later in the spring and noted that these events were successful, with higher numbers of parents attending the Texas GEAR UP SG family events than other meetings or events held in the school. Because students and parents were able to attend these events together, they were both able to learn about topics relevant to college readiness, such as financial aid, programs of study, and local college opportunities. All schools will report on participation in events from April 1, 2013, to the end of summer 2013 in a fall APR report.

Parent focus groups were conducted at six of the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools (one school scheduled an afterschool focus group but no parents attended). Based on these sessions, it was apparent that knowledge and visibility of the Texas GEAR UP SG varied widely across the schools. To a degree, this is not surprising given the shortened period of implementation this school year. At three schools, however, knowledge was particularly low among parents, and the site visit team spent much of the focus group answering parent questions about the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Across all six schools where focus groups were conducted, parents had uneven knowledge of the program but were enthusiastic about Texas GEAR UP SG once it was explained to them.

### 2.4 Participation by Teachers in Professional Development Activities

Each year of the TX GEAR UP SG, educators are to receive PD for advanced instructional strategies, participate in at least five vertical teaming events, and receive PD related to college access/preparation. These types of PD opportunities support broad goals of improving

academic rigor at participating schools. As of March 2013, only School G appeared to have made progress toward these teacher PD goals. Across schools, 58% of teachers of Texas GEAR UP SG students attended at least one PD event related to the project. In Year 1, all campuses sent teachers/administrators to the national GEAR UP conference, with the typical school sending three members. For five of the seven schools this was the primary teacher PD to date. At two of these five schools, there was one other teacher PD on tutoring attended by a small number of teachers. At School D, one teacher event was held that was attended by 19 teachers, a second event on college readiness—Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)—was attended by fewer than five teachers, and the GEAR UP conference was attended. School G was the one school that took a more extensive approach to teacher PD, providing 13 PD opportunities with recorded teacher attendance by March 31, 2013.<sup>41</sup> Several of these events were participated in by the majority of its Grade 7 teachers, including content area teachers.

Site-visit data suggest that most Texas GEAR UP SG related teacher PD was just beginning in spring 2013 and that schools planned more extensive opportunities for summer 2013 and the 2013–14 school year. Most sites already had designed and scheduled their teacher PD activities for the 2012–13 school year before NOGA and were not able to easily change plans. The most common areas of interest for future PD identified by teachers in focus groups were PBL and pre-AP training for teachers. Teachers at all sites expressed interest in vertical teaming activities, through which teachers in the same subject area across grades meet to align curriculum. However, they reported that few vertical teaming activities had yet taken place.

### 2.4.1 Vertical Teaming

Schools have identified both teacher PD and vertical teaming as goals, and this section examines vertical teaming separate from other PD. GEAR UP defines vertical teaming as involving middle school and high school staff, at a minimum, in a PD or other staff event focused on understanding alignment of curriculum, goals, or expectations. Vertical teaming can also involve elementary school staff. While all districts reported to TEA in their grant application and implementation planning documents that five or more vertical teaming sessions were scheduled, at the time of the March 31<sup>st</sup> APR reporting, only School E, School F, and School G characterized one of their PD sessions as meeting vertical teaming definitions. Further, teachers who participated in site-visit focus groups reported low participation in vertical teaming. This may be due to different interpretations on the part of those completing the grant documents of what vertical teaming is. For example, some may have interpreted it as any time middle school and high school teachers attend the same event, even if vertical alignment is not a focus. There is also some chance that teachers engaged in vertical teaming were not able to attend a teacher focus group, although attendance by these teachers was encouraged. Vertical alignment is “a term we talk about but nothing we actually do,” one teacher said.

School G provided training on PBL to a vertical team (two high school teachers participated with the middle school teachers). School G also has a separate vertical team alignment grant in mathematics; Texas GEAR UP SG teachers participated in activities under that grant during the 2012–13 school year. Elsewhere, some schools had occasional or regular departmental meetings of teachers, but teachers generally did not view this as vertical teaming. For example, teachers noted that some of these meetings focused on analyzing student data and reviewing rubrics for teacher evaluation. Teachers also indicated that none of these departmental meetings involved teachers from either elementary schools or high schools.

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<sup>41</sup> School G listed several additional PD opportunities that were either offered early in the year or appeared to be less focused on GEAR UP. The numbers presented here do not include participation in those events.

### 2.4.2 Project-Based Learning

One TEA goal for the Texas GEAR UP SG is to generally improve academic rigor at the schools. TEA is particularly interested in providing training at these schools on PBL, differentiated instruction, and data-driven decision making as potential strategies for improving academic rigor. School G used Texas GEAR UP SG funding in support of PBL for teachers in spring 2013. This site offered PBL training for approximately 30 teachers on Saturdays, with Texas GEAR UP SG funds contributing to teacher stipends. Teachers participating in this activity said the sessions were instructive and helped them become more comfortable with PBL concepts. This school has a goal for teachers to conduct at least two PBL activities during the next school year. School D, School E, and School F expressed interest in the concept, and one other school had conducted a site visit to another school to observe PBL activities. Teachers were supportive of the effort, noting that PBL may help students work more independently to solve problems. As one teacher noted, too often teachers must “spoon feed” content to students, who are afraid of making mistakes on their own. PBL seeks to help students think independently, assuming teachers have the training and comfort level to continue managing the classroom effectively.

### 2.4.3 Financial Literacy

As will be described in Chapter 3, both parents and students have concerns about affording postsecondary education. One of TEA’s partners, TG, was brought on specifically to provide ongoing, comprehensive training around college financing, financial literacy, and financial aid. By May 2013, TG completed initial visits with each Texas GEAR UP SG district. In these introductory meetings, TG presented an overview of its financial education modules and requested feedback from the coordinators regarding willingness to use these courses. Following these meetings, TG began working with coordinators in each district to create a plan for implementing the financial education modules in the classroom next year and training teachers to present this information. TG expected to conduct education/training sessions with teachers of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students in summer 2013 so that teachers incorporate two of TG’s 12 financial education modules in their classrooms in the 2013–14 school year. Under this gradual rollout plan, TG expects to introduce two additional modules each year so that students receive all 12 by the end of the grant.

## 2.5 Participation by Community Partners in Texas GEAR UP SG

Community partners can play critical roles in helping with tutoring, mentoring, job site visit/job shadowing and college visits, for example. TEA established the following two goals for Texas GEAR UP SG with regard to community partnerships:

- All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

According to the district implementation plans submitted in December 2012, and as reported in the APR, all participating districts formed a local GEAR UP Advisory Committee with representatives from Texas GEAR UP SG cohort campuses and community. It is hoped that these committees will assist in developing appropriate community partnerships. Year 1 implementation included efforts by Texas GEAR UP SG schools to build alliances with other education agencies, postsecondary education entities, and community and faith-based organizations. While an overall challenge for districts, some have been successful in forging partnerships with local/city government entities and businesses. School A, School B, and School C were unable to identify any community partners as of March 2013. School D listed the largest number of partners (seven), including two postsecondary institutions. Site visit and APR



data indicated that School G coordinated with community partners specifically to implement a job shadowing program and college visits.

## 2.6 Statewide Services

So far in this chapter, implementation has focused on Texas GEAR UP SG activities that occurred within the cohort schools. A second focus is on statewide initiatives. That is, the Texas GEAR UP SG seeks to impact students not just at the cohort schools but also statewide through the provision of guidance, information, and resources related to college access, readiness, and success for all Texas districts and communities. TEA has identified the following goals related to statewide services:

- By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have utilized at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, including materials and professional development.
- Each year, the project will increase the number of educators participating in Texas GEAR UP SG professional learning, including through Project Share and face-to-face trainings.

As described in Chapter 1, Texas GEAR UP SG is a collaborative partnership between TEA and five organizations—Texas GEAR UP Support Center, TG, T-STEM Centers, the College Board, and AMS Pictures. These partners play a crucial role in meeting the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide goals. As with the school districts, the shortened implementation time frame of the Texas GEAR UP SG contributed to delays in implementing statewide services as described here.

### 2.6.1 Supplemental Statewide Materials for Parents and Students

Texas is utilizing the Texas GEAR UP SG to expand tools and resources for students and parents statewide regarding the road to college. Currently, TEA provides two GEAR UP related websites:

- The Texas GEAR UP SG website ([www.texasgearup.com](http://www.texasgearup.com)) is used as a hub for GEAR UP programs and staff. Based on Google Analytics data provided by TEA, there were 5,237 unique users for the period from July 23, 2012 (date of state grant receipt), through March 31, 2013, with the highest concentration in the Austin area.
- Own Your Own Future interactive website ([www.ownyourownfuture.com](http://www.ownyourownfuture.com)) has resources such as "Why Go to College?" and pages on preparing, finding, and paying for college. Based on Google Analytics data provided by TEA, this site had 15,963 unique users from July 23, 2012, through March 31, 2013. This number may be low since students may access the site through school-site computer labs without being tracked as a unique visitor. Analytics showed usage across the state though it was primarily concentrated in the Gulf Coast, Houston, San Antonio, and the Rio Grande Valley regions. Video and curricular resources are available on the site, where content is available for each specific grade from Grade 7 through 12. To encourage use both inside and outside school, the site does not require logins.

Both websites have a cache of interactive lessons, guides, college planning toolkits, and grade-level guides. While both websites have received praise from educators in Texas, TEA is looking to grow the use of both websites, as there is a perception that the websites are underutilized compared to the number who potentially could benefit from these online resources. Focus group research conducted by AMS Pictures across the state in spring 2013 sought to better understand the needs of students, educators, and families to inform a redesign that will ensure



high engagement and adoption. Preliminary findings will inform the new design, which will be released statewide in Year 2. AMS has identified three directions for the redesign: (a) moving to a one-stop-shop for GEAR UP content, (b) including more engaging designs, and (c) creating a stronger link between career aspirations and the postsecondary pathway. The redesigned site will serve schools in the state grant as well as local GEAR UP partnership grantees. As of now, it is known that the two websites continue to be available statewide, although data on the percentage of districts accessing the websites is not available.

### **AWARENESS OF TEXAS GEAR UP SG WEBSITES**

During spring 2013 site visits, knowledge of state-level Texas GEAR UP SG activities was not extensive among administrators, teachers, families, and students. At least one person at all schools was familiar with the two Texas GEAR UP SG websites. However, the level of knowledge was uneven at best about state resources. School administrators had little knowledge of Texas GEAR UP SG state resources, and not all local Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators were familiar with these resources either. School G reported utilizing the Own Your Own Future website extensively in spring 2013. One example of this was observed by a member of the evaluation team who was at the school to assist with Texas GEAR UP SG survey administration. Once students completed the survey, they utilized the Own Your Own Future website to explore college requirements and costs. School E and School F also reported utilizing the Own Your Own Future website, with students using the website with their parents at parent events. Limited use across schools is not surprising given the short implementation time frame for Texas GEAR UP SG activities in the 2012–13 school year based on the timing and awarding of both the state GEAR UP grants and grants to the four cohort districts. All Texas GEAR UP SG schools expected to use the statewide resources more extensively in the years ahead.

#### **2.6.2 Project Share: Providing Statewide Teacher Professional Development Opportunities**

To provide statewide teacher PD, the Texas GEAR UP SG plans to capitalize on a tool already in use in the state of Texas by TEA—Project Share. Project Share is an online communication and teaching platform available statewide. While Project Share use during the first year of the grant was minimal, Texas GEAR UP SG did create a Project Share group that includes the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools as well as GEAR UP partnership grants statewide. TEA plans to make a long-term investment in Project Share to provide PD courses statewide. Texas GEAR UP SG expects to add new online PD opportunities under Project Share for Years 2 and 3 of the grant. The evaluation team will continue to work with TEA to determine how best to use this resource in the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. In terms of the PD component, TEA reports intentions to use Project Share in Year 2 as a primary hub for PD courses through competitive award.

In addition to the statewide opportunities, state partners have provided or plan to provide various teacher PD opportunities to the grantees. There may be some potential for these opportunities to be provided statewide. These PD opportunities include the following:

- TG – Provide ongoing, comprehensive training around college financing, financial literacy, and financial aid
- College Board – Institutes to teachers focused on rigorous content, the AP programs, and vertical teaming
- T-STEM Centers – Institutes for PBL, differentiated instruction, and vertical teaming
- AMS Pictures – While not teacher PD per se, teacher resources are provided on the Own Your Own Future and TexasGEARUP.com websites

### 2.6.3 Statewide Coalition of GEAR UP Grantees

In an effort to promote statewide collaboration, the Texas GEAR UP SG has brought together a group of state leaders from 16 active or alumni GEAR UP grants in Texas. In prior years, GEAR UP grantees in Texas met on a quarterly basis at the director level to exchange information. However, the state envisions a more robust effort under Texas GEAR UP SG to form a new umbrella group called the Texas GEAR UP Coalition. This coalition has a more broadly defined membership and has set mission and goal statements. Organizing into various work group committees, the plan is for the coalition to engage in the identification and study of critical GEAR UP topic areas such as family engagement, state policy impacting college enrollment, and GEAR UP professional learning. The group will meet formally five to six times a year, with committees meeting more often via remote means.

### 2.6.4 Statewide GEAR UP Conference

One final strategy to promote GEAR UP practices statewide is for TEA, with its partners at the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center, to deliver annual conferences. The 2012 Texas GEAR UP conference attracted approximately 250 program staff and state and national stakeholders. Staff at the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center prepared a comprehensive assessment report on the conference and indicated during interviews that the conference drew positive evaluations from participants. Planning for the 2013 conference is underway.

## 2.7 Conclusions and Next Steps

### 2.7.1 Key Implementation Findings

While the Year 1 implementation activities findings presented here are based on the short implementation time frame, the following findings regarding implementation are considered key to understanding Year 1 Texas GEAR UP SG implementation:

- **Implementation Activity Delivery Varied Across Schools.** While the key findings generally focus on average performance of schools, the range and extent of implementation activities differed across schools significantly within each type of activity. School G was able to provide the broadest range of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activities. This school engaged in providing tutoring, mentoring, and counseling to students; taking students on college events; holding student workshops/events; holding parent/family events (to a smaller extent); providing teachers with appropriate PD; and working effectively with community partners. While School G engaged in this broad range of activities, it was also relatively lower than several schools on both advanced course enrollment and student tutoring. While the program start date occurred too late to impact Year 1 course enrollment, this is an area the school will need to focus on in the future. Two other schools came close to School G's level of mixed implementation, while the remaining four schools were implementing a relatively narrow range of activities. It remains to be seen how this early success in implementing a broad range of activities may be related to positive outcomes. One early outcome was that Texas GEAR UP SG was still struggling with visibility to parents and, to a lesser extent, to teachers and administrators.
- **Progress Towards Algebra I Goals.** Schools were clearly engaged in practices that may facilitate success at meeting the Year 2 goal of having at least 30% of students successfully complete Algebra I. However low levels of enrollment in advanced mathematics courses at some schools is cause for concern about achieving the goal. Enrollment in an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7 was low relative to the expectations for success in Algebra I at Grade 8 (30%), with an average enrollment of 22%.<sup>42</sup> Approximately 47% of students

<sup>42</sup> Again, course enrollment was likely not impacted by Texas GEAR UP SG based on timing of award. Grantees who were already engaging in this practice may simply be further ahead towards attaining the goal.

were being tutored in mathematics indicating that, in general, schools are prepared to provide this support service to students. In addition, two schools had instituted an afterschool mathematics program, a potential promising practice. Successful execution of summer mathematics enrichment programs may be key to helping schools achieve the goal.

- **Strong SSS and Overall Mix of Implementation.** Four of the seven schools had a strong foundation of providing robust SSS. In Year 1, three schools exceeded and one school nearly met the Year 2 implementation goal of having 75% of students involved in comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring. At the remaining three schools, considerable effort will need to occur to achieve the goal. At these three schools, 67% to 73% of students had not participated in any type of SSS.
- **Engaging Families was Challenging.** No school met the Year 1 goal of having 50% of parents attend at least three Texas GEAR UP SG events. To some extent, this was due to schools generally offering a limited number of family events in the limited implementation time frame. Engaging families of middle school students is often difficult (e.g., Hill & Tyson, 2009). The Texas GEAR UP SG schools will need to work to overcome the challenges of engaging families in order to meet the goal.
- **Low Levels of Teacher PD.** The majority of schools had engaged in only minimal levels of teacher PD in Year 1 through May 2013. School G provided a range of teacher PD opportunities and actively engaged with partners to provide students with unique opportunities. School G was the only school to clearly report engaging in teacher PD on PBL and vertical teaming. School G’s community partners provided the school with several opportunities to engage in job site visits as well as college visits. All schools planned to increase teacher PD over summer 2013.

Another way to summarize Year 1 implementation is to take a high-level view of each school’s level of implementation of a given strategy. This summary builds on the work of identifying a mix of implementation relative to students and adds in family, teachers, community, and statewide partners. For the purposes of this high-level view, each school was considered as having engaged or not in the given type of activity. As with the earlier indicators of mix of implementation, this summary does not take into account quality or impact of the given implementation activity. Table 2.3 provides this summary.

**Table 2.3. Overview of Implementation Strategies by School, 2012–13**

Implementation Activity	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Advanced Course Enrollment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
SSS: Tutoring	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X <sup>a</sup>	X	X (mathematics only)	X (mathematics only)	X
SSS: Mentoring					X		X
SSS: Counseling/ Advising							X
SSS: Other Activities (Afterschool Mathematics Program)					X	X	
College Visit	X	X		X			X
Job Site Visit/Job Shadowing							X
Student Workshops/ Events	X	X	X		X	X	X
Parent/Family Events		X	X		X	X	X

Implementation Activity	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	School G
Teacher PD <sup>b</sup>				X	X	X	X
Community Partners		X	X	X			X
Use Statewide Services					X	X	X
<b>Total Number of Strategies Implemented</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, March 31, 2013, and May 2013 site visit data.

<sup>a</sup> School A, School B, and School C each indicated in the APR that students had participated in virtual tutoring relatively extensively. However, during the site visit, the actual level of tutoring was reported to be minimal. Still, given that tutoring had occurred to some extent, the schools were credited with having implemented tutoring.

<sup>b</sup> PD=Professional Development. For this table, attendance at the GEAR UP national conference was not included in PD. All schools did send staff to the conference.

School G was clearly engaged in the broadest range of implementation activities and had completed at least some level of utilizing 11 of the 12 activities. School B, School E, and School F each fell somewhere in the middle on range of implementation activities. School E and School F implemented activities with a focus on mathematics in particular, providing tutoring in mathematics only and providing an afterschool program in mathematics. These activities are likely based on the Algebra I desired outcomes.

School A, School C, and School D were each relatively lower on range of implementation activities, focusing primarily on advanced course enrollment, tutoring, student workshops, and to a small extent, parent events. While it is not yet known if any particular activity, as compared to engaging in a range of activities, is linked to desired outcomes, the Texas GEAR UP SG certainly encourages participation in a broad range. Given this, it is hoped that School A, School C, and School D will initiate a broader range during the remainder of Year 1 and moving forward. This is true for the remaining schools as well, with the exception of School G where it is hoped the broad range of implementation activities will be sustained in future years.

## 2.7.2 Facilitators and Barriers to Texas GEAR UP SG Implementation

It was evident from APR data and site visits that there were several facilitators as well as barriers affecting progress and successful Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in Year 1. Understanding facilitators and barriers to implementation provides needed guidance to grantees who may be struggling.

### FACILITATORS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**Grant-funded Coordinator and Support from Campus/District Administrators.** During the site visits, it became clear that implementation level appeared to have a positive relationship to both the coordinator's time commitment to the program and general support from the campus/district. Facilitators to implementation included having a coordinator with significant time dedicated to the Texas GEAR UP SG program and having strong support from administrators. School G, where the range of implementation was highest, hired a grant-funded coordinator devoted 100% to the program. This structure proved invaluable in promoting fast response to questions and helped develop a robust program on site. The individual was an experienced school administrator with knowledge of budgeting, scheduling, and how to get the most out of available funding. The School G coordinator worked closely with the school principal to design activities that fit the goals/objectives of the school as well as the Texas GEAR UP SG. Both the coordinator and the principal reported a strong working relationship that helped leverage other school and community resources. Support from the principal also helped facilitate teacher buy-in and participation in activities. The coordinator in this school was located in the main office across the hall from the principal, promoting easy communication. It is

not surprising that in this context the school was able to engage in such a broad range and number of activities even in the limited timeframe.

School E and School F also had a coordinator with a substantial Texas GEAR UP SG time commitment and strong support from campus administrators. These two schools shared a coordinator who was assigned to Texas GEAR UP SG 100% of the time. While not stationed directly in either school, the coordinator visited each school on a daily basis to build relationships and to monitor the afterschool mathematics program. The strong relationship was perceived to have helped to get activities going quickly. In particular, the afterschool mathematics program took shape in an expedited manner following receipt of the NOGA. It was perceived by several teachers and staff interviewed during the site visit as playing a crucial role in helping to prepare more Grade 7 students for Algebra I the following school year. For these schools, the district also provided crucial leadership that facilitated implementation. The coordinator shared a large office with coordinators for other external programs as well as the district's director of advanced programs. An administrator said this arrangement was done purposefully to promote coordination and communication among programs to ensure that they not only meet Texas GEAR UP SG objectives but also fit into the district's strategic plan.

**Coordination with Other Programs in the School.** Texas GEAR UP SG sites with high levels of Year 1 implementation as of spring 2013 leveraged other resources within the school building to enhance programming. School G coordinated Texas GEAR UP SG services with CIS to leverage the strength of both programs. This cooperation led to the development of job shadowing activities as well as more general coordination of efforts to identify services needed by students. At School E and School F, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator was able to utilize existing resources such as AVID to build out programming. These schools already employed classroom tutors through AVID twice a week. Texas GEAR UP SG provided funds to have these tutors work an additional two days a week and to have tutors and teachers attend PD on tutoring. "We were able to select the tutors from AVID and we know that they are good," a district administrator said.

**Existing Relationships with Local Universities.** Local university links were important in School A, School B, School D, and School G. Each school was able to use these relationships to schedule a college visit. School G utilized its university relationship to develop a 2013 summer program designed to help more students succeed in Algebra I next year.

**Support from the Texas GEAR UP Support Center.** The Texas GEAR UP Support Center played a significant role in supporting districts, serving as a day-to-day management site for the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Among other activities, the Support Center established working relationships with leaders and program staff in each school/district; worked with schools/districts to understand grant goals and targets; provided ongoing guidance on Texas GEAR UP SG requirements; attended Texas GEAR UP SG committee meetings and events; planned training sessions to promote strong implementation in Year 2; promoted strong attendance at national GEAR UP conferences; provided monitoring and feedback on implementation of activities and objectives; and served as a liaison among Texas GEAR UP SG subrecipients at the state level. All Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators gave the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center high marks for its regular communication and helpfulness. The Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center and TEA also led efforts to reconvene and strengthen the Texas GEAR UP Coalition so that the state program and local GEAR UP grantees meet regularly to exchange information and discuss pressing challenges.

**State/School Communication.** Interviews with staff from TEA and from each Texas GEAR UP SG school indicated a strong foundation was set for effective use of state partners in the years ahead. All state partners indicated they were satisfied with the communications they had with TEA. Staff at all Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools indicated satisfaction with both TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center. The Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools described



having regular meetings by telephone with both offices to discuss grant activities, the current status of their efforts, and actions for the future of the grant. Staff at each Texas GEAR UP SG cohort school also indicated that their contacts at TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center were responsive and available as needed via email to answer questions and discuss the grant. TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center were generally satisfied with communication. Staff at the Texas GEAR UP Support Center noted that the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools sometimes were more likely to reach out to TEA when the Texas GEAR UP Support Center likely should have been the first point of contact.

**GEAR UP “Value” to the Partner Organizations.** While they were chosen to help TEA effectively accomplish Texas GEAR UP SG objectives, all partners perceived their participation as benefitting their organization. The main benefit that partners see as a result of participation is that it helps them meet their organizational goals. For example, TG has goals that focus on getting their materials out to as many people as possible within the state of Texas. Participating in the Texas GEAR UP SG allows it to share this information with a new group of students and parents. Similarly, T-STEM Center leadership indicated that its goal is to enroll as many teachers in PBL workshops as possible and reported that participating in the Texas GEAR UP SG grant is helping it meet this goal. Finally, a UT-IPSI official noted that this grant gives UT-IPSI the opportunity to work with an established college access program with which it had not collaborated before, hopefully leading to contributions to knowledge in the field.

### BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION

**November/December 2012 Start and Truncated Time Frame.** It bears repeating that implementation within Year 1 reported here occurred in a shortened period. The schools did not begin implementation until November/December 2012, and the APR data set a cut off point for implementation of March 31, 2013. The site visit data provided some high-level implementation identification in May 2013. In all, this means that the implementation reported here is based on three to five months of implementation data. In Year 2, schools will have the entire year to implement activities. In their implementation plans, all of the district subrecipients described the delay in grant award as a barrier to implementation that they were working to overcome. Schools planned to address this barrier by providing summer 2013 activities. However, some schools expressed concerns that non-Texas GEAR UP SG related summer programming for teachers and students had been planned before the award, and changing those plans to align with Texas GEAR UP SG objectives was proving difficult.

The delay in grant award also impacted, although to a lesser extent, progress on statewide initiatives. In particular, TEA had proposed in the federal application to add Texas GEAR UP SG relevant data fields to the state longitudinal data system, which would potentially have facilitated comparison across schools. Unfortunately, deadlines to add data fields could not be met, so this did not occur as planned. In addition, it was originally planned that changes to the state websites might occur within Year 1. Fortunately, while Year 1 was focused on better understanding what was/was not liked about the website, TEA was able to maintain availability of both websites to the public.

Another consequence of the November/December 2012 start was the loss of some institutional expertise. As a result, TEA hired a new GEAR UP state coordinator who did not begin until October 2012, three months after the announcement of the grant. As a result, there was considerable “catch-up” work to perform at the state level throughout the 2012–13 school year. Similarly, some schools participating in the grant had experienced turnover in leadership roles, and new leaders had to be approached about the Texas GEAR UP SG before moving forward.

**Improving Academic Rigor in Advanced Courses.** Generally, there was agreement during site visits that the courses identified as advanced were not as rigorous as might be needed to facilitate future success. Teachers, as well as students and administrators to some extent,



reported these courses as not as rigorous as desired. As one teacher noted, “The level of pre-AP curriculum is not on par with other districts.” Said another, “The kids in pre-AP are still behind what the teachers feel is true AP.” Teachers generally had not received specific pre-AP training and said they had designed the courses much like the general education course but with a few added activities. In other words, while the percentages of students in advanced courses may be on track to meet expectations, the level of academic rigor may need to be increased.

To address this issue, administrators and GEAR UP coordinators suggested College Board pre-AP training as a Texas GEAR UP SG activity for summer 2013. They believed that such training would increase rigor in pre-AP classes and better prepare students for AP classes in high school. At School A, teachers must participate in the training in order to teach a pre-AP class next year. This school also planned to bring middle school and high school teachers together to discuss pre-AP and AP strategies. All sites were interested in pursuing additional rigorous courses. School G plans to introduce pre-AP/AP courses in Spanish, given the large Spanish-speaking population. Teachers at each site said they would welcome PD activities designed to increase rigor in these classes, and schools may be able to increase rigor given the availability of Texas GEAR UP SG supported summer PD in pre-AP and AP.

**Lack of Texas GEAR UP SG Visibility.** Knowledge and visibility of GEAR UP varied widely across the schools, which is not surprising given the shortened implementation time frame of the program during the 2012–13 school year. In School A, School B, and School C, however, knowledge was particularly low among students, parents, and teachers. These schools held few or no workshops/events for students and parents as of May 2013. The evaluation site visit team spent considerable time answering questions about the program with these schools. In School D, teacher knowledge of the program was uneven, perhaps due to discussions about Texas GEAR UP SG supporting an iPad® initiative for the school. “I thought GEAR UP was just technology. I didn’t know there was more beyond technology,” one teacher said.

The lack of awareness of Texas GEAR UP SG was most apparent with parents. At each parent focus group, at least one parent expressed concern that adults had little understanding of the program. Several believed Texas GEAR UP SG was primarily a mathematics program. This suggests that parents perceive the increased focus on mathematics related to Algebra I goals, but have not made the connection between Algebra I and college readiness. One parent said, “I don’t think the GEAR UP program is well-defined. I think it needs to be advertised to the parents.”

**Coordinator’s Other Responsibilities.** While a committed coordinator facilitated program implementation, a coordinator with multiple responsibilities may have contributed to lower implementation at some schools. Coordinators working with School A, School B, School C, and School D had other responsibilities that decreased the amount of time they were able to focus on Texas GEAR UP SG. One coordinator had responsibility for several other grants, while another also coordinated a large district-wide K–12 curricular program.

**Lack of Parent Events.** While schools that did offer parent events sometimes struggled to attain the level of parent involvement hoped for, several schools simply had not provided sufficient opportunity for parents to be involved in the performance reporting period examined. All sites are working to increase the level of parent involvement in Texas GEAR UP SG programs. Parents in focus groups indicated that they had little knowledge of the program and that there were few parent events offered. Coordinators also acknowledged during evaluation site visit interviews a need to increase parent participation. One strategy may be to offer incentives for parent participation. In School G, it was reported that parent participation in Texas GEAR UP SG events increased substantially when students who brought a parent were prioritized in having course electives approved for the 2013–14 school year.

**Uneven Receptivity of TEA Partners by Texas GEAR UP SG Cohort Districts.** TEA partners reached out to the Texas GEAR UP SG districts and indicated that the level of effort or receptivity to grant programs differed across the cohort districts. For initial meetings, some districts brought a team of individuals such as the GEAR UP coordinator, principals, and counselors to talk with the state and its partners. Other sites included only the GEAR UP coordinator at the meetings. Of the PD available from the College Board, two districts had not yet narrowed down the list of PD opportunities at the time of site visit. It was the impression that much of this indecision was due to changes in leadership, which led to inconsistency within the schools. Similarly, TG indicated that one district was not familiar with its work and resources; initially, this district was less receptive to the idea of incorporating financial education into the classroom. One state partner, TSTEM, had not yet been awarded a grant from TEA for Texas GEAR UP SG work and therefore awareness of it as a Texas GEAR UP partner by the school was minimal though there was awareness of TSTEM more broadly.

### 2.7.3 Potential Promising Practices

In addition to engaging in facilitators identified above and seeking ways to overcome barriers, there are several emerging promising practices related to implementation at several locations across the state program that are worthy of continued follow-up in the future. This report identifies four potential promising implementation practices based on information to date.

#### TEXAS GEAR UP SG PARENT WORKSHOP SERIES

School E and School F launched a parent workshop series for GEAR UP that attracted 15 to 60 parents to each session. This parent workshop series was a three-part program with these evening workshops:

- An overview of the Own Your Own Future website, showing how its resources provide information on preparing for, attending, and paying for college.<sup>43</sup>
- A workshop on financial literacy and financial aid options.
- A presentation from a local community college about programs of study, the role of community colleges, and available financial aid.

The parent workshop series is considered a potential best practice in part because of the large number of parents in attendance. At both schools, administrators and the coordinator described attendance at these sessions as above attendance at typical parent programs. One of the sessions attracted more than 60 family members. Texas GEAR UP SG used flyers, personal calls from teachers to parents of Grade 7 students, and "robo-calls" to draw parent interest. Students were able to accompany their parents to these sessions, making them true 'family' events. Sessions often included fun quizzes with parents to determine what they know—and would like to know—about college costs and options. Both schools provided free childcare during the events.

Both schools want to continue the parent workshop series in the future. Parents offered suggestions for future sessions that included learning to use computers, creating a resume (for students and parents), English instruction, and college visits where parents accompany their children. "We want to build rapport with parents and have a long running relationship with them," one coordinator said. While acknowledging that their school was not able to meet the goal of 50% of parents coming to all three events, administrators were optimistic. "We haven't met this goal, but we had many parents come, and we had many repeat attendees," said one district administrator. "The principals took notice that parents were showing up." Parents who

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<sup>43</sup> [www.ownyourownfuture.com](http://www.ownyourownfuture.com)

attended these sessions indicated that they were helpful not only for adults but also for children. “My daughter used to say ‘if I go to college.’ Now she says ‘when I go to college,’” said one parent.

### **AFTERSCHOOL MATHEMATICS PROGRAM**

School E and School F offered an afterschool mathematics program to help prepare students for Algebra I in Grade 8. Program activities focused on projects and game-based activities such as a series of mathematics problems geared to solving a crime. Other activities included competitions between groups of students. Students were divided into groups of 10 to 20 students for the afterschool mathematics program, with each group taught in a separate classroom. The schools designed the program understanding that students had other afterschool activities; as a result, the program was not offered immediately after school so students could attend other clubs or sports activities first. For those without other afterschool activities on a particular day, homework help was available. The approximately 90-minute afterschool mathematics program culminated with dinner. Bus transportation was available afterward.

Students in evaluation site visit focus groups overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with the afterschool mathematics program, particularly its hands-on aspects in topics from pre-algebra to beginning geometry. Teachers in the program indicated that the lessons often were more challenging than a typical mathematics class and said students responded well to the hands-on activities. While there was strong satisfaction with the program, it warrants further follow-up next year by the evaluation team to determine how participants are succeeding in Algebra I.

### **ENHANCED COLLEGE VISITS**

While college visits were beginning at most sites, School G tied college visits to specific activities in the classroom, as teachers conducted related pre- and post-visit activities. In English classes, students researched colleges before and after the visits; in one classroom observed by the site visit team, students designed three-panel brochures about a “dream” college they created for this activity. The brochure provided information on college curricula, athletics, and student services and included accompanying artwork. In an English class for students with limited English skills, site visitors observed a teacher leading a post-visit writing exercise. Working together, students listed what they learned about college; each student then wrote a short essay on the topic. Such activities linked college awareness with classroom activities such as preparing and writing an essay. In this sense, college visits were similar to educational field trips.

### **LEVERAGING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

School G has been particularly effective in leveraging community partnerships to build a robust Texas GEAR UP SG program. At this school, a partnership with CIS has led to development of three job shadowing activities deemed effective by students in site visit focus groups. Two trips were to work sites, including an auto plant and a regional grocery headquarters. Students made a third visit the local government center, where they played the roles of city leaders to discuss issues. Students were organized into five groups, each discussing an issue. Afterward, each group designated an individual to speak about that topic to a group of city leaders. The school partnered with a local college and developed many activities, including a college visit and a 2013 summer bridge program on a college campus to help students develop their mathematics skills for success in Algebra I. At this college, Texas GEAR UP SG has linked to the Gateway to College program for at-risk students. The gateway program was originally designed for high school students, but Texas GEAR UP SG has helped “extend” it to middle school. Both CIS and the college have memoranda of understanding with their partner Texas GEAR UP SG school that outline responsibilities as well as partnership goals.

#### 2.7.4 Recommended Next Steps

Several important next steps for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation were identified. One that has already been mentioned is the plan to engage in summer programs for students and summer teacher PD. In addition, the following next steps are recommended.

##### ENGAGE IN YEAR 2 TEXAS GEAR UP SG OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Given the variation in visibility of the program across stakeholders and schools, it is recommended that Texas GEAR UP SG outreach and awareness activities continue into Year 2 of the grant, possibly with a 2013–14 school year “kickoff meeting” for students and families. They should also target administrators for outreach, as some schools are expected to have new administrators in fall 2013. Such outreach also may need to include a greater focus on the Texas GEAR UP SG statewide websites, as knowledge of these was low across all sites.

##### ALGEBRA I PREPARATION

During focus groups at the spring 2013 site visits, teachers expressed a variety of opinions on the value of the Algebra I goal. Teachers at one school were skeptical that 30% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students would succeed in Grade 8 Algebra I, while teachers at another favored placing *all* Grade 8 students in Algebra I to increase rigor. Based on such varied responses, it is recommended that Texas GEAR UP SG monitor teacher expectations for their students, given the critical role of teachers in college awareness and preparation.

##### PARENT EVENTS/INCREASED PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Asked for their suggestions for parent activities, parent focus groups requested events that would provide more information about college requirements and scholarships. Parents of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and families with older children were also concerned about financial aid for college. It is recommended that one option in the future may be to provide an event or several events where parents and families are shown the FAFSA4caster, a web-based tool from the U.S. Department of Education that gives families a concrete example of the aid their children may be eligible to receive based on family size and estimates of current family income.<sup>44</sup> Beginning in Year 2, TG will be providing Texas GEAR SG staff with their Financial Literacy Training; staff members are then expected to provide the training to parents.

Parent suggestions covered more than just college awareness. At one school, parents said they hoped Texas GEAR UP SG could help them work more effectively with teachers on homework and related issues, particularly for parents with limited English proficiency. Parents at two schools said they would like access to English classes or other education for themselves. At one school, parents said Texas GEAR UP SG events did not have Spanish translation available when it was needed. While this appeared to be an isolated case, having translation services available is critical to parent engagement in many of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools.

Most Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators were aware of the need to increase parent involvement. One coordinator said the program is unusual in that it serves an entire grade level without an income cutoff or other eligibility requirement. This fact alone requires some education of families. “I think that some parents are still waiting to hear that their kids won’t qualify,” the coordinator said. Looking forward, coordinators indicated they might try new strategies to increase parent attendance, such as taking them on college trips and sponsoring a student talent show that also includes college awareness activities. Schools also were considering options such as texting and e-mailing parents about upcoming activities. Schools will also need to consider if they are scheduling parent events often enough and at times when parents can attend. Grantees may also want to consider placing one or more parents on their Texas GEAR

<sup>44</sup> [www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov)

UP SG district advisory councils. None of the districts had planned to include parents on these committees as of December 2012, but this type of opportunity might prove useful in guiding family engagement efforts.

### **VERTICAL TEAMING**

Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators in all districts say vertical teaming is an important issue they want to focus on in Year 2 of the grant, particularly as next year's GEAR UP students (Grade 8) prepare for high school. Two districts plan to start activities in summer 2013 through PD, and another plans to bring together middle and high school teachers in fall 2013. Two schools indicated during site visits that they planned to switch curriculum, which would involve vertical teaming. It may be worthwhile for TEA or the Texas GEAR UP Support Center to provide coaching and technical assistance related to vertical teaming models and promising practices in order to balance and coordinate activities that support Texas GEAR UP SG vertical teaming goals with vertical teaming initiatives underway at the districts.

### **COLLEGE PREPARATION ADVISOR AND MIDDLE SCHOOL COLLEGE OFFICE**

In Year 2 of the grant, each school will have its own College Preparation Advisor. While grant coordinators will continue to lead in implementing the broad range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, College Preparation Advisors will identify issues and be responsible for keeping students on track for high school completion and college success by providing individualized student support. Employed by UT-IPSI, but located at each school, these advisors will support students in academic achievement, course selection, and summer enrichment activities. The College Preparation Advisor will support increased family and community awareness of college and of the Texas GEAR UP SG. During interviews conducted in May 2013, the GEAR UP Support Center at UT-IPSI—and many school administrators—agreed that, in addition to student access, the advisors must have regular access to teachers, parents, and school leaders to be successful. In addition, it is recommended that the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinators work with their schools to establish a college office. By establishing a physical place, students, parents, and school staff will know where to go to get needed information; this provides a potential location for them to work with the College Preparation Advisor, tutors, and mentors. According to the Texas GEAR UP SG Support Center, the College Preparation Advisor will assist students to complete 5- or 6-year graduation plans.

### **STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION**

Texas GEAR UP SG has established a strong foundation for statewide implementation through engaging in its first annual conference. In addition, Project Share may facilitate PD, while establishing the Texas GEAR UP Coalition may help disseminate information on best practices in the future via a collaborative, inclusive structure. This may also facilitate mentoring on GEAR UP activities across schools/districts. During site visits, one Texas GEAR UP SG school indicated it was already serving as a mentor to a school in another district.

Looking forward to Year 2, partners expect to see growth in many areas. AMS Pictures plans to update the Texas GEAR UP SG website and is examining the use of other communication tools for sharing information, such as Facebook and Twitter. The Texas GEAR UP SG is designing a second annual Texas GEAR UP statewide conference to enhance the work of the state coalition and provide workshops and information to the four Texas GEAR UP SG districts as well as other GEAR UP partnership grantees in the state.





### 3. Students' and Parents' Plans, Knowledge, and Perceptions

Surveys are a useful data source to understand baseline implementation, and suggest potential directions for continued implementation, of Texas GEAR UP SG by soliciting feedback on the quality of services, determining aspirations/expectations, and assessing levels of college awareness. Survey data inform both short-term and intermediate outcomes; as such, survey items are aligned with the Texas GEAR UP SG goal to increase cohort students' and their families' knowledge of postsecondary education options, preparation, and financing. This chapter provides a summary of spring 2013 parent and student survey data. These data complement the findings presented in Chapter 2 by telling the story of implementation from the perspective of stakeholders—students and parents. Findings in this chapter discuss survey data on postsecondary plans; discussions and knowledge about college; understanding of financial aspects related to postsecondary education; and perceptions about Texas GEAR UP SG. Statistically significant differences between parents and students and across schools are noted where appropriate. Appendix G provides tables with additional detail on the findings reported here, including results of statistical significance testing and significance level.<sup>45</sup>

To better understand the survey findings presented here, several points are worth highlighting:

- In general, these data can be considered baseline data. As noted previously, the implementation period was shortened in Year 1. While some program elements were in place at the time of survey administration, schools were still in the process of reaching full implementation during their first year. It is possible that the limited implementation time frame resulted in some changes; however, the impact is anticipated to have been limited in Year 1. In future reports, aggregated analysis of trends over time will further inform successes, challenges, and promising practices that have emerged from this initial year; it will also allow for the opportunity to understand such changes in the context of how Texas GEAR UP SG is being implemented across schools.
- While data for parents and students on the same item are presented together and compared, caution should be taken in making comparisons given a low parent response rate and potential for self-selection bias. That is, parents who completed the survey may have been more interested and/or more involved in the Texas GEAR UP SG program than those who did not.
- Tables and figures include n-counts to indicate the number of individuals responding to that item, which often varies from the total of survey responses.

Considering these cautions, findings from survey data provide helpful insight on initial perceptions of implementation. It will be important to determine if and how these perceptions change over the course of implementation; such analyses will be the focus of forthcoming reports. The following questions are addressed based on the Year 1 survey data:

- During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? To students' families?
- What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)?

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<sup>45</sup> Statistically significant results reported in this chapter are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, indicating that there is less than a 5% chance that difference occurred due to chance alone. Throughout this section, the term "significant" is only used to refer to statistical significance. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all GEAR UP programs include several specific items on surveys for national evaluation purposes. Throughout this section, required items are noted.

- What are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, college readiness, financing college)?
- What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of SSS implementation strategies?
- What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?
- What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?

### 3.1 Survey Response Rates

Texas GEAR UP SG surveys were collected in May 2013 from the cohort of Grade 7 students and parents served in the 2012-13 school year.<sup>46</sup> After data cleaning (a standard practice to prepare data for analysis by removing invalid responses), 1,385 student surveys (90% of surveys received) and 401 parent surveys (93% of surveys received) remained for analyses.<sup>47</sup> This represents an overall response rate of 20% for parents and 71% for students. In Year 1, schools struggled to achieve the 50% response rate for parent surveys and the 80% response rate for student surveys goal set by the U.S. Department of Education. TEA must report findings from student and parent surveys in the APRs throughout the grant period. The number of students at each school was based on the APR enrollment data.<sup>48</sup> The response rates by school for parents and students are included in Table 3.1.<sup>49</sup> Appendix G provides additional information.

**Table 3.1. Parent and Student Survey Response Rates by School, 2012–13**

School	Number of Students	Number of Valid Parent Surveys Received	Parent Survey Response Rate	Number of Valid Student Surveys Received	Student Survey Response Rate
School A	310	80	25.8%	212	68.4%
School B	315	18	5.7%	216	68.6%
School C	255	110	43.1%	208	81.6%
School D	199	13	6.5%	110	55.3%
School E	266	18	6.8%	180	67.7%
School F	316	16	5.1%	251	79.4%
School G	304	146	48.0%	208	68.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,965</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>20.4%</b>	<b>1385</b>	<b>70.5%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Federal Annual Performance Report Data through March 31, 2013; *Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013)*; *Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013)*  
 NOTE: Parent survey response rate is calculated based on one parent per student.

School C and School G were close to meeting the U.S Department of Education requirement of a 50% response rate for parent surveys (43% and 48%, respectively). School C was also the only school to meet the student response rate requirement of 80%; School F nearly achieved that goal with a 79% student survey response rate. Response rates were as low as 5% for

<sup>46</sup> The term “parent” is used here to simplify reporting. The surveys indicated that an appropriate parent, family member, or guardian could complete the survey.

<sup>47</sup> Reasons for exclusion included the following: dissenting to taking the survey, declaring they already took the survey in another format, indicating a grade other than Grade 7 (student), indicating not having a child in Grade 7 (parent), and completing less than 50% of the survey items. Excluding surveys based on lack of data is a generally accepted practice within evaluation, given the perception that the lack of completeness of a high level of items may indicate disinterest or a lack of focus on the part of the respondent.

<sup>48</sup> One parent survey was sent home with each student, although more than one parent of a child may have completed the online survey.

<sup>49</sup> Given the low percentages of parents who responded to the survey at four schools, comparisons across schools on the parent survey were made only for those campuses where at least 25% of parents responded.

parent surveys at School F and 55% for student surveys at School D. In future survey administrations, additional strategies to meet required response rates will be explored such as resending surveys, encouraging online versions, providing time for parent survey completion at Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events, and on-site support from evaluation team members.<sup>50</sup> Opportunities to use such strategies will be considered across all seven schools with an intensive effort at schools where response rates were considerably low. In making comparisons between schools on parent survey responses, only School A, School C and School G where response rates exceeded 25% will be included.

## 3.2 Postsecondary Plans

Postsecondary plans of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students and parents are important as they point to the readiness level of the primary stakeholders. In other words, knowing that most students want to go to college positions Texas GEAR UP SG to respond with efforts to increase the knowledge about how to do so and spend less time convincing students of the importance of a college education. It will be imperative to track changes over time regarding the extent to which students report that GEAR UP participation influences their plans for attending college.

### 3.2.1 Educational Aspirations and Expectations

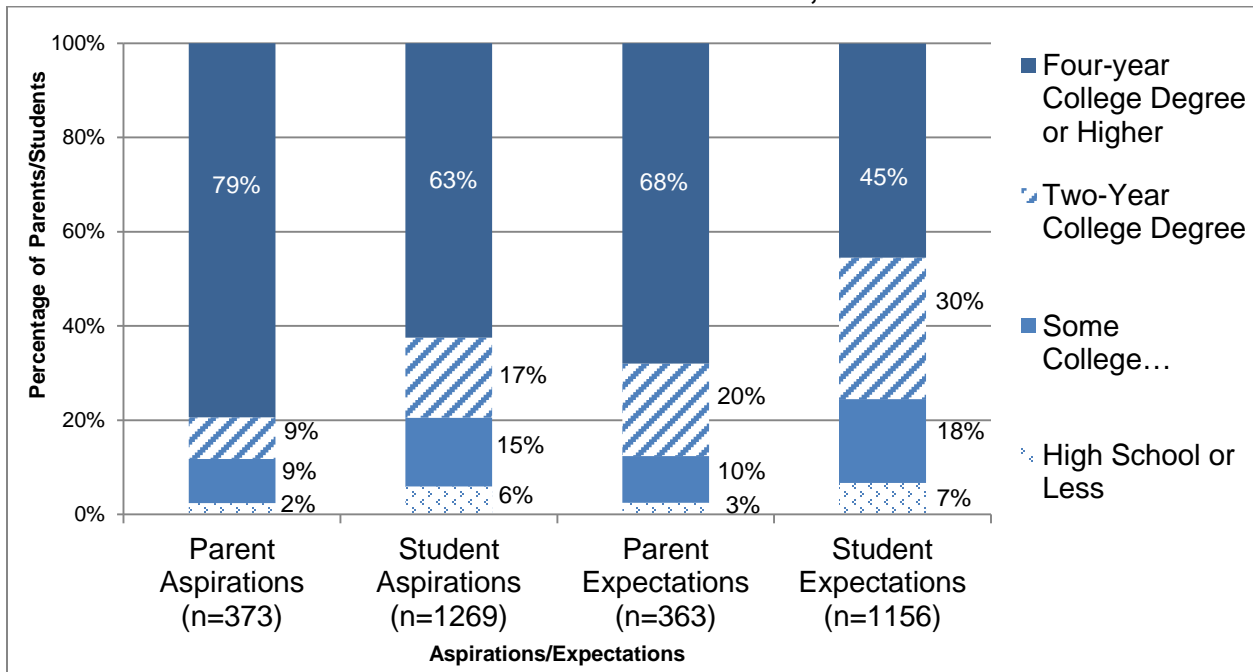
Plans for attending college can be understood as both the level one would like to achieve and the level one anticipates to achieve with the ideal that both are in the direction of a four-year college degree. Parents and students both were asked on the survey about the highest level of education desired (aspirations) and expected (expectations).<sup>51</sup> Percentages for each response option are displayed in Figure 3.1 with additional detail in Appendix G. In order to understand expectations and aspirations for any level of postsecondary education, responses indicating either a two-year or four-year degree can be combined. Most parents (89%) would like their child to obtain at least a two-year (Associate's) degree; the majority of students (80%) indicated such aspirations for themselves. Parents' and students' expectations for postsecondary education are also similar when combining expectations to obtain at least a two-year degree. The high number of parent/family members and students who would like their child or themselves to attend college indicates that Texas GEAR UP SG schools may have a large population of potential participants interested in engaging in program services that align with this college-going mentality.

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<sup>50</sup> See Appendix G for details about the spring 2013 survey administration, data cleaning, and demographic characteristics of survey respondents.

<sup>51</sup> The question regarding educational expectations is required by the U.S. Department of Education for both the student and parent survey.

**Figure 3.1. Comparison of Percentages of Parents and Students Who Aspire and Expect to Obtain Given Level of Education, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\* Parent Aspirations differed significantly from Student Aspirations:  $\chi^2(3) = 32.88, p < .001$

\*\* Parent Expectations differed significantly from Student Expectations:  $\chi^2(3) = 53.71, p < .001$

Educational aspirations significantly exceeded expectations.<sup>52</sup> For example, while 79% of parents indicated they would like their child to obtain a four-year college degree or higher, only 68% expect their child to obtain this level of education (Table G.5 in Appendix G). Similarly, students' expectations are significantly higher than their aspirations, with 63% of students indicating they would like to obtain a four-year college degree, but only 45% indicating they expect to do so (Table G.6 in Appendix G). It is hoped that the Texas GEAR UP SG program will assist both parents and students in understanding the potential to achieve that to which they aspire.

Similarly, if responses are not combined, parent aspirations were significantly higher than student aspirations; overall and at each of the three schools with adequate parent response rates (Table G.4 in Appendix G).<sup>53</sup> Parent educational expectations were also significantly higher than student expectations overall and at each of these three schools (Table G.4 in Appendix G).<sup>54</sup> While fewer students share in their parents aspirations to obtain a four-year college degree or higher, this was still the most common aspiration for students. Texas GEAR UP SG may seek to work closely with parents in a way that leverages parents' higher educational aspirations and expectations to increase that of students.

<sup>52</sup> Parents:  $\chi^2(9) = 115.78, p < .05$  and Students:  $\chi^2(9) = 366.05, p < .05$ . A small percentage of parents (8%) and students (13%) had expectations that exceeded aspirations. This indicates there may have been some confusion with the items, as it is unlikely, for example, that one would achieve a four-year college degree when one had aspired to high school or less. The items will be presented slightly differently in the next administration to address this issue.

<sup>53</sup>  $\chi^2(3) = 32.88, p < .001$ ; School A:  $\chi^2(3) = 12.51, p < .01$ ; School C:  $\chi^2(3) = 12.51, p < .01$ ; and School G:  $\chi^2(3) = 8.29, p < .05$

<sup>54</sup>  $\chi^2(3) = 53.71, p < .001$ ; School A:  $\chi^2(3) = 29.71, p < .001$ ; School C:  $\chi^2(3) = 15.67, p < .001$ ; and School G:  $\chi^2(3) = 9.70, p < .05$

Students' educational aspirations and expectations differed significantly across schools (Table G.7 and Table G.8 in Appendix G); differences were not significant across schools for parents (Table G.9 and Table G.10 in Appendix G).<sup>55</sup> Student aspirations to achieve a four-year degree were above 70% at two schools (School D and School F) and student expectations to achieve a four-year degree were above 50% at three schools (School D, School E, and School G). Texas GEAR UP SG may need to provide intensive support to specific schools where aspirations and expectations are particularly low and where the differences between expectations and aspirations are large.

### 3.2.2 Perceptions of College Plans

It is critical for parents and students to think about and plan for college early on in order to prepare accordingly. Two items on the parent and student surveys asked about plans for college; results are displayed in a series of pie charts in Figure 3.2. Nearly all parents and students agreed or strongly agreed that attending college is important for career goals and one's future (95% and 94%, respectively). Students' agreement about the importance of attending college differed significantly across schools with the percentage of students who strongly agree that it is important ranging from a high of 82% (School D) to a low of 62% (School A) (Table G.11 in Appendix G).<sup>56</sup> Differences were not statistically significant across schools for parent agreement on the importance of attending college. Relatively few parents (12%) or students (22%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is too early to think about going to college, although the percentage of students was significantly greater than the percentage of parents.<sup>57</sup> As such, Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students as well as their parents may have an overall "readiness level" to receive information and services about college.

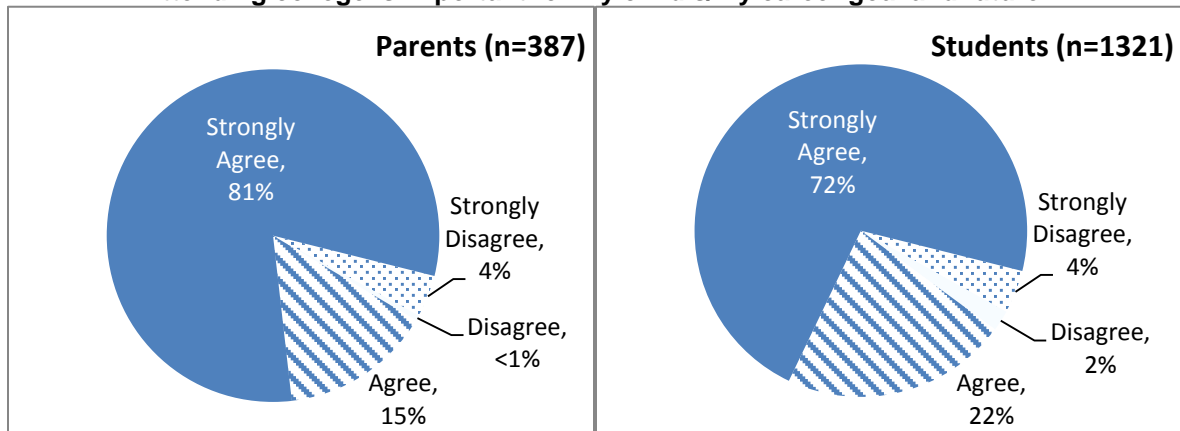
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<sup>55</sup> Student aspirations by school:  $\chi^2(18) = 56.20, p < .001$ ; student expectations by schools:  $\chi^2(18)=44.07, p < .01$

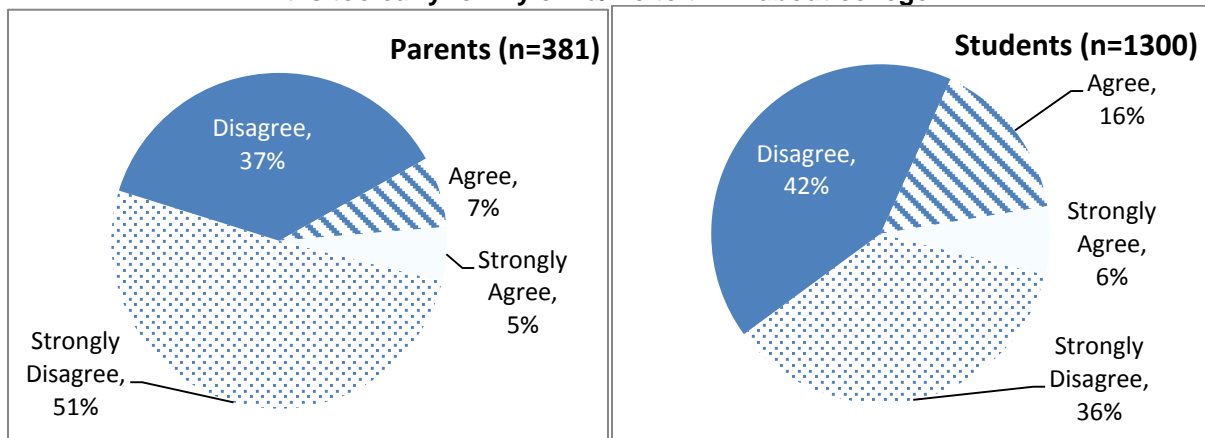
<sup>56</sup> Student-reported agreement differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 31.98, p < .05$

<sup>57</sup> Student-reported agreement differed significantly from parent-reported agreement:  $\chi^2(1) = 35.98, p < .001$

**Figure 3.2. Parent and Student Perceptions of College, 2012–13**  
**Attending college is important for my child’s/my career goal and future.**



**It is too early for my child/me to think about college.**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).  
 NOTE: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total 100% due to rounding.

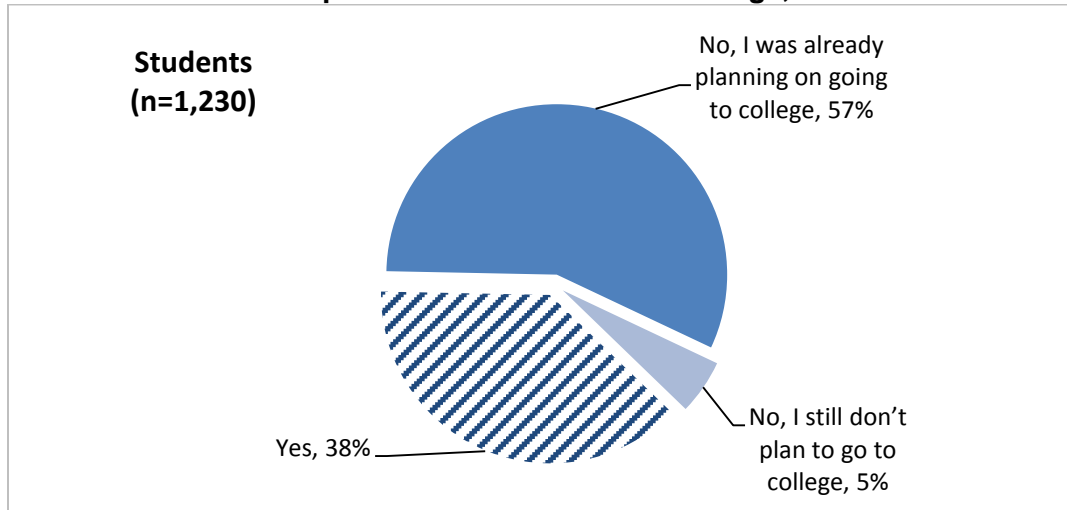
### 3.2.3 Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP SG on Educational Plans

Given the goals of GEAR UP, it is important to understand the extent to which Texas GEAR UP SG influences college-going decisions. Students were asked to indicate if participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events helped them decide to go to college after high school graduation (See Figure 3.3). While more than half of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students (57%) indicated they already planned on attending college, more than one third of students (38% of respondents) indicated that participating in Texas GEAR UP SG activities in Year 1 helped in making the decision to go to college. Students’ perceived impact of Texas GEAR UP SG, as it relates to postsecondary plans, differed significantly across schools (see Figure G.1 in Appendix G).<sup>58</sup> In School G, 58% of respondents indicated that Texas GEAR UP SG participation was impacting their expectation to go to college; this is of particular interest as implementation was relatively higher at this school within Year 1. Texas GEAR UP SG efforts going forward may seek to address the 5% of students who still do not plan to go to college, as well as to maintain the remaining 95% who currently do plan to attend college; intensive efforts may be necessary at School A and School D where 10% and 8% of students respectively still do not plan to go to college.

<sup>58</sup> Student perceptions by school:  $\chi^2(12)=121.7, p < .001$



**Figure 3.3. Percentages of Students Who Perceive that Participating in Texas GEAR UP SG has Impacted Decision to Go to College, 2012–13**

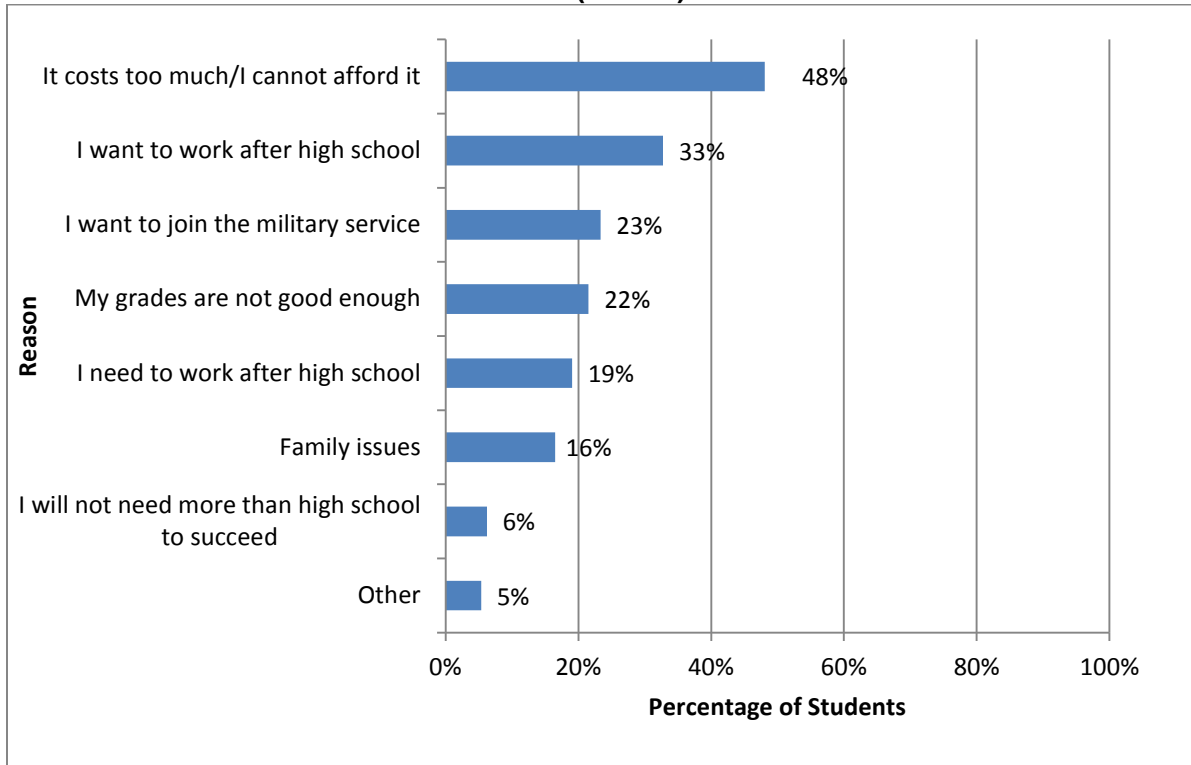


Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013); Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation? (n=1,230).

### 3.2.4 Reason for Not Continuing Education

In an effort to influence those who do not plan on attending college, it is important for Texas GEAR UP SG to know some of the reasons why students do not plan on continuing their education. One item on the student survey asked the following: “If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)?” After accounting for students who indicated that they do plan to continue their education (50% of respondents), Figure 3.4 displays what students identified as potential reasons for not continuing education. Concerns about costs (48%), wanting to work (33%), plans for military service (23%), and poor grades (22%) were among the most frequently selected reasons. Among the 5% of respondents selecting “other,” one student offered the following: “I just don't want to. I don't like school at all. If I did want to go, I won't be able to pay for it.” Given the large percentage of students who indicate cost as the reason to not attend school, schools may need to focus on building awareness of college costs and sources of financing college through Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 2 and beyond to positively influence students’ plans to attend college.

**Figure 3.4. Percentages of Students by Reason for Not Continuing Education, 2012–13 (n= 678)**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: For this survey question—“If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select all that apply)”—response percentages will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses. Percentages above reflect the portion of those who selected at least one reason; 678 students (50% of respondents) selected “Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school.”

### 3.3 Discussions and Knowledge about College

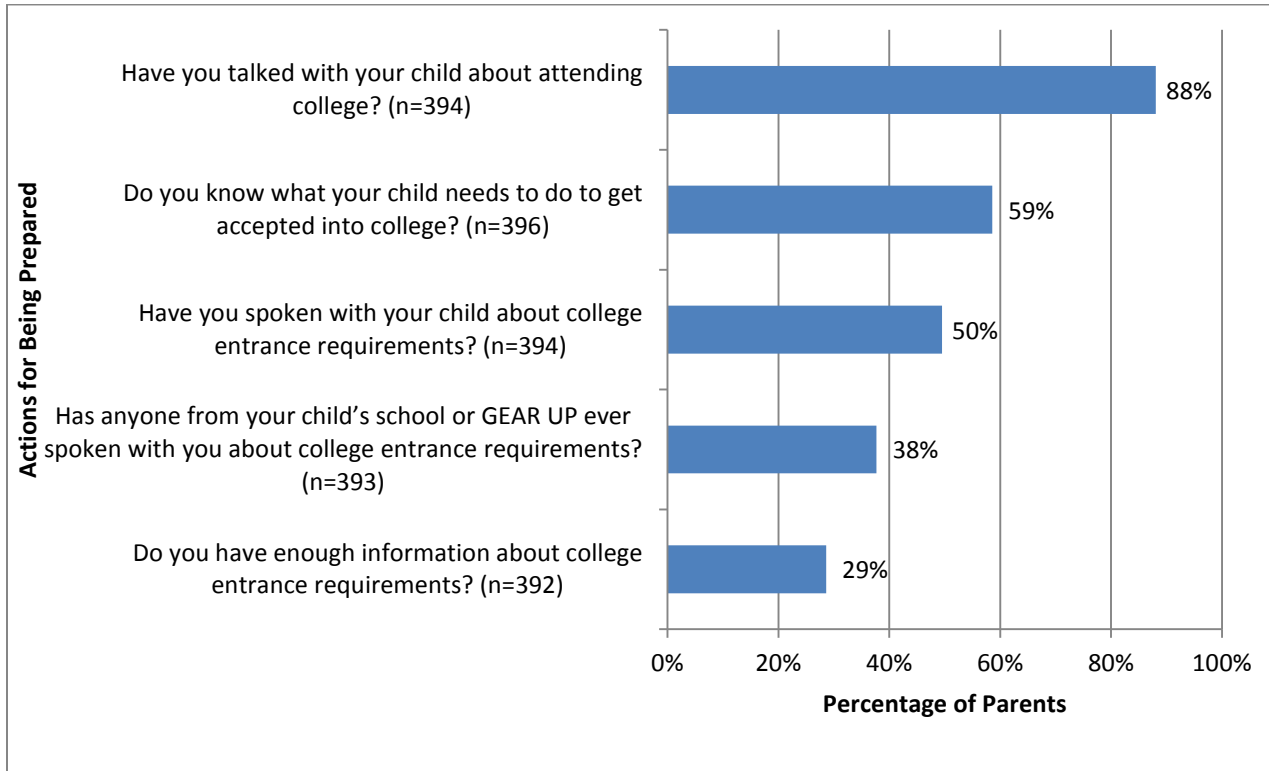
Not only is it critical for parents to talk to their child about college, but it is also important for them to have sufficient information to share during those conversations. Texas GEAR UP SG activities can be a platform to facilitate the very conversations and knowledge-building necessary to achieve program goals.

#### 3.3.1 Discussions about Attending College and College Entrance Requirements

It is important for parents to engage in general conversations about college plans but also about what it takes to achieve those goals; the more in-depth conversations necessitate a more thorough understanding of what those specifics entail. Five items on the parent survey asked about the preparedness for and engagement in discussions with their child about college (see Figure 3.5).<sup>59</sup> Parents reported engaging in discussions with their child about attending college (88%) and, to a lesser extent, the entrance requirements to be able to do so (50%). This is not surprising as nearly three fourths of parents (71%) indicated they do not have enough information about college entrance requirements. There were no statistically significant differences by schools on these items.

<sup>59</sup> The following questions are required on the APR by the U.S. Department of Education: “Have you talked with your child about college entrance requirements?” and “Has anyone from your child’s school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?”

**Figure 3.5. Percentages of Parents Having and Being Prepared for College Discussions, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

Students were also asked to indicate if anyone at school or from Texas GEAR UP SG had spoken to them about college entrance requirements. Students were more likely than parents to have had these conversations with someone at school or from Texas GEAR UP SG (60% and 38%, respectively).<sup>60</sup> The majority of students (60%) indicated that someone had spoken to them but this differed significantly by school (Figure G.2 in Appendix G).<sup>61</sup> Students at School G were the most likely to indicate that someone had spoken to them about this, with 84% indicating this discussion had occurred. During a visit to School G to assist with survey administration, students were observed completing an activity to look up requirements for two colleges, which may provide one example of an activity that may have contributed to the difference across schools on this item. While some conversations about college are occurring, it will be important for Texas GEAR UP SG to engage parents in discussions so they can be well-informed; one way to achieve this may be to speak with parents directly about such requirements and encourage they share that knowledge with their child.

### 3.3.2 Sources of Information

In an effort to build both parent and student knowledge about a range of college topics, it is important to understand the frequently used resources that may be the initial approach for information dissemination; awareness of less-often used resources can also inform necessary steps to encourage that parents and students access them. When asked about what sources of information have helped inform postsecondary education plans, parents and students selected

<sup>60</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly from parent/family-member-reported discussion:  $\chi^2(1) = 62.80, p < .001$

<sup>61</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(1) = 70.83, p < .001$ . This question is required by the U.S. Department of Education.

various sources as shown in Table 3.2. For students, discussions with parents (60%) and discussions with teachers/school counselors (50%) were common sources of information. Both parents and students reported obtaining information from their peers (48% and 33%, respectively). Less than half of parents (45%) and students (34%) reported doing research on their own; this research includes using Texas GEAR UP SG websites to an even lesser extent (only 9% of parents and 15% of students). It will be important for Texas GEAR UP SG to focus on providing multiple sources of information going forward, as 65% of students selected two or more sources of information and 49% of parents selected two or more sources of information. Texas GEAR UP SG events and activities can be leveraged as opportunities for parents and students to engage in information-rich discussions with each other and with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and school staff. These interactions can also be a chance for Texas GEAR UP SG staff to point parents and students to available resources (such as Texas GEAR UP SG websites).

**Table 3.2. Parents' and Students' Reported College Information Sources: Percentages by Source, 2012–13**

Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your child's/your future college education. (Select all that apply)	Parent (n=362)	Student (n=1339)
Information from or discussions with parents/family members <sup>a</sup>	N/A	59.9%
Information from or discussions with friends or other parents <sup>b</sup>	48.3%	N/A
Research that I have done on my own	44.7%	33.9%
Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age <sup>a</sup>	N/A	33.2%
Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events	37.5%	28.3%
Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	24.6%	50.3%
Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: www.texasgearup.com or www.ownyourownfuture.com	8.6%	15.0%
Other (please specify other sources)	10.8%	5.1%
Parent's current or past personal experience in college	3.3%	N/A
Other family member enrolled in college	2.8%	N/A
Based on the previous experience with other child(ren)	1.4%	N/A
Other family member graduated from college	1%	N/A
College materials or visits	1%	1%
Program other than GEAR UP (e.g., AVID, Breakthrough)	N/A	1.3%
Television or watching sports	N/A	<1%
Class activity or assignment	N/A	<1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses. N/A = Not Applicable.

<sup>a</sup> Item choice on student survey only.

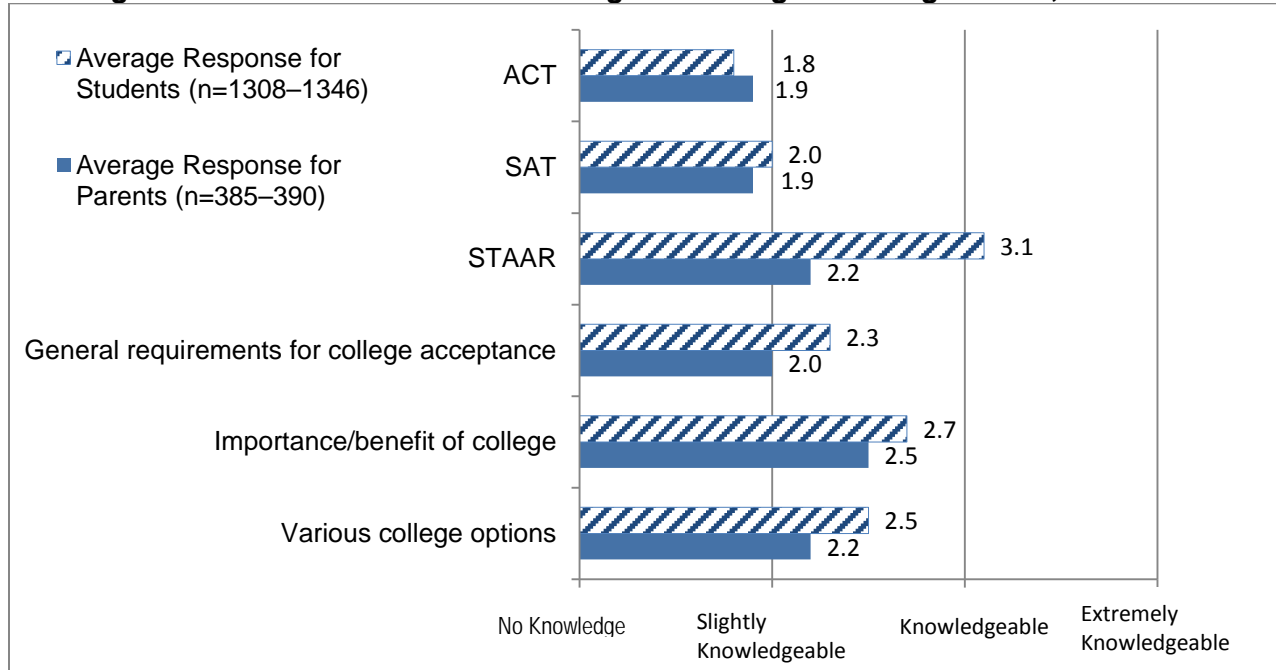
<sup>b</sup> Item choice on parent survey only.

### 3.3.3 Knowledge about College

A detailed understanding about specific terms and concepts related to college is essential to parents and students making decisions that align with their plans; knowing parent and student levels of knowledge can also help Texas GEAR UP SG focus on particular areas. Both parent and student surveys asked for respondents to indicate how knowledgeable they were about various college-related terms (see Figure 3.6 as well as Figure G.3 and Figure G.4 in Appendix G). Higher mean scores indicate higher knowledge, with an average of 1 equaling no knowledge and mean of 4 equaling extremely knowledgeable. Most means fell between 2 (*slightly knowledgeable*) and 3 (*knowledgeable*). Relatively low means are not surprising given that the data are from Year 1. These data are primarily important to guide Texas GEAR UP SG schools in possible directions for future events/activities/resources.

Students reported being significantly more knowledgeable than parents about STAAR, general requirements for college acceptance, importance/benefit of college, and various college options.<sup>62</sup> Parents appear to need information on requirements for college (particularly ACT, SAT, and general acceptance) and more than information on the need for college. Students and parents did not differ on their knowledge about ACT or SAT, which was generally low. Students' perceived knowledge of general requirements for college acceptance differed significantly across schools.<sup>63</sup> Average student responses were as low as 2.1 at School C and as high as 2.6 at School G. For all other knowledge items, there were no significant differences by school.

**Figure 3.6. Parent and Student Average Knowledge of College Terms, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).  
 NOTE: Response options to the question “How much do you know about each of the following?” were scaled as follows: 1 – No Knowledge; 2 – Slightly Knowledgeable; 3 – Knowledgeable; 4 – Extremely Knowledgeable.

### 3.3.4 Plans for Advanced Course-Taking

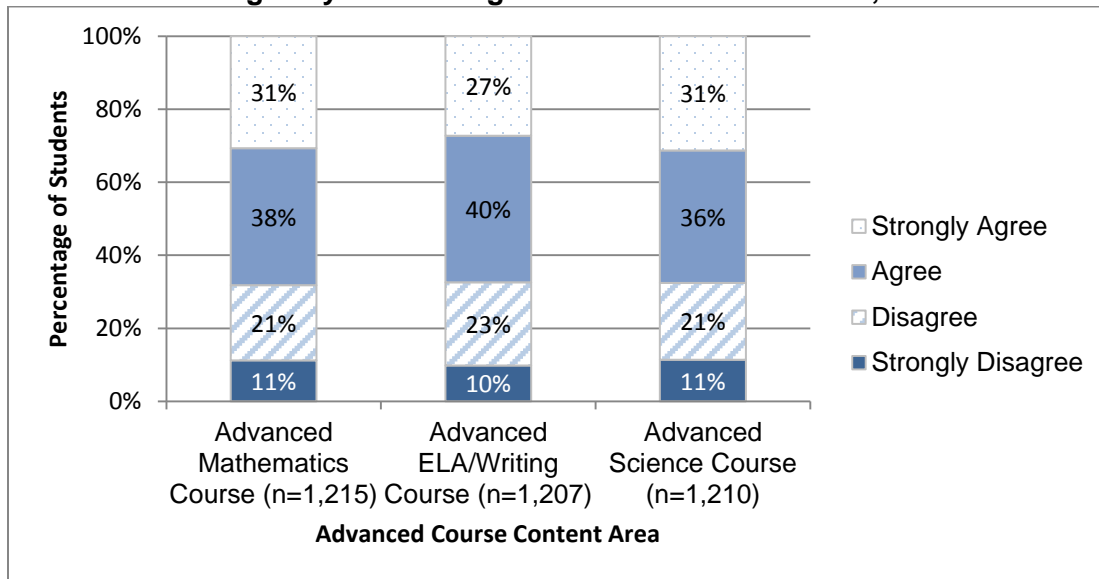
An initial step towards reaching the goal of advanced course completion, which prepares students for college acceptance and success, is plans for enrolling in those courses. As shown in Figure 3.7 (as well as Table G.12 in Appendix G), most students agreed or strongly agreed that they were planning on taking advanced courses in mathematics (68%), English/writing (67%), and science (68%). Students' plans on taking advanced courses differed significantly across schools for mathematics and English/writing (Table G.13 in Appendix G).<sup>64</sup> At School A (19%) and School B (27%), fewer than 30% of students strongly agreed that they had plans to take an advanced mathematics course. Texas GEAR UP SG staff may be interested in targeting the one third of students who do not plan on taking advanced courses.

<sup>62</sup> Average parent/family member knowledge about the following items significantly differed from mean student knowledge – STAAR:  $F(1) = 196.08, p < .001$ ; College Requirements:  $F(1) = 20.41, p < .001$ ; Importance/benefit of college:  $F(1) = 4.54, p < .05$ ; Various College Options:  $F(1) = 27.13, p < .001$

<sup>63</sup> Average student knowledge about college requirements significantly differed across schools:  $F(6) = 4.76, p < .001$

<sup>64</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools in mathematics  $\chi^2(18) = 35.65$  and in English/writing,  $\chi^2(18) = 31.78, p < .05$

**Figure 3.7. Students’ Plans to Take Advanced Courses: Percentages by Level of Agreement and Content Area, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Percentages across those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Percentages above reflect the portion of those who responded with some level of agreement; 10–11% of respondents selected “Don’t know/doesn’t apply.”

A majority of parents (95%) agreed that they would encourage advanced course-taking (37% selected *agree* and 58% selected *strongly agree*). This was not significantly different by school.

### 3.4 Understanding of Financial Aspects Related to Postsecondary Education

The goal of GEAR UP to increase postsecondary awareness and aspirations includes financial literacy about college. As was already noted, nearly half of students indicated concerns about cost as a reason for not planning to attend college. Several additional survey items addressed both parents and students’ thinking about money and college. In general, these findings suggest there is low knowledge and high interest in receiving more information about paying for college.

#### 3.4.1 Discussions with the School/Texas GEAR UP SG Staff about Availability of Financial Aid

Texas GEAR UP SG can play a valuable role in influencing how parents and students understand the financial aspects of college; as such, it is essential to know the extent to which these stakeholders report having conversations related to this critical topic. Parents and students were asked if anyone from the school or Texas GEARUP SG staff had spoken with them about the availability of financial aid to help pay for college. Just more than half of students (51%) but only one third of parents (34%) indicated that they had engaged in these conversations. While these percentages are encouraging, there is clearly room for additional discussions to best inform both students and families. That is, not only do large percentages of students and families need to be engaged in these conversations going forward, those who have already been engaged may be in need of additional information and guidance.

#### 3.4.2 Knowledge about Financing College

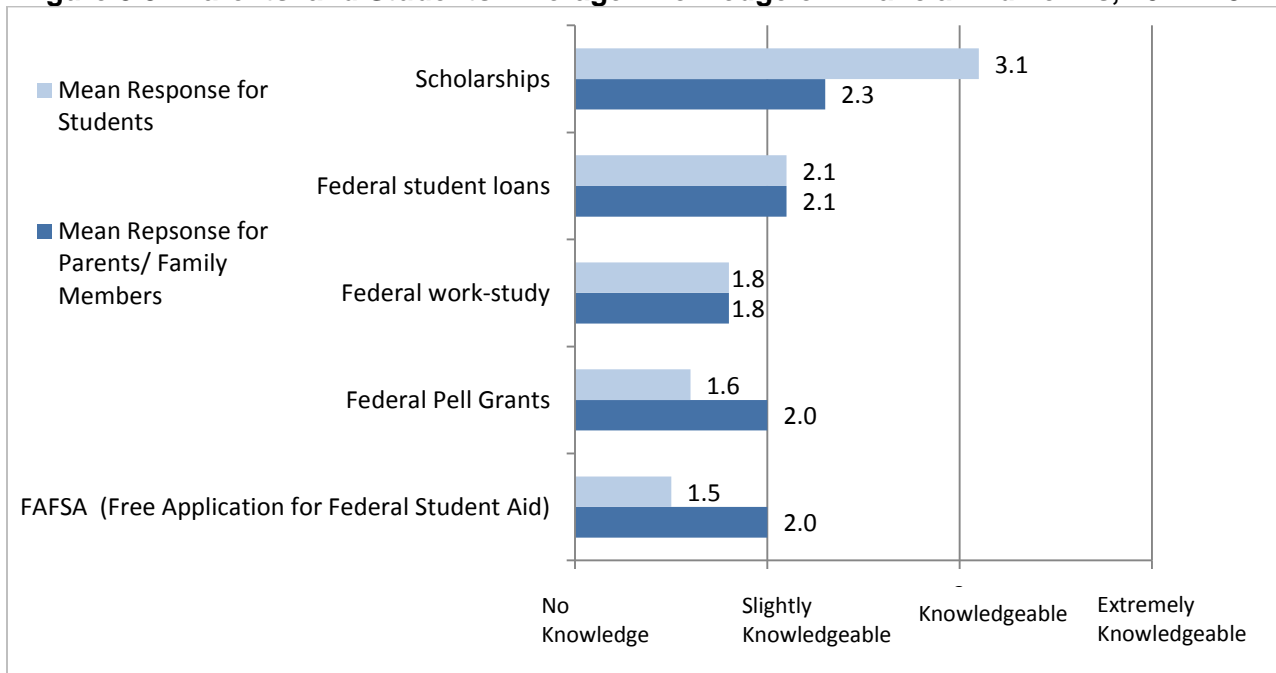
In addition to overall knowledge about financing college, it is helpful for Texas GEAR UP SG to understand specific terms or concepts that parents and students need to have more knowledge of; this data could inform the areas of foci for activities/events as the program continues to be



implemented. Most parents and students fall somewhere in the middle on feeling knowledgeable about financing college. One in four parents (25%) and slightly more than 1 in 10 students (12%) reported having *no knowledge* regarding financial aid and the costs and benefits of their child pursuing postsecondary education.<sup>65</sup> At the other end of the scale, only 9% of parents but 17% of students reported feeling *extremely knowledgeable* on this topic (see Figure G.5 in Appendix G). Students may actually have more knowledge, or they may simply perceive themselves as more knowledgeable on this topic.

In addition to overall perceptions about parent and student knowledge of financing college, surveys also asked about knowledge of specific financial aid-related terms; average knowledge results are shown in Figure 3.8.<sup>66</sup> Table G.14 in Appendix G shows percentages for each response option. Parents reported their familiarity with each of the five terms to be, on average, *slightly knowledgeable*. Students reported being on average *knowledgeable* or *extremely knowledgeable* about scholarships; students reported that for other financial aid-related terms they were, on average, *slightly knowledgeable*. Texas GEAR UP SG activities focused on each of these aspects of financial aid may help to increase the overall perceived knowledge, and presumably actual knowledge, about financial aid.

**Figure 3.8. Parents’ and Students’ Average Knowledge of Financial Aid Terms, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).  
 NOTE: Response options to the question “How much do you know about each of the following?” are scaled as follows: 1 – *No Knowledge*; 2 – *Slightly Knowledgeable*; 3 – *Knowledgeable*; 4 – *Extremely Knowledgeable*.

### 3.4.3 Perceived Cost of Higher Education

Accurate knowledge about the costs of postsecondary education is one step towards seeing this goal as a possible reality; as such, building awareness about the actual costs of various types of schools can be a way for Texas GEAR UP SG to reach out to parents and students who may have otherwise seen college an unattainable for reasons related to cost. The actual average

<sup>65</sup> This is a required item.

<sup>66</sup> Having *no knowledge* was scored as 0, *slightly knowledgeable* equaled 1, *knowledgeable* equaled two and *extremely knowledgeable* equaled 4.

cost for one year at a local two-year community college is \$2,367, while the actual average cost of one year at a public Texas four-year university (tuition and fees only) is estimated at \$7,650 (THECB, 2013a; THECB, 2013b). Both parent and student surveys asked about how much they thought college costs (Table 3.3). Parents and students correctly perceived that there were lower costs associated with one year of attendance at a local public two-year community college as compared to at a four-year public college in the state. Still, parents and students generally overestimated the costs as compared to the average. For example, 62% of parents and 49% of students thought one year at a two-year community college would cost more than \$3,000. Similarly, 60% of parents and 47% of students estimated costs at a four-year college to be more than \$12,000, well above the actual average. While some of the difference between perceived and actual costs may be related to what is known about actual local costs, this finding suggests that helping parents and students understand actual college costs may be crucial to overcoming cost as a barrier to postsecondary education. While fewer parents and students underestimate actual costs, correcting this perception will assist in better preparing families financially.

**Table 3.3. Parents' and Students' Perceived Cost of Higher Education: Percentages by Cost Grouping, 2012–13**

How much do you think or would you guess it costs (tuition and fees only) to attend for one year at...	n	\$1 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$4,500	\$4,501 to \$12,000	More than \$12,000
<b>Parent Survey</b>						
Your local public two-year community college?	361	16.9%	21.1%	15.2%	31.9%	15.0%
A four-year public college in your state?	357	3.0%	3.4%	4.5%	28.8%	60.2%
<b>Student Survey</b>						
Your local public two-year community college?	1,310	27.4%	23.7%	17.2%	21.3%	10.4%
A four-year public college in your state?	1,318	4.6%	6.4%	8.4%	33.8%	46.8%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

### 3.4.4 Perceived Ability to Afford Postsecondary Education

In addition to knowing the costs, it is important that parents and students have enough knowledge about financing options to see college as an affordable option through one or more of the many options available. Both parents and students appear to have concerns about being able to pay for college, although a significantly greater percentage of parents than students reported perceiving that they would definitely be able to afford a four-year college (31% and 7% respectively) (Figure 3.9).<sup>67</sup> Most parents (69%) and most students (93%) have at least some concern about their ability to afford college by selecting *probably*, *not sure*, *probably not*, or *definitely not*.<sup>68</sup>

Students' perceived ability to afford college differed significantly across schools.<sup>69</sup> The percentage of students who indicated they would *probably* be able to afford college was 61% at

<sup>67</sup> Parent/family member perceived ability to afford college differed significantly from students' perceptions:  $\chi^2(1) = 32.88, p < .05$

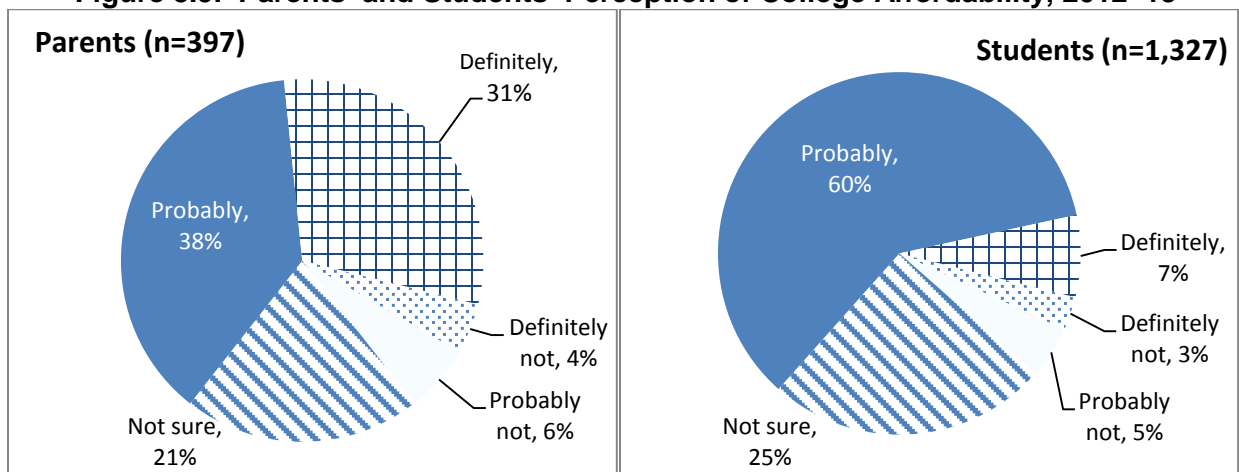
<sup>68</sup> The question regarding perceived affordability is required by the U.S. Department of Education for both the student and parent survey.

<sup>69</sup> Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 191.56, p < .001$

School E and less than 40% at School B and School D. The percentage of students selecting *definitely* was zero at School A, School C, School E, and School F and 23% at School D. This may reflect community differences, although all schools were selected for participation in the Texas GEAR UP SG based on high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Students' perceptions of the affordability of college may be impacting their future plans about attending college as nearly half of students (48%) indicated college cost as a reason for not continuing their education after high school (refer back to Figure 3.4 earlier in this chapter).

More than half of students (51%) reported talking to someone at their school or GEAR UP about financial aid. This differed significantly across schools with more than 80% of students at School G and less than 40% of students at School A and School C stating yes.<sup>70</sup> Only 34% of parents (n=393) reported that someone from their child's school or GEAR UP spoke with them about available financial aid.<sup>71</sup> As such, targeted efforts to reach out to parents and students may help to increase perceptions of affordability.

**Figure 3.9. Parents' and Students' Perception of College Affordability, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).  
 NOTE: Data are responses from the following question “Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources? (*Definitely not, Probably not, Not sure, Probably and Definitely*) and “Do you think you will be able to afford to attend a public four-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources? (*Definitely not, Probably not, Not sure, Probably, and Definitely*).

### 3.5 Perceptions about Texas GEAR UP SG

Given the multidimensional aspects of Texas GEAR UP, it is critical to know how effective participants perceive activities to be. This will inform decisions about interim improvements in how activities are designed and implemented as well as which strategies may be “high-yield.” At the school level, this provides an opportunity to identify pockets of success; in other words, it allows stories about who is doing what well to emerge.

#### 3.5.1 Perceived Effectiveness of GEAR UP-Related Activities Participated in by Child

Parents were asked about how effective they perceived activities that their child participated in were; students also reported their perceived effectiveness of these various activities. In each case, parents and students were able to indicate that they could not rate the activity because

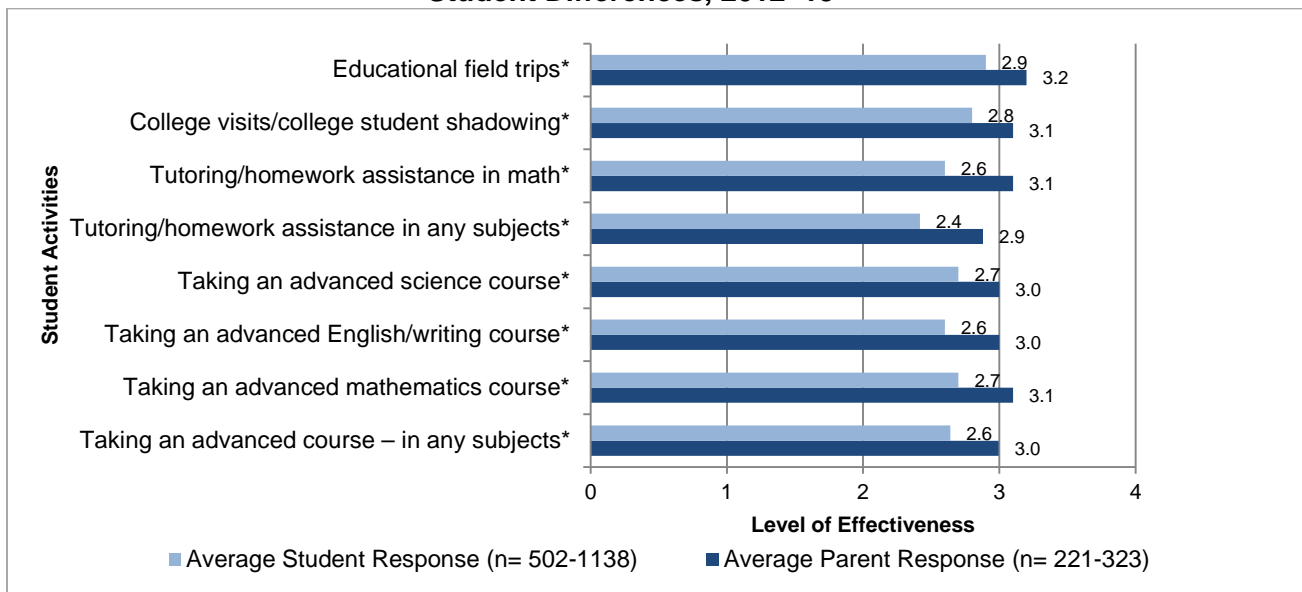
<sup>70</sup> Student-reported engagement in discussions about the availability of financial aid differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(6) = 115.53, p < .001$

<sup>71</sup> The question regarding discussions about financial aid is required by the U.S. Department of Education for the student and parent survey.

they/their child had not participated in the activity. Interestingly, students appear to have generally overestimated their participation in some activities. For example, 80% of students indicated they considered themselves to be in an advanced mathematics course whereas schools indicated between one in four and one in three students was enrolled in such a course. This may be based on students' perceptions of academic rigor; that is, if students find a course difficult they may consider it to be advanced. In general, the Texas GEAR UP SG schools may want to communicate more effectively about when students are participating in various program components.

The surveys asked about levels of effectiveness, with lower mean scores indicating that parents/students perceived the activity as less effective, and inversely, higher mean scores indicating they perceived the activity as more effective. On average, parents found each of the activities to be *mostly effective*. Students who participated in academic or career counseling/advising, mentoring, and financial aid counseling/advising rated those activities as *slightly effective* on average; however, participation in the other activities listed were rated as *mostly effective* on average by students. Student perceptions of effectiveness were significantly lower than parent perceptions for eight activities. Figure 3.10 shows significant differences and Table G.6 in Appendix G shows non-significant differences.<sup>72</sup> Students generally were less likely than parents to rank any given activity as *very effective*. Table G.15 in Appendix G displays results for each response option.

**Figure 3.10. Average Perceptions of Effectiveness about Student Activities: Parent and Student Differences, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent/Family Member Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

Scale is as follows: 1 – Not Effective; 2 – Slightly Effective; 3 – Mostly Effective; 4 – Very Effective

NOTE: Significance tests for differences between parent/family member and student responses did not include schools with below a 25% response rate; however, overall Mean includes all seven schools. Given the large amount of missing data for each of these items, significance tests were only conducted for items with 60% or more valid responses.\* $p < .05$

<sup>72</sup> Average parent/family members' perceived effectiveness about the following activities significantly differed from mean student perceptions – Any advanced class:  $F(1) = 23.18, p < .001$ ; Advanced mathematics:  $F(1) = 13.86, p < .001$ ; Advanced English/writing:  $F(1) = 25.09, p < .001$ ; Advanced science:  $F(1) = 16.24, p < .001$ ; Any tutoring:  $F(1) = 38.33, p < .001$ ; Mathematics tutoring:  $F(1) = 21.12, p < .001$ ; College visits:  $F(1) = 16.16, p < .001$ ; Educational Field Trips:  $F(1) = 13.35, p < .001$

For both taking an advanced mathematics course and for tutoring in math, there were no differences by school in perceived effectiveness. At School D and School G, where it is known that college visits occurred, perceived effectiveness of this activity was higher than at other schools. Caution is again urged in interpreting the findings, since many students and parents rated effectiveness of activities that did not occur based on APR data.<sup>73</sup> Four students responded to the “other” option and indicated that doing their own research (e.g., internet searches and college visits) was *very effective*. As schools implement Texas GEAR UP SG programs over time, perceived effectiveness of the activities will continue to be a desired outcome to monitor.

### 3.5.2 Perceived Effectiveness of Parent Activities

Parents were asked to rate the effectiveness of activities they participated in; average perceived effectiveness ranged from 2.7 for family high school/college visits, to 3.0 for meetings with Texas GEAR UP SG staff and workshops on the importance/benefit of college (see Table G.7 in Appendix G). In other words, parents generally perceived activities as *mostly effective*, regardless of the activity. As such, Texas GEAR UP SG focus may be best targeted towards providing more of these activities and to a lesser extent focusing on improvements to how they are designed and implemented.

### 3.5.3 Overall Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG

Beyond feedback about specific activities, parents were also asked about overall perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG, with regards to the two primary goals of the program (i.e., helping students succeed in school and be better prepared for college). Not surprisingly given implementation to date, slightly more than one fourth of parents indicated they did not know or it did not apply that GEAR UP had helped their child to be more successful in school (25% of respondents) and be better prepared for college (25% of respondents); see Table G.16 in Appendix G. Among parents who indicated a level of agreement, the majority indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that GEAR UP had helped their child to be more successful in school and be better prepared for college (87% and 89% respectively). Given the Texas GEAR UP SG schools' indication that summer programs will be implemented, it is promising that parents (90%) agreed they would encourage participation.

Parents and students responded similarly to a question about overall satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG; 95% of parents and 85% of students reported being satisfied or very satisfied with GEAR UP. Student satisfaction differed significantly across schools.<sup>74</sup> Percentages of students who reported being *very satisfied* were below 25% at School B, School D, and School E and above 41% at School G. Given that School G appeared to make the most progress in Year 1 on implementing a range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, it is encouraging that satisfaction was so high at this campus.

## 3.6 Relationships between Perceptions

So far, survey results have been presented with regard to a single dimension. In this section, relationships between variables are explored to examine how various perceptions might relate

<sup>73</sup> That is, for example, schools reported on the APR much lower percentages of students who participated in an advanced course. Students can indicate on the survey that they did not take an advanced course or they can indicate how effective they believe the advanced course they are taking is. The percentage of students who indicated on the survey that they were not in an advanced course was much smaller than the percentage reported in the APR by the school. This suggests that students may not understand the choice options. The order of options will be clarified in future versions of the survey to further encourage students/parents to first decide if they/their child have actually participated in the activity. It may also indicate that students are unclear about when they are/are not participating in a given activity.

<sup>74</sup> Student-reported satisfaction with GEAR UP differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 44.61, p < .001$



to one another. Rather than examining only relationships between individual items, several aggregated scores were created (e.g., knowledge of college terms). Because the findings reported here are correlational, it cannot be argued that levels on one variable are impacting or causing levels on another variable. Still, understanding that these relationships were occurring is helpful in order to better understand the program by seeing the extent to which various constructs are associated with each other. For example, knowing there is a positive linear relationship between discussions with GEAR UP staff and knowledge (as engagement in discussions rises, so too do levels of knowledge) might prompt more focus on discussions in hopes of also impacting knowledge.

### 3.6.1 College Entrance Requirements

Parent discussion about college entrance requirements with the school/Texas GEAR UP SG staff was significantly positively correlated with parents reporting that they have enough knowledge about college entrance requirements.<sup>75</sup> These discussions were also significantly positively correlated with parents reporting that they had talked with their child about college entrance requirements.<sup>76</sup> In other words, having engaged in discussions with schools about college entrance was associated with higher-reported knowledge levels and the occurrence of conversations with their child about the topic.

Student discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their school were significantly positively correlated with students' perceived knowledge about general requirements for college acceptance.<sup>77</sup> In other words, having engaged in these conversations was associated with higher self-reported level of knowledge about college entrance requirements. This trend is the similar with parents; discussions about college entrance requirements with someone from their child's school was significantly positively correlated with parents' perceived knowledge about general requirements for college acceptance.<sup>78</sup> Texas GEAR UP SG may want to focus on increasing opportunities to engage parents and students in discussions about what is needed to be accepted into college through events, meetings, advising sessions, etc.

### 3.6.2 Knowledge about Financing College

Student discussions about the availability of financial aid with someone from their school was significantly positively correlated with students' perceived knowledge about financial terms (an aggregate of the following variables: scholarships, federal student loans, federal work-study, federal Pell grants, FAFSA).<sup>79</sup> In other words, students who had participated in such conversations had higher levels of knowledge about financial aid. Parent engagement in discussion with the school/ Texas GEAR UP SG staff about the availability of financial aid was also significantly positively correlated with knowledge of financial terms.<sup>80</sup>

Parent knowledge of financial terms (an aggregate of the following variables: scholarships, federal student loans, federal work-study, federal Pell grants, FAFSA) is significantly positively correlated with parent perceived affordability of attending a public, four-year college.<sup>81</sup> In other words, higher levels of parent knowledge were associated with higher belief that the family would be able to afford a public, four-year college. Texas GEAR UP SG efforts to increase

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<sup>75</sup>  $r(384) = .33, p < .001$

<sup>76</sup>  $r(386) = .29, p < .001$

<sup>77</sup>  $r(1304) = .20, p < .001$

<sup>78</sup>  $r(378) = .22, p < .001$

<sup>79</sup>  $r(1268) = .27, p < .001$

<sup>80</sup>  $r(392) = .45, p < .05$

<sup>81</sup>  $r(384) = .26, p < .001$



knowledge about college costs and financing options may be a key factor in changing the perceptions about college being affordable.

### 3.7 Summary

In Year 1, parent and student survey data suggested several potential directions for implementation in the future. Both parents and students had gaps between aspirations and expectations, indicating that there is concern about actually achieving the goals to which they aspire. It is certainly hoped that Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events/resources will reduce this gap before students and their families simply give up. Closely aligned to this will be efforts to build parents' and students' financial awareness (i.e., knowledge of costs/benefits and awareness of funding options). Based on the survey data, schools are encouraged to take an early focus in Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events on financial related issues, including informing about the cost of postsecondary education and the availability of resources to assist with financing.

Not surprisingly, knowledge was relatively low in Year 1 across a range of college-going topics—required exams (SAT/ACT), acceptance requirements, and options for college choices. If this were not the case, the Texas GEAR UP SG program might not be needed. Level of knowledge is something that is anticipated to change and increase over time as Texas GEAR UP SG implementation of activities/events/resources occurs. Helping students to understand the importance of thinking about college early on and taking advanced courses to prepare for such plans may be important focus areas. The positive correlational analyses suggest that engaging in discussions with parents and students may be associated with increased knowledge. These discussions could occur across a broad range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events.

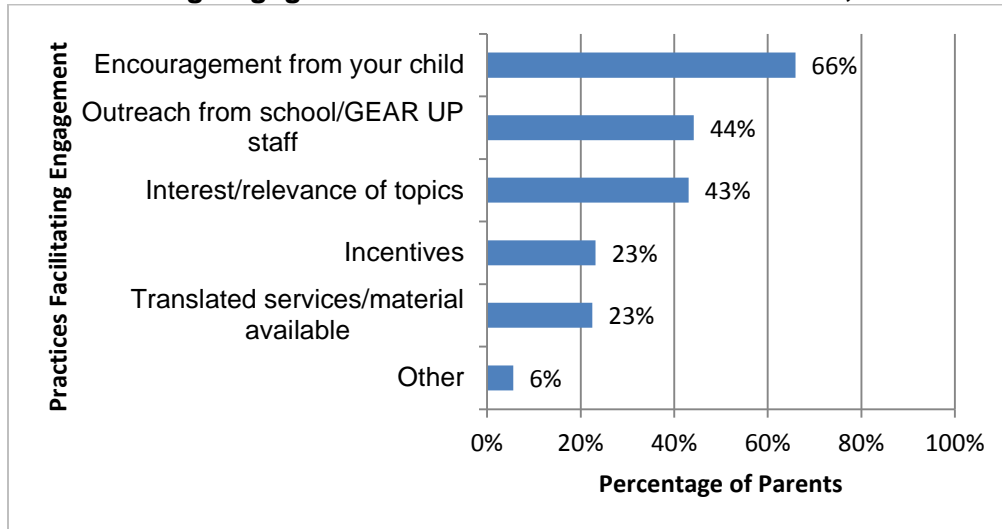
#### 3.7.1 Facilitators and Barriers

In order for events/activities to be successful, it is important to understand any potential facilitators and barriers to participation. Analyses of survey items related to participants' reported facilitating and constraining factors around their participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities/events address the following evaluation questions:

- What facilitators and barriers can be identified regarding implementing SSS strategies?
- What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities?

In an effort to better understand factors that promote or hinder parent participation in Texas GEAR UP SG activities, two survey items asked parents to select what those factors included; responses are displayed in Figures 3.11 and 3.12. For parents, encouragement from their child was the most commonly identified facilitator for participation (66%), while time/schedule was the most commonly identified barrier (68%). Interest/relevance of topic was described as a facilitator by 43% of respondents but as a barrier by only 5% of respondents. As such, ensuring that parent activities have a clearly articulated purpose/value as well as scheduling at times appropriate to families and engaging students in bringing parents to events may be key to successful activities. Texas GEAR UP SG may want to engage in intensive planning and solicit more input/feedback on activities to ensure that they are perceived as effective by participants. This may include making sure topics are relevant, selecting convenient or multiple times, and increased advertisement of events.

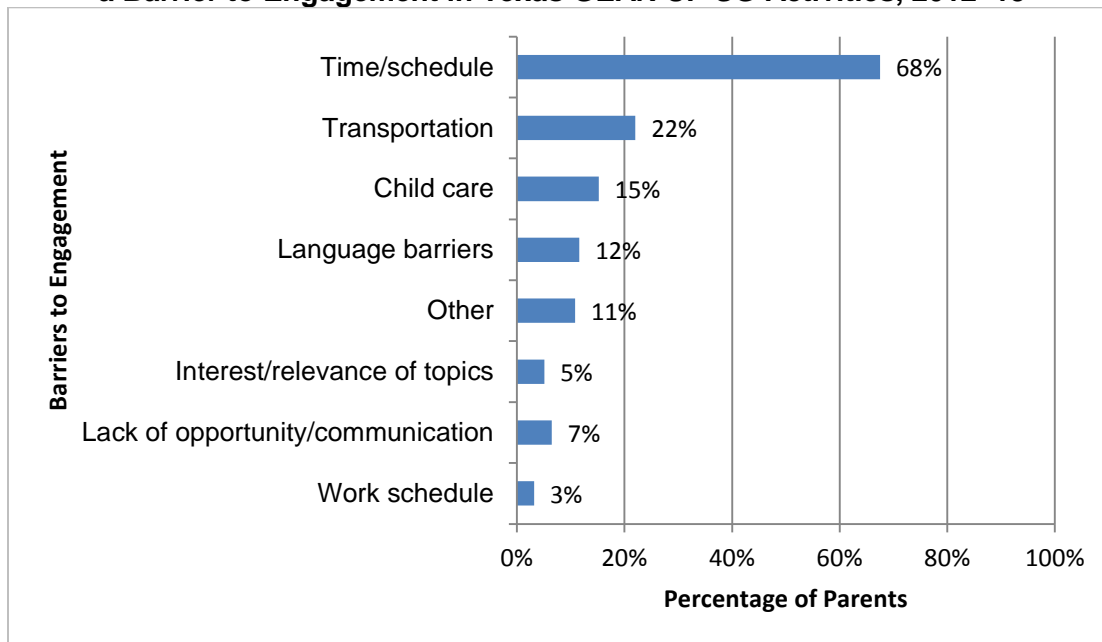
**Figure 3.11. Percentages of Parents Identifying Given Practice as Facilitating Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTES: n=267; for this survey question—“Have any of the following contributed to your being able or willing to attend school sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)”—response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

**Figure 3.12. Percentages of Parents Identifying Given Practice as a Barrier to Engagement in Texas GEAR UP SG Activities, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013)

NOTE: n=277; for this survey question—“Have any of the following contributed to your not being able or willing to attend school sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)”—response percentage will not add up to 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Finally, parents and students were asked for direct input on the kinds of information, support, or activities that would help their child/them to be successful in school and prepared for college. A thematic analysis of open-ended responses produced a list of categories as shown in Table 3.4. Information on financing college was most commonly offered by both parents and students (49% and 28%, respectively). An example of one comment from a parent included the

following: “College/university mentors to work, talk, and explain to their group of 1–5 about attending college and walking alongside them through the process.” Responses from students included: “What we need from our school and GEAR UP is a lot of encouragement and lots of talk about the GEAR UP and posters about college.” and “I believe GEAR UP does a good job with college information. When they share their success with us it makes me want to do the same.”

**Table 3.4. Parent and Student Input on Needed Information/Support/Activities, 2012–13**

Information/Support/Activity	Parents (n=80)	Students (n=778)
More information on college/financial aid/scholarships/requirements	48.8%	28.1%
Classes/courses/classroom support/improved instruction	N/A	25.8%
More information on GEAR UP program/how to participate	20.0%	N/A
Student support services	N/A	17.0%
Tutoring/individualized care	27.5%	12.3%
Financial support/scholarships	N/A	10.3%
College tours	5.0%	8.5%
Sports, activities, and clubs	11.3%	8.2%
Field trips	N/A	7.2%
More information on GEAR UP	N/A	2.1%
Supplies/equipment/technology	N/A	1.7%
Bilingual	5.0%	N/A

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).



## 4. Analysis of Texas GEAR UP State Grant Budgets and Expenditures

The following section includes an analysis of three key areas of the Texas GEAR UP SG budgets and expenditures in order to address the evaluation question of how TEA and schools budgeted for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 1. One area is the Year 1 budget and expenditures for the overall Texas GEAR UP SG as managed by TEA. A second area is the topline budget and expenditures of the four Texas GEAR UP SG school districts. The third area is cost categories. While information was limited given the early phase of implementation and presumed delays in drawing funds down, these data provide a baseline against which all future cost analyses can be explored and presented.

### 4.1 Overall Texas GEAR UP Budget and Expenditures

The U.S. Department of Education awarded \$5 million to TEA to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG during fiscal year 2013 (September 1, 2012, through August 31, 2013). In addition, TEA leveraged 100% of the grant award in matching funds. Table 4.1 shows grant funds awarded and matching contributions by category. Overall, TEA budgeted 91% of the \$5 million in awarded funds consultants and contracts, which includes things like subgrants to school districts, the Texas GEAR UP Support Center subgrant to UT-IPSI, and the evaluation contract awarded to ICF International. In addition, actual and anticipated expenditures of grant and matching funds were disaggregated and are presented by category. While included as a line item, the overall Texas GEAR UP SG budgets did not include any planned expenditures on equipment or scholarships/tuition assistance in Year 1.

**Table 4.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Award Funds and Matching Contributions, FY2013**

Category	Budgeted Grant Funds for FY2013	Budgeted Matching Funds for FY2013	Actual Expenditures of Grant Funds thru March 31, 2013	Actual Expenditures of Matching Funds thru March 31, 2013	Anticipated Expenditures of Grant Funds from April 1 to August 31, 2013	Anticipated Expenditures of Matching Funds from April 1 to August 31, 2013	Anticipated Carryover of FY2013 Grant Funds to FY2014
Salaries and Wages	\$40,754	\$113,500	\$38,034	\$22,208	\$0	\$8,366	\$2,720
Employee Benefits	\$10,188	\$4,235	\$14,026	\$6,218	\$0	\$2,342	(\$3,838)*
Travel	\$15,000	\$0	\$3,166	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$9,834
Materials and Supplies	\$2,000	\$102,000	\$176	\$0	\$1,824	\$102,000	\$0
Consultants and Contracts	\$4,561,688	\$1,206,425	\$920,268	\$386,901	\$1,805,278	\$790,219	\$1,836,142
Other	\$0	\$3,569,123	\$7,030	\$0	\$0	\$3,569,123	(\$7,030)*
<b>Subtotal of Direct Costs</b>	<b>\$4,629,630</b>	<b>\$4,995,283</b>	<b>\$982,700</b>	<b>\$415,327</b>	<b>\$1,809,102</b>	<b>\$4,472,050</b>	<b>\$1,837,828</b>
Indirect Costs	\$370,370	\$4,717	\$6,874	\$0	\$363,495	\$4,717	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$989,574</b>	<b>\$415,327</b>	<b>\$2,172,597</b>	<b>\$4,476,767</b>	<b>\$1,837,828</b>

Source: Annual Performance Report data as of March 31, 2013.

\* Negative carryover amounts in two categories are included to show that actual expenditures were higher in these categories than the amounts budgeted. Negative amounts were not reported on the APR submitted to the U.S. Department of Education; instead, they were reported as \$0, as negative amounts are not carried-over by category from year to year, and funds per category may be rebudgeted. Negative balances resulting from higher than budgeted expenditures per category were within permitted thresholds and did not require amendment. Actual and anticipated expenditures above category were specifically reported to the U.S. Department of Education in narrative sections of the APR.



## 4.2 School Districts' Budgets and Expenditures

In October 2012, TEA awarded subgrants from the Texas GEAR UP SG totaling \$750,000 to four school districts to serve students in seven middle schools during the 2010 fiscal year (from the date of award through August 31, 2013).<sup>82</sup> Eight months after the subgrants were awarded (as of May 30, 2013), the school districts overall had drawn down 21% of grant funds. Table 4.2 summarizes each school district's budgeted award, as well as the amount and percentage of award dollars drawn down by school districts as of May 30, 2013. Three of the school districts drew down at least 26% of their funds through May 30, 2013. District 4, which received the largest subgrant award of \$275,000, had only drawn down 2% of their grant funds. This figure is extremely low even given the shortened period of implementation for the program during the 2012–13 school year. The data provided by TEA likely do not reflect school districts' actual spending on program implementation but rather the amount of funds districts drew down from TEA as of May 30, 2013.<sup>83</sup> That is, some school districts do not draw down grant funds on a regular basis and instead wait until the end of the grant period to draw down all funds spent. Evaluators anticipate that more detailed and “real time” information on actual expenditures of both award and matching funds will be available through the data system that is being initiated starting in fall 2013.

**Table 4.2. Texas GEAR UP SG School District Budget and Drawdowns**

School District	Amount Budgeted – Award	Amount Drawn Down – Award	Percentage Drawn Down – Award
District 1	\$175,000	\$60,614	34.6%
District 2	\$175,000	\$58,717	33.6%
District 3	\$125,000	\$33,017	26.4%
District 4	\$275,000	\$4,695	1.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$750,000</b>	<b>\$157,043</b>	<b>20.9%</b>

Source: TEA reported drawdowns from ISAS as of May 30, 2013.

## 4.3 Description of Planned Expenditures by Cost Categories

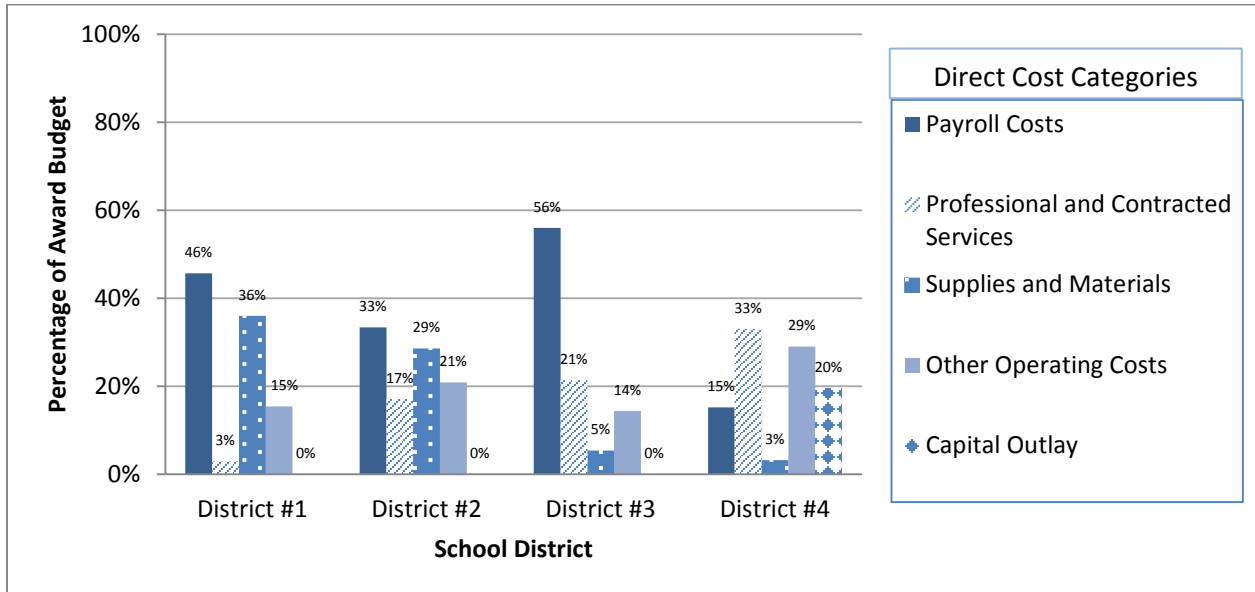
Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 show budgeted amounts for both subgrant awards and matching funds for the four school districts broken out by five cost categories: payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and capital outlay. Sections that follow the figures point out some of the trends in school district plans within each category. Future reports will analyze categorical budgets and expenditure trends in further detail using information from TEA such as expenditure reports pulled from the subrecipient data system and amended NOGAs.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Subrecipients were also required to provide matching funds in an amount that is at least 100% of their subgrant awards. Three of the subrecipients provided exactly 100% in matching funds, while District 1 provided a 107% match (\$187,000). At the time of this report, information about actual expenditures of matching funds was not available.

<sup>83</sup> In addition to the APR data, which were related to budget through March 31, 2013, TEA provided some additional budget information through May 2013.

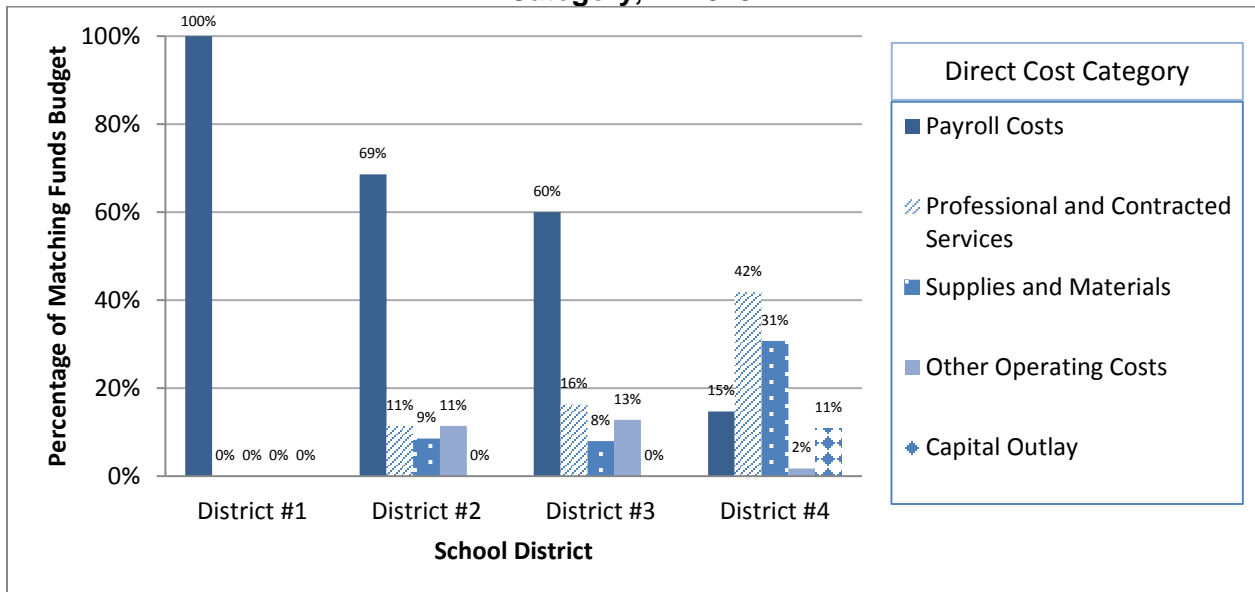
<sup>84</sup> Budget summaries below refer to the approved amendment of District 4's NOGA. While the amendment represents no change in total amount, District 4 shifted budget amounts from payroll and supplies/materials to contracted services, other operating costs, and capital outlay.

**Figure 4.1. Percentage of Texas GEAR UP SG Award Budget by Direct Cost Category, FY2013**



Source: NOGAs: District #1 – 10/8/2012; District #2 – 10/10/2012; District #3 – 10/24/2012; District #4 – 10/10/2012.

**Figure 4.2. Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentage of Matching Funds Budget by Direct Cost Category, FY2013**



Source: TEA NOGAs: District 1 – 10/8/2012; District 2 – 10/10/2012; District 3 – 10/24/2012; District 4 – 10/10/2012.

**PAYROLL**

School district budgets for payroll costs range from 15% to 56% of award funds with considerable variation within this cost category (Figure 4.1). Amounts budgeted for project management range from \$5,000 (with a \$5,000 match) in District 2 for a project director, to \$30,000 (with a \$30,000 match) for a project coordinator in District 3. No school district budgeted award or matching funds for both a project director and a project coordinator; no award or matching funds were budgeted for data entry clerks or bookkeepers. Three of the four school districts (District 1, District 2, and District 3) budgeted award funds (as well as matching

funds) for tutors. Two school districts allocated matching funds for auxiliary positions; this includes a counselor and community liaison/parent coordinator in District 2 and a counselor in District 4. All of the matching funds in District 1 are in payroll costs for a mathematics instructional coach, AVID teacher, and literacy coach. District 4 budgeted 6% of its matching funds for other employee positions including assistant principals, a senior evaluator, and a secretary. Across the four school districts, funds budgeted for professional staff extra-duty pay range from \$7,500 of award dollars in District 1, to \$57,500 (\$37,500 in award funds and \$20,000 in matching funds) at District 2. Match dollars for personnel is generally time and effort given out of those positions. The positions are 100% funded from other sources.

### **PROFESSIONAL AND CONTRACTED SERVICES**

Not only does the proportion of funds allocated for professional and contracted services vary across the four school districts, but also the ways in which districts initially planned to rely on these services for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation is unique across districts. Contracted funds allocated for staff development include test preparation at District 4 (\$114,865 in match funds); college readiness in District 2 (\$30,000 in award funds and \$20,000 in match funds); and vertical team alignment in District 1 (\$5,000 in award funds). Other contracted services include the following student services: mentoring/job shadowing in District 3 (\$11,700 of award funds), accelerated algebra instruction/summer academy in District 3 (\$15,000 of award funds), and summer mathematics camp in District 4 (\$86,250 in award funds). Another area of contracted services includes parent outreach; this consists of presentations in District 4 (\$4,500 of award funds) and college outreach provided by CIS in District 3 (\$10,000 of matching funds). Three of the four school districts (excluding District 1) budgeted for at least one contracted service above \$10,000.

### **SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS**

Two of the school districts planned to use a small percentage of award dollars for supplies and materials (District 4 – 3% and District 3 – 5%); District 1 and District 2 budgeted for 36% and 29%, respectively. However, District 4 budgeted for \$84,807 of matching funds for supplies and materials. In District 1, \$59,000 in award funds are planned for 200 PC tablets (at \$250 per unit) and related equipment. Using both award and matching funds, District 3 plans to purchase graphing calculators for mathematics instruction and four PC tablets (at \$710 per unit) for data management. District 4 also planned to use award dollars for 75 PC tablets with cable kits for digital algebra curriculum (at \$579 per unit) but included this \$53,769 budget item (for PC tablets and related equipment) in the capital outlay cost category.

### **OTHER OPERATING COSTS**

District #4 budgeted the highest percentage of award funds for other operating costs (29%). In all four school districts, these planned costs relate to travel for employees including conferences such as GEAR UP, College Board, AVID, and PBL. Budgeted amounts range from \$12,000 in award funds in District 1, to \$61,000 (\$56,000 in award funds and \$5,000 in matching funds) in District 4. Three of the school districts budgeted award dollars for student travel for college visits; planned amounts included \$3,000 at both District 2 and District 4, compared to \$2,000 at District 1. District 2 and District 3 also budgeted travel costs for executive directors, superintendents, and board members.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

District 3 is the only school district that included indirect costs in its budget, which amounted to 3% of its award funds. District 4 was the only school district with capital outlay budget items, and these funds are planned for PC tablets (described above) and the TI Nspire program (\$30,020 of match funds).

## 4.4 Summary

The U.S. Department of Education awarded TEA a substantial seven-year grant of \$33 million to implement the Texas GEAR UP SG initiative. During state FY2013, TEA anticipated spending \$5 million, or approximately 15% of the total grant. Spending during this first year may have been impacted by subgrant awards to the four subrecipient school districts occurring after the start of the school year and the impact that had on school districts to implement activities. At the time of APR reporting on March 31, 2013, TEA anticipated carrying over 37% of the Year 1 (FY2013) funds to Year 2 (FY2014). As of May 30, 2013, school districts had only drawn down 21% of their awarded funds for Year 1.

This section included a look at budgeted award and matching amounts compared to the most up-to-date information about actual expenditures. It provides a baseline against which all future cost analyses can be explored and presented.

Evaluators will continue to track spending against budgeted amounts at the state and school district levels. In future annual implementation reports (August 2014 and August 2015), evaluators will report on annual and cumulative expenditures similar to how information is presented in this report. In the first comprehensive evaluation report (January 2015), evaluators will begin to explore and report out on connections between expenditures and outcomes, both in terms of implementation and impact of GEAR UP on Texas schools, students, and their parents.

## 5. Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Next Steps

While the period of implementation in Year 1 was short, several early findings of interest are worth noting and provide formative information to TEA and its partners. These findings have been summarized here, organized around key evaluation research questions. Progress on TEA goals for the Texas GEAR UP SG are presented where appropriate. These findings are based on the following sources:

- APR data submitted by Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools reflecting implementation through March 31, 2013.
- Site visits conducted by the evaluation team with each Texas GEAR UP SG cohort school in May 2013.
- In-person and telephone interviews with TEA and its partners conducted in April/May 2013.

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

#### 5.1.1 Overall Implementation

*How was Texas GEAR UP SG implemented overall and at each of the participating schools?*

In Year 1 of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, there was considerable variability across subrecipients both in the extent of implementation of various aspects and in the range of implementation activities. Implementation was clearly impacted by the short timeframe. In other words, most schools found it challenging to engage in the amount and wide range of practices encouraged by Texas GEAR UP SG in the timeframe from start of implementation (November/December 2012) to March 31, 2013 (APR reporting)/May 2013 (site visit reporting).

School G was the clear leader in implementing a broad range of activities, engaging in 11 of 12 potential implementation activities by May 2013. This included tutoring, mentoring, counseling, job site visits, and college visits among other activities. School E came closest to that range, with involvement in 7 of 12 strategies. School A was involved in the narrowest range of activities, engaging in only 4 of 12 potential strategies. The mix of activities implemented may impact outcomes, and as such, it is important to examine and understand these patterns, although at this point in the project, it remains unclear which individual implementation activities or which mix of activities will be associated with desired outcomes.

#### 5.1.2 Student and Family Implementation Activities

The mix of implementation is related to a TEA goal. Specifically, Texas GEAR UP SG has set an SSS implementation goal of having at least 75% of Grade 8 students involved in comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring by the end of Year 2. Across all schools, based on data available to date, 39% of students had participated in SSS. School A, School B, and School C will all need to make significant adjustments in order to achieve this Year 2 goal; in Year 1, 34% of students or fewer were participating in SSS. At School D, School E, and School F, more than 75% of students were already engaged in SSS, primarily through tutoring. At School E, almost all students (91%) were participating in both tutoring and mentoring. School G, providing the broadest mix of SSS, had 66% of students participating in at least one form of SSS. School G will need to make only small adjustments in Year 2 to achieve the goal.

A second TEA goal is having information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success available to 100% of cohort students and their parents by the end of the first year. All schools did provide information and workshops to cohort students, and across schools, 81% of students had participated in at least one Texas GEAR UP SG activity.

Similarly, all schools engaged in some form of communication with parents, although these activities were generally less successful. A related Texas GEAR UP SG performance target at

least 50% of parents attending at least three events each year. As of March 31, 2013, no school was able to successfully accomplish this goal, and the number of parent/family events was generally too low in Year 1 at this point to support that goal (most schools had not conducted three family events).

Providing advanced courses can be considered an implementation activity, while successful completion of advanced courses is an outcome of interest. Specifically, the TEA goal is that by the end of year 5, 60% of the cohort, including LEP students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course. Year 1 also provided a baseline for advanced course taking and considerable variability was found across schools. School E offered advanced course work to the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students in only mathematics, while School D offered advanced courses in three subjects (mathematics, English, and science) and had 39% of students enrolled in at least two advanced courses. Enrollment in advanced mathematics is of particular interest as it may be related to school success at achieving the TEA goal of at least 30% of Texas GEAR UP SG cohort students successfully completing Algebra I in Grade 8. That is, if at least 30% of students successfully complete an advanced mathematics course in Grade 7, these same students may also be likely to successfully complete Algebra I in Grade 8. In Year 1, no school had at least 30% of cohort students enrolled in advanced mathematics, although School D had 29% enrolled. School G had the lowest percentage of students enrolled in advanced mathematics (18%).

All schools indicated plans to engage in summer mathematics enrichment programs to further support student preparedness. Success in these mathematics enrichment programs may be critical to achieving the Algebra I goal. Implementing the summer transition programs may also support the cohort schools' ability to meet the TEA goal of 30% of cohort student enrollment in summer programs.

### **5.1.3 Teacher Professional Development Implementation**

TEA has set two goals related to teacher PD, each of which Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools are expected to achieve in each grant year. The first goal is that all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning. Secondly, teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year. While all schools indicated on their APR reports that they were engaging in vertical teaming, teachers participating in focus groups during the evaluation site visits suggested that gaps remained in engaging teachers in these opportunities. Similarly, only School G, had offered a training on PBL. All schools did meet with TG, a TEA partner, regarding providing teacher PD on financial education; TG was working with schools to deliver training beginning in summer 2013. Generally, the schools indicated that teacher PD goals would be primarily addressed during summer 2013. These activities and students participation in them will be evaluated in future reports.

### **5.1.4 Community Partners**

TEA also has set goals that Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools/districts will engage in community partnerships, including forming business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration and forming alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness. All schools began working on forming partnerships, with mixed progress reported. School A, School B, and School C did not identify any community partners as of May 2013; this is an area these schools will need to focus on going forward. While School G listed only three partners, it was the most successful to date



at capitalizing on their partners. Partners at School G were involved with students on activities including mentoring, job site visits/job shadowing, and a college visit.

### 5.1.5 Statewide Implementation

The Texas GEAR UP SG is also focused on making an impact statewide, primarily through the provision of resources on websites, through statewide opportunities for teacher PD, and through promoting statewide collaboration among federal GEAR UP grantees. TEA was able to meet the goal of providing information and resources statewide by maintaining availability of two previously existing statewide GEAR UP related websites. In addition, TEA's partner, AMS Pictures, reported making progress in learning what improvements to the websites might be useful to schools. AMS Pictures is also developing strategies to assist TEA in tracking who uses the websites. TEA continued to issue partner contracts throughout Year 1, but these were not in place for the full implementation period, which impacted what partners were able to implement as of May 2013.

TEA was less successful at making progress in statewide implementation of teacher PD opportunities. Steps were taken to establish a Project Share GEAR UP group, but no PD opportunities had been provided at the time of this report. Project Share is an online communication and teaching platform that is available statewide, and TEA and its partners plan to utilize this platform for Texas GEAR UP SG statewide PD opportunities. While not direct training, teacher resources and toolkits are available on the statewide website and provide an indirect format for encouraging teachers to engage in GEAR UP related activities.

The most apparent progress on a statewide initiative was made on establishing a statewide coalition of GEAR UP grantees. The coalition met four times as of May 2013. At these meetings, various work group committees were formed and assigned tasks with the goal of bringing back progress at future meetings that will occur five to six times per year. In addition, the Texas GEAR UP SG held the first annual conference attended by approximately 250 program staff as well as state and national stakeholders. Participants positively rated the conference.

### 5.1.6 Perceptions of Implementation

*What were students, parents, and school staff perceptions of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation to date?*

While site visits involve only small numbers of parents participating in focus groups, it was clear that as of May 2013 parents at most schools remained unaware of the Texas GEAR UP SG program. The exception to this was School G. School G mailed information to parents, but they also engaged in a wide range of student activities, which may explain why parent knowledge was high at this school. Schools will clearly need to focus on family engagement in Year 2.

Parents who completed the spring 2013 survey reported that the activities they perceived their student to have engaged in and that they had engaged in were mostly effective, including enrollment in advanced courses, tutoring, and mentoring. Students' average perception of the effectiveness of these activities was significantly lower than parents', and greater percentages of students reported that activities were only slightly effective (as compared to mostly or very effective). It may be that parents are generally supporting doing anything to a greater extent than are students. Student overall satisfaction was highest at School G, where 41% of students indicated they were very satisfied with Texas GEAR UP SG activities. While implementation appeared to be relatively high at School E and School F as well, less than 25% of students reported being very satisfied. This suggests it is not just the mix of implementation but which activities and/or how activities were delivered that may impact satisfaction.

### 5.1.7 Facilitators and Barriers

*What facilitators and barriers were associated with implementation of strategies?*

While multiple facilitators and barriers are described in the implementation chapter, the clearest facilitator/barrier was related to the time commitment of the grant coordinator and support from campus/district administrators. Not surprisingly, the most salient barrier to implementation (beyond low time commitment for the coordinator), was the shortened period of implementation. It will be interesting to understand how level and mix of implementation change once all data for the year are reported (post summer 2013). It is worth noting that the November/December 2012 start may be one reason that four schools had a grant coordinator with limited time commitment.

Another interesting potential barrier identified during site visits was the need to improve academic rigor in advanced courses. Teachers at several schools noted that while they have students in advanced courses, the content was not as rigorous as would be needed to facilitate success. Schools have significant leeway in identifying a course as advanced, but if the content is less rigorous than hoped, it is less likely that students ultimately will be successful. This concern points to the importance of schools focusing on the TEA goal to provide teacher PD that will improve academic rigor.

Parents who completed the spring 2013 survey indicated they were more likely to be engaged in activities when their student encouraged them to be engaged. This suggests that schools may need to work with students on involving parents, which can be difficult at the middle school level. Picking a topic that was of interest to parents was also critical to their engagement in the activity. The greatest percentage of both parents (49%) and students (28%) indicated Information on college financing as a topic of interest. One fifth of parents also indicated they were interested in more information about the Texas GEAR UP SG program. Not surprisingly, time/schedule conflicts were the most commonly identified barrier to parent participation on the survey.

Other facilitators to implementation included building on existing programs within the school, existing relationships with universities, and support from the Texas GEAR UP Support Center. Barriers included the need to increase the number of parent events and teacher PD opportunities. One barrier to implementation, noted during site visits, was that at least one Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator was required to go through the district central office for approval of even small tasks, such as hanging flyers about the program on school walls; this at times led to delays in accomplishing tasks.

### 5.1.8 Potential Best Practices

*What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore potential best practices?*

During site visits, three potentially promising implementation activities were identified. Namely, there was broad enthusiasm at School E and School F for an afterschool mathematics program and at School G for enhanced college visits. At School E and School F, administrators, the Texas GEAR UP SG coordinator, and teachers all expressed enthusiasm for a family engagement program.

Teachers considered the afterschool mathematics program to be rigorous academically while still being fun and engaging for students. Teachers at these schools indicated that the lessons used in the program were often more challenging and more hands-on than in a typical mathematics class. In site visit focus groups, students who attended the program were

overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Providing dinner and bus transportation home after the program were identified as facilitators of program success.

School G tied classroom activities to college visits. For example, in one activity students researched colleges for a paper in English class. In addition to learning more from the visit through these activities, engaging in this practice is likely to increase development of a college-going culture at the school. The general perception was that these activities made the experience more meaningful for students and also created a college-going culture in the school.

Finally, School E and School F reported success with a three part series of family engagement workshops that occurred primarily after the APR report. As was noted, engaging families was generally challenging for the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort schools. The schools reported feeling successful at engaging parents in the series, as compared to previous experiences with engaging parents. Factors that may have contributed to success include engaging in a wide range of practices to build parent awareness of and interest in the events, including flyers, personal calls from teachers, and “robo-calls” to parents. Free childcare and Spanish translation further reduced barriers to participation. The schools were optimistic that they could build on this success in the future and attain the goal of 50% parent attendance at three events.

### 5.1.9 Knowledge about College Readiness

*What are students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)? What are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college aspirations/expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)? What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?*

For both parents and students, educational aspirations exceeded expectations. That is, both students and parents appear to have some concerns about achieving their education related dreams. School G, where the mix of implementation was high, had the highest percentage of students who indicated that participating in the program had impacted their decision to go to college (58%). Among students who do not plan to go to college, concerns about cost were considered a main reason for not continuing their education (48%).

Perhaps one reason that parents and students are concerned about cost is that they tend to overestimate how much college will cost. That is, parents and students overestimated the cost as compared to the actual state average. One in four parents and 12% of students indicated they have no knowledge about college financial aid, and parents on average considered themselves to be only slightly knowledgeable about college terms. In the absence of knowledge about costs, parents (69%) and students (93%) expressed at least some concern about being able to afford college. While Texas GEAR UP SG cannot impact the actual cost of college, it can provide parents and students with better information regarding actual costs and about financial supports to assist in paying for college, including scholarships and loans. In addition, since parent fears are high, but lower than those among students, parents need to be supported and encouraged to have frank conversations about financing college with their children.

Across a range of college related terms (e.g., SAT, FAFSA), the majority of parents and students indicated they were either slightly knowledgeable or knowledgeable, with few indicating they were extremely knowledgeable. This suggests that Texas GEAR UP SG has targeted an appropriate group of schools where the parents and students need additional information and support in order to become knowledgeable. Nearly three fourths of parents indicated they feel they do not have enough information about college entrance requirements; a similar percentage

(62%) indicated that no one from school or Texas GEAR UP SG had talked with them about these requirements. In comparison, the majority of students (60% overall) indicated that someone had spoken to them about college entrance requirements. School G had the highest percentage of students indicating they had this conversation (66%). Supporting parents in gaining information may be critical as 60% of students indicated that they consider parents to be a key source of such information.

### 5.1.10 Grant and School District Budgets and Expenditures

*How did schools budget for Texas GEAR UP SG in Year 1?*

Spending during Year 1 was impacted by the November/December 2012 start. While TEA had anticipated that 37% of the Year 1 budget would be carried over to Year 2, school districts had drawn down only 21% of awarded funds as of May 30, 2013. The budgets across school districts aligned with information from the evaluation site visits. For example, School G allocated a significant portion of its budget to support the grant coordinator. The level of implementation was also apparent through the school district expenditures; the school districts with the greatest number of activities implemented drew down greater percentages of their awards as of May 30, 2013. Because the school districts were all anticipating engaging in both mathematics enrichment programs and in Texas GEAR UP SG related teacher PD during summer 2013, these expenditure figures may increase significantly. Budget and expenditure data will be of greater interest when all financial reporting for the year is completed.

## 5.2 Recommendations and Next Steps for Implementation

Based on the range of data that have been analyzed to date, several key recommendations or next steps with regard to program implementation in Year 2 can be made. These include the following:

- **Summer 2013 Implementation.** During spring 2013 site visits, all schools indicated that they would be implementing both summer mathematics enrichment programs (to support the Algebra I goal) and summer teacher PD. Summer 2013 implementation will be considered as Year 1 implementation. It is anticipated that successful summer implementation will be crucial to achieving success on Texas GEAR UP SG goals regarding Grade 8 student enrollment in Algebra I and regarding teacher participation in PD. There was some concern reported during site visits that teacher PD would continue to present a challenge over the summer. Some schools indicated that planning for teacher PD in a given school year, including the summer, occurs at the start of the school year. Texas GEAR UP SG Year 1 implementation did not begin until November/December 2012, and schools found changing the teacher PD plans even into summer 2013 sometimes difficult. More generally, it is recommended that each school work on plans for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation in the upcoming year over each summer.
- **Year 2 Texas GEAR UP SG Outreach Activities.** Given the relatively low or uneven visibility of the program across stakeholders in Year 1 and given that some new students will join the school (and thus the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort), it is recommended that schools be encouraged to consider engaging in additional “kickoff” type of activities at the start of the 2013–14 school year. These activities should include students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- **SSS Decision Making.** The Texas GEAR UP SG encourages schools to place students in SSS based on both teacher/counselor input and available data. Currently, only School G reported engaging in this practice. Going forward, all schools report that they are working on an EWDS, which will likely increase using data to drive decision making. Overall, it is recommended that schools revisit their decision making for providing SSS to students to

facilitate the right students receiving the right supports as early as they can be identified throughout the school year.

- **Increased Number, Timing, and Content of Parent Events to Support Family Engagement.** To meet the goal of 50% of parents participating in at least three events each year, it is recommended that schools consider delivering more than three events or delivering one type of event at multiple times to facilitate parent attendance. In addition, parents reported that they are more likely to be engaged when the content aligns with areas where they have concerns. The most common focus across site visits and survey data would be for schools to consider family events that address the range of financial related topics—financial literacy, college costs, and scholarships. Those schools that have high percentages of parents who are LEP may want to consider engaging these parents by supporting their development of English skills, as at least some parents indicated an interest in such opportunities. Subrecipients might also be encouraged to broaden their range of strategies used to recruit families.
- **College Preparation Advisors.** In Year 2, each school will have a College Preparation Advisor who has been trained in the Texas GEAR UP SG goals, school characteristics, student success strategies, and college access and readiness strategies and will be assigned to the school for 100% of her or his time. While grant coordinators will continue to lead in implementing the broad range of Texas GEAR UP SG activities, College Preparation Advisors will identify issues and be responsible for keeping students on track for high school completion and college success by providing individualized student support. It will be critical for schools to provide the College Preparation Advisors with appropriate and timely access to all the stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and relevant data for them to succeed in their role. To further support a college-going culture at the school, it is also hoped that these College Preparation Advisors will be provided with a dedicated physical space for individual work with students.

### 5.3 Next Steps in the Evaluation

The evaluation will continue in the 2013–14 school year, when the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort is in Grade 8. The next report, *Annual Implementation Report #2*, will be published in August 2014. The evaluation will continue to focus on implementation (district and statewide); mix of implementation strategies; and perceptions of students, parents, staff, and administrators about the program. Site visits will occur in fall 2013 with a focus on summer programming and EWDS and again in spring 2014 focused on implementation during the school year. In addition, the next report will include final baseline data as well as initial outcome data. For example, by the time of the next report, successful completion of Year 1 advanced courses (baseline outcome) will be known. Additional analyses examining implementation and outcomes overall and within subgroups will be conducted and reported on. In addition, information about comparison groups will be introduced in the next report.





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## Appendix A: Evaluation Questions and Project Goals

### A.1 Evaluation Questions Addressed in Year 1 Implementation Report

Table A.1 provides an overview of the evaluation questions addressed in this Year 1 implementation report. Additional research questions will be addressed in the future. The list of evaluation questions will be expanded as appropriate to each report. In addition, several of the research questions described below focus on understanding when and how implementation changes. For this report, the focus is on first period of implementation only.

**Table A.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation Questions Addressed in Texas GEAR UP SG Year 1 Implementation Report**

Evaluation Questions
<b>1. Implementation of Texas GEAR UP SG Strategies and Identification of Potential Best Practices</b>
<b><i>1.1 To evaluate implementation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG) strategies intended for teacher professional development (PD) to improve academic rigor (AR) and data-driven instruction (DDI)</i></b>
1.1.1 What types of PD implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their Year 1 action plans?
1.1.2 In Year 1, when and to what extent did grantees implement PD strategies?
1.1.3 What percentage of core content teachers had the opportunity to participate in PD training regarding each of the following: differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, project-based learning (PBL), other? What percentage of core content teachers actually participated in each PD opportunity? To what extent, if any, did teachers other than core content teachers have an opportunity to participate and actually participate in PD?
1.1.4 When and how did grantees provide PD regarding vertical team preparation and implementation to MS and HS teachers? Were appropriate teachers from all schools on the vertical team able to attend the PD?
1.1.5 What are perceptions of teachers who attend given PD regarding: training itself, impact on teacher practice, and impact on vertical alignment, as appropriate to training?
1.1.6 What facilitators and barriers can be identified to implementing PD opportunities? If barriers to implementing were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
1.1.7 In what ways are trained teachers implementing data driven strategies? Differentiated instruction? PBL?
<b><i>1.2 To evaluate implementation of student support services (SSS) Texas GEAR UP SG strategies</i></b>
1.2.1 What types of SSS implementation strategies were identified by grantees in their action plans?
1.2.2 What types of information were utilized to identify students for participation in SSS implementation activities?
1.2.3 When and to what extent did grantees implement SSS strategies with students?
1.2.4 What are student, parent, and staff perceptions of SSS implementation strategies?
1.2.5 What facilitators and barriers can be identified regarding implementing SSS strategies? If barriers to implementing were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
1.2.6 During each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students? How do grantees inform students about opportunities to learn about college attendance and career success? How many activities are held for students to attend? How and to what extent do grantees provide information to students regarding information that is available through the state office?
1.2.7 By the end of the year, how many students (%) participate in each type of college readiness activity conducted by grantees? How many activities does each student attend?

Evaluation Questions
<b>1.2 To evaluate implementation of SSS Texas GEAR UP SG strategies</b>
1.2.8 What are students' levels of understanding regarding readiness (e.g., college aspirations/ expectations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)?
<b>1.3 To identify potential best practices</b>
1.3.1 What practices implemented by the grantee might be identified as potential best practices based on Year 1 data?
1.3.2 What practices implemented by grantees are perceived by grantees (students, parents, staff) to be effective, and therefore a potential best practice?
1.3.3 What individual strategies and/or mix of strategies were provided in Year 1?
<b>2. Family, School and Community Impact</b>
<b>2.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on families (parents)</b>
2.1.1 Each year of the grant, what types of information are grantees making available to students' families? How do grantees inform families about opportunities to learn about college attendance and career success? How many activities are held for parents to attend? How and to what extent do grantees provide information to parents regarding what is available through the state office?
2.1.2 By the end of each year, how many parents (%) attend each type of activity conducted by the grantees? How many activities does each parent attend?
2.1.3 Each year it is measured, what are parents' levels of understanding regarding a range of topics linked to understanding college and career readiness (e.g., college expectations and aspirations, college options, being college ready at each grade level, financing college)? Do parents report having gained knowledge over the year based on information and activities provided by the grantee?
2.1.4 What information or opportunities do parents perceive to have been most relevant in informing them regarding college and career readiness?
2.1.5 What facilitators and barriers do schools and parents report regarding participation in college readiness activities? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
<b>2.2 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on community partnerships</b>
2.2.1 At the end of each grant year, how many partnerships have schools formed with business alliances? In what ways and how often have business partners offered opportunities for career exploration to students?
2.2.2 At the end of each grant year, how many partnerships have schools formed with government entities? Community groups? In what ways and how often have partners offered opportunities for career exploration to students? Opportunities to provide information regarding scholarships, financial aid, college awareness and readiness?
2.2.3 What are the perceptions of the school and of the community partners regarding the partnership as it relates to meeting GEAR UP goals? What facilitators and barriers to partnerships are reported? If barriers were identified, to what extent were grantees able to overcome such barriers and how? Do grantees anticipate and are they able to overcome barriers in following years?
<b>3. Statewide Impact</b>
<b>3.1 To evaluate the impact of GEAR UP on statewide availability of information and professional learning opportunities</b>
3.1.1 By the end of Year 1, what types of information regarding college readiness have been made available through the state? Are there any topics relevant to college readiness not yet available?
3.1.2 What steps if any has the state office taken to communicate to schools and families about information available?
3.1.3 Each year, how many GEAR UP professional learning opportunities are made available to educators (e.g., Project Share, face-to-face)? How many educators, including those not at current GEAR UP campuses, are participating in such opportunities?



Evaluation Questions	
<b>4. Cost and Sustainability Outcomes</b>	
<b>4.1 To evaluate use of GEAR UP funding</b>	
4.1.1	For what services and activities do grantees use grant funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
4.1.2	To what extent were grantees able to secure matching funds?
4.1.3	For what services and activities do grantees use matching funds each year and over the entire time period of the grant?
<b>4.2 To evaluate sustainability of GEAR UP implementation</b>	
4.2.1	To what extent are grantees able to sustain activities initiated with the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort with following cohorts of students?

## A.2 Texas GEAR UP SG Project Goals and Objectives

Project goals that were addressed in even a preliminary manner were presented within the report. The following is a list of all project goals outlined by TEA in the federal grant proposal.

Project Goal 1 - Improve instruction and expand academic opportunities in math and science.

- Project Objective 1.1: By the end of the project's second year, 30% of cohort students will have completed Algebra I in the 8th grade. By the end of the project's third year, 85% of students will have completed Algebra I.
- Project Objective 1.2 - By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of cohort students graduating on the Recommend High School Plan or Distinguished Achievement Plan, including four years of credits in each core subject, will meet or exceed the state average.

Project Goal 2 - Increase access to and success in quality advanced academic programs.

- Project Objective 2.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all participating high schools will make opportunities available for each student to complete 18 hours of college credit (through AP, dual credit, or concurrent enrollment) by the time he or she graduates from high school.
- Project Objective 2.2: By the end of the project's fifth year, 60% of the cohort, including limited English proficient (LEP) students, will complete a pre-AP or AP course.
- Project Objective 2.3: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 50% of cohort students will graduate with college credit earned by AP exam or through dual credit.

Project Goal 3 - Provide professional development for strong data-driven instruction.

- Project Objective 3.1: In each grant year, all core content teachers will have the opportunity to participate in training regarding differentiated instruction, advanced instructional strategies, and project-based learning.
- Project Objective 3.2: In each grant year, teams of teachers at the middle and high school will complete at least five days of vertical teams preparation and implementation each year.

Project Goal 4 – Provide a network of strong student support services to promote on-time promotion and academic preparation for college.

- Project Goal 4.1: By the end of the second year, at least 75% of the 8th grade students will be involved in a comprehensive mentoring, counseling, and/or tutoring program based on results of teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data.
- Project Objective 4.2: Beginning in the second year, at least 30% of the students will be involved in summer programs and institutes designed to help them work at or above grade level, ease transitions, and increase college awareness.

- Project Objective 4.3: By the end of the project's third year, the on-time promotion rate of cohort students will exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 4.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, 70% of GEAR UP students will have knowledge of, and demonstrate, necessary academic preparation for college.

Project Goal 5 - Promote high school completion and college attendance.

- Project Objective 5.1: By the end of the project's fourth year, all cohort students will complete the PLAN or the PSAT. By the end of the project's fifth year, all cohort students will complete the SAT or ACT.
- Project Objective 5.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, the percentage of students meeting criterion on the ACT/SAT will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.3: At the end of the project's sixth year, the number of students who graduate college ready in math and English will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.4: At the end of the project's sixth year, the cohort completion rate will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 5.5: At the beginning of the seventh year, more than 50% of cohort of students will enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation.

Project Goal 6 - Meet or exceed state average for first-year college retention.

- Project Objective 6.1: The student retention rate for the second semester and the second year of college will meet or exceed the state average.
- Project Objective 6.2: At the end of the project's seventh year, the number of students on track to complete college will exceed the average postsecondary completion rate.

Project Goal 7 - Increase the availability of post-secondary information and knowledge-building opportunities.

- Project Objective 7.1: By the end of the first year, the state office will make information regarding college options, preparation, and financing will be made available to students, parents, and educators throughout the state.
- Project Objective 7.2: By the end of the first year, information and workshops aimed at linking college attendance to career success will be available to 100% of cohort students and their parents.
- Project Objective 7.3: Each year, at least 50% of cohort parents, including parents of current and former LEP students, will attend at least three college awareness activities.
- Project Objective 7.4: By the end of the project's fifth year, teachers and counselors will complete training in the college admissions and financial aid process.

Project Goal 8 - Build and expand community partnerships.

- Project Objective 8.1: All participating districts will form business alliances that support higher student achievement and offer opportunities for career exploration.
- Project Objective 8.2: Participating campuses will form alliances with governmental entities and community groups to enhance the information available to students regarding scholarships, financial aid, and college awareness.

Project Goal 9 - Promote college readiness statewide.

- Project Objective 9.1: Each year, the project will increase the number of educators participating in GEAR UP professional learning, including through Project Share and face-to-face trainings.
- Project Objective 9.2: By the end of the project's sixth year, at least 40% of Texas school districts will have utilized at least one Texas GEAR UP statewide resource, including materials and professional development.

## Appendix B: Evaluation Design, Methods, and Analytics

While the current report is focused on Year 1 implementation of Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG), understanding the overall evaluation design helps the reader understand the logic of the data being collected.

### B.1 Longitudinal Design

One important aspect of the evaluation design is to study Texas GEAR UP SG longitudinally. The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation is based on a cohort model design. Texas GEAR UP SG services were first provided to Grade 7 students in participating districts during the 2012–13 school year and will continue through the first year of enrollment at a postsecondary institution (the 2018–19 school year). There are two additional cohort groups of interest for the purposes of the evaluation that will be included in future reports. First, one of the comparison groups will be a retrospective comparison group of the students who are one-grade level ahead of the Texas GEAR UP SG cohort—the students at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools who are in Grade 8 in the 2012–13 school year. Examining trends in outcomes in this cohort as compared to the targeted cohort will allow TEA to better understand how the program has potentially created change at the school level. Similarly, while the 2012–13 Grade 7 cohort is the primary target for Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, it is hoped that future cohorts of students will also benefit through sustained implementation of the program with new Grade 7 students. Therefore, the evaluation team will compare outcome data from the follow-on cohorts as well. For example, by the third annual implementation report (August 2016), it will have examined trends in successful completion of Algebra I in Grade 8 for three cohorts of students (i.e., Grade 8 in the 2012–13 school year [comparison retrospective cohort], Grade 8 in the 2013–14 school year [target cohort], and Grade 8 in the 2014–15 school year [comparison follow-on cohort]). The potential cohorts of interest are presented in Table B.1.<sup>85</sup>

**Table B.1. Texas GEAR UP SG Cohorts of Data Collected During the Seven-Year Grant**

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	First Year of College
Retrospective Cohort	← Baseline: Prior to GEAR UP	Grant Year 1	Grant Year 2	Grant Year 3	Grant Year 4	Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6 →
Cohort 1	← Baseline: Grant Year 1	Grant Year 2	Grant Year 3	Grant Year 4	Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →
Cohort 2	← Baseline: Grant Year 2	Grant Year 3	Grant Year 4	Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →	
Cohort 3	← Baseline: Grant Year 3	Grant Year 4	Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →		
Cohort 4	← Baseline: Grant Year 4	Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →			
Cohort 5	← Baseline: Grant Year 5	Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →				
Cohort 6	← Baseline: Grant Year 6	Grant Year 7 →					
Total number of cohorts for data in each grade	7	7	6	5	4	3	2

<sup>85</sup> Outcome data often lag in availability relative to implementation data. For example, course completion data for any given school year are not available until October of the following year, at the earliest. In order for appropriate time to run analyses, outcome data will typically occur approximately six months post receipt at the earliest.

## B.2 Quasi-Experimental Design

In addition to comparisons that will be made based on longitudinal aspects of the design, the ICF team will utilize a quasi-experimental design (QED). The Texas GEAR UP SG schools were not selected randomly to participate, ruling out a true experimental design. Still, it is important to understand outcomes within the Texas GEAR UP SG schools in comparison to outcomes elsewhere. Specifically, outcomes at the Texas GEAR UP SG schools will be compared to: a) statewide averages (where possible); and b) outcomes in comparison schools selected based on propensity-score matching (PSM) to be as similar as possible to Texas GEAR UP SG participating schools. A student-level PSM is not necessary given that the Texas GEAR UP SG is a school wide approach (i.e., all students in Grade 7 in the 2012–13 school year will have opportunities to participate); if appropriate comparison schools are selected that level of matching may be sufficient. However, it is anticipated that a student-level PSM will be conducted as well in order to best argue the comparability of the Texas GEAR UP SG schools/students to comparison schools/students.

### B.2.1 Propensity Score Matching

PSM is the optimal method for establishing an equivalent comparison group in non-experimental studies. PSM refers to a class of multivariate methods for constructing comparison groups based on pairing study subjects, in this case schools, based on what is known about those subjects. Propensity scores represent the estimated probability that a program participant is assigned to an intervention based on observable variables. The evaluation team and Texas GEAR UP SG program staff will determine the final criteria for matching Texas GEAR UP SG and non-Texas GEAR UP SG comparison schools with proposed characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, grade level, academic achievement in reading and mathematics at baseline, special education/limited English proficiency [LEP] status, completion rates, parent education level). By using PSM to identify a very close non-Texas GEAR UP SG match (or multiple matches) for each Texas GEAR UP SG school, it will be possible to estimate the value-added effect of the Texas GEAR UP program. That is, if two schools are found to be similar on a range of characteristics, but students at only one school receive the GEAR UP “treatment,” then any potential differences in outcomes may be attributable to GEAR UP participation. It is anticipated that up to 7 schools (1 per Texas GEAR UP school) will be selected for comparison group based on PSM.

Specific details regarding the PSM will be provided in future reports when outcome data are analyzed. The information presented here represents the plan to conduct the PSM. ICF will conduct a school level PSM using an Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) and Common Core Data. Each GEAR UP school will be matched with one comparison school (nearest-neighbor method).<sup>86</sup> Three aspects of the PSM are described here. In cases where alternatives are described, final determinations will be based on the extent to which balance on covariates between intervention and control sample is achieved.

- **Ratio.** A fixed 1-to-1 ratio will be used; each GEAR UP school will be paired with one comparison school.
- **Algorithm.** The nearest-neighbor method is one of the most straightforward and fast algorithms. Exact matching will be required only for a limited subset of variables, particularly, school’s grade span and campus urban-centric locale.
- **Distance metric.** The propensity score is an extremely useful metric distance that summarizes many covariates in a single measure. The propensity score is based on a

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<sup>86</sup> The nearest-neighbor method selects the  $n$  comparison units whose propensity scores are closest to the treated unit.

logistic regression of an indicator of group membership on all the covariates for which balance is desired. For this school level regression being in the GEAR UP group is a relatively rare occurrence (i.e., only seven cases). It is anticipated this can limit the utility of the propensity score as a balancing score in the present application. However, there are alternative distance metrics that can be used, including Mahalanobis distance; robust Mahalanobis distance; weighted Mahalanobis distance where the weights are determined to maximize balance (Diamond and Sekhon, forthcoming). All the alternatives will be explored, and the final choice will be based on the covariate balance they achieve.

### B.3 Methodology

The Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation is utilizing a mixed-methods approach in order to best address the evaluation questions with the data available at a given point in time during the evaluation; a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods is being used to best address the range of evaluation questions. The use of multiple methods to collect, analyze, and synthesize information related to Texas GEAR UP SG allows for checks and balances across methods. Multiple methods allow for the triangulation of results, producing an in-depth assessment of Texas GEAR UP SG's effectiveness and providing greater confidence in evaluation findings. Much of the data that were collected, as described in the data sources section that follows, are quantitative in nature. Evaluators collected additional qualitative data through open-ended survey items and site visit interviews and focus groups, allowing the story of Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and impact at each school/district to be told. Findings based on data collected through the range of perspectives are compared against one another throughout reporting of findings.

### B.4 Data Sources and Data Collection

Evaluators used several data sources for this report, including Annual Performance Report (APR) data, extant data provided by TEA, student and family survey data, and site visit data. The following sections provide an overview of each data source, including process of collecting data that were included in this report.

#### B.4.1 Annual Performance Reporting Data

The ICF team worked with TEA to develop an appropriate tool for collecting APR data.<sup>87</sup> The APR data collection was aligned with requirements for the U.S. Department of Education APR, submitted by TEA in April 2013. Specifically, each school was provided with an EXCEL spreadsheet prepopulated with information about Grade 7 students. Subrecipients were asked to first provide information about any students currently enrolled on the campus but not included in the prepopulated files. Then, subrecipients were asked to report on implementation and participation at the student-level in Texas GEAR UP SG activities from the beginning of the grant through March 2013. For example, subrecipients indicated student enrollment in advanced courses; student participation in tutoring, mentoring, and counseling; and student participation in any Texas GEAR UP SG events held at the campus. Subrecipients also indicated if the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) participated in any events targeted for parents. Subrecipients provided a description of each Texas GEAR UP SG student and family event held at their school. In addition, subrecipients provided information on teacher participation in professional development (PD) opportunities related to the Texas GEAR UP SG and on community partnerships formed to date. Appendix C has a description of all data that Texas GEAR UP SG grantees were requested to submit in the APR for the 2012–13 school year.

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<sup>87</sup> This strategy was a one-time solution for collecting APR data. In the future, TEA's partner, UT-IPSI, will contract with a provider of a system to more efficiently collect Texas GEAR UP SG APR data. The participating schools will be able to update implementation data in the new system as new activities occur (i.e., regular, timely updates).



### B.4.2 Extant Data

Extant data refers to data that TEA already collects. TEA provides these data to the evaluation team as appropriate. The following extant data were used in writing this report:

- **TEA's Texas GEAR UP SG Grant Application and Subrecipient Applications.** TEA provided its application to the federal government, subrecipient applications provided by each Texas GEAR UP SG school, and all in-place TEA partner agreements. These documents were reviewed in order to better understand the Texas GEAR UP SG grant in general and for specific information regarding planned implementation priorities. This review occurred prior to survey and site visit protocol development in order to inform the process.
- **Action Plans.** Each Texas GEAR UP SG school provided an updated action plan in December 2012. These updated plans clarified, eliminated, and added planned implementation strategies. In this report, these action plans were used to provide general insights regarding connections between what grantees planned and what was implemented. Before submitting future reports, each action plan will be coded for specific implementation strategies and a more extensive comparison of planned versus actual implementation analyses will be conducted.
- **Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).** PEIMS contains student-level information collected by TEA on public education. It provides data on student demographics, attendance, high school course completion and high school completion, school personnel, and district organizational information. For this report, a limited number of PEIMS variables were included in the prepopulated fields on the APR (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, LEP status, special education status).
- **Academic Excellence Indicator System.** AEIS contains campus-level performance information about every public school and district in Texas. AEIS reports also provide extensive profile information about staff, finances, and programs. This report includes AEIS data from the 2009–10 school year, as data from this year informed the selection of schools for participation in Texas GEAR UP SG.

### B.4.3 Student and Parent/Family Surveys

The U.S. Department of Education requires that GEAR UP grantees survey students and parents at least every two years, with an additional requirement that programs survey at least 80% of their students and at least 50% of their parents at these intervals. Texas GEAR UP SG students and parents were first surveyed in spring 2013.<sup>88</sup>

Following a review of documents and discussions with TEA, the ICF team developed Texas GEAR UP SG surveys (see Appendix D), which underwent several layers of review and required approval by both ICF's Internal Review Board (IRB) and TEA's Data Governance Board (DGB).<sup>89</sup> Both student and parent surveys were available online. Only one school administered the survey online in significant numbers. The remaining schools identified appropriate times to collect survey data by providing paper versions distributed during an event

<sup>88</sup> Federal GEAR UP requirements are for biannual collection of survey data. Survey collection was not required in Year 1. Year 1 surveys were conducted because the evaluation team believes they provide an important baseline to better understand Texas GEAR UP SG outcomes. In addition, the evaluation will exceed federal requirements, and evaluators will conduct surveys of Texas GEAR UP SG students each fall and spring, parents each spring, and comparison students every other spring beginning in 2014. Surveys will undergo minor revisions as needed to reflect appropriate Texas GEAR UP SG implementation and goals prior to each submission.

<sup>89</sup> IRB approval was received to use passive consent from parents for student participation in the surveys. Parents were notified that the survey was planned and asked to inform the school if they did not want their child to participate. Students also provided their own assent for participation in the surveys.



or sent home. ICF team members were available to assist with this collection during site visits, but in most cases schools collected the data independently following instructions provided by the evaluation team as required by IRB.<sup>90</sup> Students and parents could choose to take the survey in either English or in Spanish. Survey data was collected anonymously.

The U.S. Department of Education has identified items that must be included on the surveys (i.e., five items each on the student and parent survey). From this basic foundation, GEAR UP programs are free to add additional questions. Items were selected for inclusion in the Texas GEAR UP SG surveys from surveys developed by members of the ICF evaluation team with prior experience evaluating GEAR UP programs and based on sample surveys (i.e., CoBro Consulting, 2010). Content areas on the survey were finalized with TEA and included information regarding such items as: a) student/parent satisfaction with the program and program activities; b) student/parent questions on educational expectations and aspirations; and (c) student and parent knowledge regarding postsecondary education, including financial knowledge. Understanding what information parents and students have learned and retained that Texas GEAR UP SG subrecipients provided is important in determining whether students/families have attained a base of knowledge about college that make the prospect of college attendance less daunting both financially and personally.

#### **B.4.4 In-Person/Telephone Interview with TEA and Partners**

To best understand the role of various partners and progress at the state level, the ICF team developed interview protocols and conducted interviews with the Texas GEAR UP SG state project director at TEA and with appropriate personnel from each of the TEA Partners in May/June 2013 (see Appendix D for interview protocols). The interview with the TEA Texas GEAR UP SG program coordinator was conducted in person. This interview provided information regarding the process of receiving the Texas GEAR UP SG award, making subrecipient awards, and the role of TEA and the Texas GEAR UP SG program coordinator in working with the subrecipients. In addition, questions were asked regarding any changes in the goals for the Texas GEAR UP SG, regarding the status of TEA's work with partners, progress on statewide initiatives, and perceptions of the progress of the Texas GEAR UP SG to date.

Representatives from each of the five TEA partners participated in telephone interviews with the evaluation team. One partner had two staff members participate in separate interviews; all other partners had a single interview with one staff member. During the interviews, partners were asked to describe their organizations as well as their organizations' roles in the Texas GEAR UP SG. They were also asked about their relationship with TEA, with the Texas GEAR UP SG schools, and with other TEA partners. Partners also provided information regarding progress on implementation of activities, planned future activities, and barriers and facilitators of implementation.

#### **B.4.5 School Site Visits**

Site visits are an important feature of the Texas GEAR UP SG evaluation. To ensure that relevant and useful information was gathered on these site visits, protocols specific to multiple types of stakeholders were developed. Six protocols were developed to gather data from stakeholders. These protocols were for Texas GEAR UP SG school coordinator interviews, school administrator interviews, teacher focus groups, student focus groups, parent focus groups, and community partner interviews/focus groups. The content of the protocols was aligned to Texas GEAR UP SG goals, relative to implementation in Year 1. Generally, the protocols explored knowledge and understanding of the Texas GEAR UP SG, participation in

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<sup>90</sup> The surveys took about 20 to 30 minutes for students to complete. Ideally student surveys would take no more than 15 to 20 minutes. If appropriate, future survey versions will be shortened.

and perceptions of implementation activities, barriers and facilitators to participation in Texas GEAR UP SG implementation activities, perceptions of stakeholders regarding promising practices, and awareness of issues related to postsecondary education. Focus groups are most effective when they are highly participatory, and these sessions were structured to provide ample time for participants to express their views about the program and specific activities within it. The student focus group protocol was designed using classroom discussion strategies (e.g., brainstorming) to encourage participation by all students.

### SPRING 2013 SITE VISITS

A site visit was completed at each of the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools from May 6 to May 23, 2013. The evaluation team made copies of interview and focus group protocols available to schools (see Appendix C) prior to participating in the visit. Telephone calls and emails were used to communicate with each site regarding the visit and to develop a site visit schedule. Schedules varied by school based on the availability of participants, but all schools were asked to schedule time for separate interviews with the GEAR UP coordinator at the school and an administrator, as well as focus groups with students, parents, and teachers. During the communication about the site visits, it was clarified that the intent of the visit was not to evaluate teachers or staff but to gather information on Texas GEAR UP SG implementation, emerging promising practices, and strategies that could enhance program effectiveness. The team customized materials for specific sites based on information gained in the APR on activities and events for students, parents, and teachers.

A few of the general highlights regarding these visits are provided here. The Appendix E case studies provide more details. Each site visit varied somewhat in order to be appropriate to the individual school.

- **School Staff Interviews.** The ICF team designed interview protocols for principals, assistant principals, school-site Texas GEAR UP SG staff, and other administrators. In most cases with administrators, interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. At one site, ICF met with a principal and assistant principal simultaneously. At each school, an interview was requested with both an administrator (i.e., principal, assistant principal) as well as school-site GEAR UP SG staff. In one district, there was not a specified GEAR UP SG staff member at each school, but rather a district-level coordinator for GEAR UP on the campus. Overall, ICF conducted interviews with 13 school administrators.
- **Teacher Focus Groups.** ICF conducted 18 focus groups and two individual interviews with 62 teachers. Due to classroom coverage issues, the size and duration of focus groups varied widely. The size of focus groups ranged from two to 10 participants. The typical length of a teacher focus group was approximately 30 minutes. Six schools scheduled teachers for focus groups during their planning periods or open times, while the seventh scheduled all mathematics teachers for a focus group at the same time and found substitutes, if needed, for teachers to attend. Based on teachers' schedules and availability, the number of teachers participating by school ranged from a low of 6 to a high of 14. Teachers participated in interviews rather than focus groups if they were unavailable at the same time as other teachers. At five locations, groups were deliberately kept small, with multiple groups held during the day, to accommodate teachers' planning periods and ensure a cross-section of teachers from the main subject areas. Teachers were asked about knowledge of Texas GEAR UP SG, perceptions of the program at their school, and current and planned Texas GEAR UP SG-sponsored PD and workshops. Many of the questions focused on activities regarding Texas GEAR UP SG goals related to Algebra I completion. For those teachers with day-to-day involvement with the program, ICF inquired about specific activities and their perceived effectiveness along with perceptions of program buy-in among teachers, parents, and students.
- **Student Focus Groups.** Focus groups with students were held at each school to examine student knowledge of the program and of higher education, their participation in program

activities, and their perceptions of GEAR UP's effectiveness. Student focus groups ranged in size from seven to eight participants. At six of the schools, one focus group was conducted with students and at one of the schools, two student focus groups were conducted, giving this school 14 students participating in focus groups. Overall, 61 students participated in focus groups.

- **Parent Focus Groups.** ICF conducted focus groups with parents at six of the seven sites (at one site, a parent focus group was scheduled but no parents attended). The purpose of these focus groups was to examine parent knowledge of the program and of higher education, their participation in program activities, and their perceptions of effectiveness. The evaluation team provided Spanish-speaking personnel at five sites where the school requested such support. At three sites, Spanish-speaking parents attended and ICF conducted two focus groups at the site, one in English and one in Spanish. Overall, 41 parents participated in focus groups, including nine who attended Spanish-language sessions. The size of parent focus groups in 2013 ranged from three to 10 participants.
- **Community Partner Interview/Focus Groups.** In setting up the site visits, all sites were asked about current relationships with community partners on the Texas GEAR UP SG; time was made available in the schedule to interview community partners if available. At one location, ICF conducted a focus group of four community partners active in the program in Year 1 to better understand their roles and how they met specific GEAR UP needs.

## B.5 Data Security and Cleaning

The ICF team received all data provided by TEA via a secure, password protected environment. Survey data was collected by schools and then shipped to ICF. ICF provided boxes and shipping labels to schools to facilitate this process. Students and parents were asked not to write their names on the surveys in order to maintain anonymity. Separate envelopes or boxes were used to collect consent/assent forms. Once received by ICF all electronic data were stored on a protected server accessible only to team members who have signed TEA's access to confidential data form. Paper surveys were numbered and scanned in order to create an electronic copy. The paper copies were then stored in a locked file cabinet

Upon receipt of the APR data in April 2013, ICF reviewed the data and asked TEA to follow up with schools for clarification regarding some responses. The survey data was examined for missing values, outliers, and response patterns. Once all cleaning steps were completed, a final clean data set was prepared for use in analyses.

## B.6 Data Analytics

### B.6.1 Descriptive & Change Statistics: Implementation Analysis

As noted in Chapter 1, the data available to date reflect a somewhat shortened period of implementation of the program. The majority of the analyses included descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, averages, ranges). In some cases, the same data were examined in two different ways. For example, on the surveys, perceived effectiveness of strategies was provided as one of four categories. These data were presented as a percentage indicating a given category or as average effectiveness by numbering the categories from 1 (not effective) to 4 (very effective). Averages were then provided both by individual activity and summarized across activities, as appropriate.

### SUBGROUP ANALYSES

In many cases, comparisons by subgroups remained descriptive in nature. Where appropriate, crosstabs (chi-square analyses comparing frequency distribution by subgroup) and analysis of variance (ANOVA)—comparing means by subgroup—were conducted and significant differences between subgroups were noted. As noted, some analyses were conducted on both APR and survey data. ANOVAs were utilized only to compare means across schools.

School/district was the key grouping variable used in this report. Information on providing implementation was also grouped by provision type (i.e., virtual vs. face-to-face). In future reports, students will be subgrouped in several ways including gender, race/ethnicity, LEP status, and special education status. Students will also be subgrouped by participation or not in advanced coursework (e.g., are students in advanced courses more or less likely than those who are not to be tutored in that subject). Parent participation will be examined relative to the student characteristics (e.g., students with special needs or in advanced courses more or less likely to have parents participating in GEAR UP events).

### LEVEL/MIX OF IMPLEMENTATION

As outcomes become available, it will be of interest to understand whether specific implementation activities are associated with outcomes and/or if it is some level (amount) or mix of implementation that is related to outcomes. In the future, cluster analysis will be conducted to identify groups of students participating in a given mix of activities/services. Year 1 implementation data was explored to begin to understand potential strategies for developing mix of implementation variables. The strategy used was to provide descriptions of early patterns of mix of implementation at the school level.

### B.6.2 Analyses of Site Visit Qualitative Data

Findings from the qualitative analyses were cross-referenced with findings from quantitative analyses to more completely answer evaluation questions of interest. In addition, Appendix E provides case study summaries.

### DATA REVIEW

Evaluators did not conduct detailed coding of qualitative data. The site visit team conducted extensive content analysis to identify themes as well as similarities/differences across the sites.

### CASE STUDIES

Case studies were developed for each of the four subrecipient districts. School-level case studies were not utilized in order to maintain the confidentiality that was assured to participants in the evaluation site visits. The purpose of these case studies was to describe implementation from the various perspectives of those who participated in the site visits. These case studies also identified any notable differences across the schools as well as emerging promising practices and challenges for each district.

## B.7 References

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## Appendix C: Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Reporting Data Requested from Grantees, 2012–13

The following instructions were provided to each Texas GEAR UP SG school to assist them in providing required annual performance reporting (APR) data due in April 2013.

### Navigating the GEAR UP Annual Progress Report Upload Spreadsheet:

Please know that we appreciate your efforts to provide the best possible data related to your participation in GEAR UP. We know there is a lot of information to keep track of and appreciate your diligence in doing so, especially in this first year of initial implementation. Note that in future years of the GEAR UP project, districts will be using a customized data reporting system that will be provided by the GEAR UP state office. With consistent and timely data inputs in this system, extracting reports to support the Annual Progress Report will not require the use of these GEAR UP upload documents. However, in this first year of implementation, the worksheet upload was the most efficient resource available.

This document provides you with an overview of the tabs in the document, recommended approaches for completing the student enrollment tab, and detailed description of data elements you will be submitting on each tab of the spreadsheet. Most of the data element definitions are also in comments on the spreadsheet, but it is hoped that this overview will facilitate understanding the bigger picture. In each tab in the upper left hand corner, controls exist to let you navigate to the previous page, the next page or back to the main page.

There are 12 tabs in this spreadsheet:

1. The first tab is a navigation tab. To facilitate navigation, this tab provides “hot” buttons to each of the tabs in the document where you will be entering data. Simply click on the white button for a given page and you will be taken to that page. You will also need to provide contact information on this tab. In order for the buttons to work (including the populate button), you must have enabled macros in Excel (once you enable macros, you may need to close and reopen the file in order for the macros to work).
2. Tab 2 is the student enrollment tab. TEA has input into this tab your campus’ Grade 7 students from the fall 2012–13 PEIMS snapshot. To reflect current enrollment, you may need to make additions to and/or deletions from this tab. That procedure will be discussed below. **Please note: This page includes a yellow ‘Populate’ Button (explained in more detail below) that will assist you in completing the document. It is highly recommended that you complete the student enrollment list as much as possible before using the ‘Populate’ button. Using the ‘Populate’ button before you have completed enrollment will cause issues with the other tabs, which will need to be cleaned up manually.**
3. Tabs 3 through 7 are all student related. The populate button will fill these tables in with the list of current Grade 7 students defined in the second tab. Then you can add the additional GEAR UP data required for each student.
4. Tabs 8 and 9 collect data on parent activities. Parents of Grade 7 students are of particular interest. Tab 9 will also be populated with current Grade 7 students’ names in order to identify their parents’ participation in GEAR UP activities.
5. Tabs 10 and 11 collect data on teachers and professional development activities.
6. Tab 12 is for listing your GEAR UP partners.



## Recommended Approach for Completing the Student Enrollment Tab and Populating Your Worksheets

1. **Complete the student enrollment list in Tab 2.**
  - a. As noted, the Tab 2, labeled “2. Student Enrollment” will be provided to you with your campus’ Grade 7 students from the fall 2012–13 PEIMS snapshot already input. This includes the following for each enrolled student: local id, first name, last name, gender, race, ethnicity, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Status, and Special Education status.
  - b. Some Grade 7 students may have left the campus since the fall Snapshot and some may have enrolled.
    - i. Your first task will be to indicate (in Column I) if the given student is currently enrolled in Grade 7 at your campus (Y for Yes, N for No). If the student is no longer enrolled, you will select No and you will enter the date they de-enrolled in Column J (mm/dd/yyyy). Do not leave any blanks in Column I.
    - ii. If a new student has enrolled in Grade 7, you will need to complete the entire row for the student, including Columns I and J.
2. **Populate your Worksheets**
  - a. Once you are confident that your enrollment list is completely updated and that you will need to make no additional changes to it, press the yellow **‘Populate’** Button at the top of the worksheet.
  - b. Even if you make no changes to the student enrollment list, you will still need to press the **‘Populate’** Button.
  - c. Pressing the **‘Populate’** Button will automatically add all students identified as Y in Column I (indicating yes currently enrolled) on to all of the appropriate following tabs.
3. **Enter the other student data on Tabs 3 through 7.**
  - a. Once the worksheets have been populated you can continue to complete Tabs 3-7

### Recommended Approach for Adding or Deleting Students after Initial Population of All Tabs:

1. If you later realize that a student was left on the list that should have been eliminated, please just delete that student’s row from all following worksheets (and mark them as N on the student enrollment page).
2. If you realize you need to add an additional student, please add it to each tab individually.
3. **Clicking on the ‘Populate’ Button more than once is discouraged.** If you click on the button more than once, ALL students on the student enrollment page will be duplicated on the following pages and you will need to delete multiple rows to make the single addition.

### Recommended Approach for Both Parent and Teacher Tabs:

1. First complete the tab which defines the events (Tab 8 for parents; Tab 10 for teachers).
2. Then complete the Attendance/Enrollment tab (Tab 9 for parents; Tab 11 for teachers). These Tabs depend upon the events having been defined in step 1 here.

### WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED HELP.

The Texas GEAR UP Implementation Office at IPSI will be supporting you in completing the GEAR UP data upload document. Please contact the IPSI office for help in any part of the upload for which you have questions:



**Descriptions of the Individual Worksheets and their Respective Columns**

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
1. Main Page		<p>Enter the contact information for the person who will be completing the report on this page in rows 2 through 6.</p> <p>This page also provides hotlinks to each of the worksheets.</p>
<p><b>2. Grade 7 Student Enrollment</b></p> <p><i>TEA will input the campus' Grade 7 student enrollment based on the fall snapshot. Please review the list and identify any students who have de-enrolled or enrolled since the fall snapshot. If new Grade 7 students have enrolled, please add a new line of data for each new student.</i></p>	Column A	<u>Local ID</u>
	Column B	<u>First Name</u> : If adding names, please add as you would in PEIMS.
	Column C	<u>Last Name</u> : If adding names, please add as you would in PEIMS.
	Column D	<u>Gender</u> : Select or type Female or Male
	Column E	<p><u>Race</u>:</p> <p>Select or type from the following list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliations or community recognition.</li> <li>• Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.</li> <li>• Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.</li> <li>• Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.</li> <li>• White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.</li> <li>• Two or more races</li> <li>• Race Unknown</li> </ul>

Column F	<p><u>Ethnicity:</u></p> <p>Select or type from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, Hispanic or Latino – A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.</li> <li>• No</li> <li>• Ethnicity Unknown</li> </ul>
Column G	<p><u>Limited English Proficient Status:</u> You will select the PEIMS LEP status indicator code from the drop down list as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>0 Not LEP</b></li> <li>• <b>1 Identified As Limited English Proficient (LEP)</b></li> <li>• <b>F Student Exited From LEP Status - Monitored 1 (M1)</b> – student has met criteria for bilingual/ESL program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her first year of monitoring as required by 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP</li> <li>• <b>S Student Exited From LEP Status - Monitored 2 (M2)</b> – student has met criteria for bilingual/ESL program exit, is no longer classified as LEP in PEIMS, and is in his or her second year of monitoring as required by 19 TAC §89.1220(l) and is not eligible for funding due to the fact that they are not LEP</li> </ul>
Column H	<p><u>Special Education Status:</u> Select Yes/No to indicate if currently identified as special education</p>
Column I	<p><u>Enrollment Status:</u> If this student is currently enrolled in Grade 7 at the campus select Yes from the dropdown menu; if student is not currently enrolled, select No. (You can also type Yes or No). <b>Only students with a Yes will populate onto further sheets where GEAR UP participation will be described.</b> Do not leave any blanks.</p>
Column J	<p><u>Enrollment/De-Enrollment Date:</u> If you indicated Yes student is enrolled in Grade 7 and they are a new enrollee since the fall snapshot, please enter the date student enrolled on campus.</p> <p>If you entered No to indicate a student had de-enrolled, please indicate the de-enrollment date.</p> <p>It is not necessary to add enrollment dates for students who have stayed enrolled since the fall snapshot.</p> <p>Dates should be entered as mm/dd/yyyy. Date must be between 8/1/2012 and 3/31/2013.</p>

NOTE: Complete this page first. Check all work and if confident student enrollment list is accurate, click on the Populate button at the top of the page.

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
3. Advanced Courses	Column A-C	Local ID, First Name and Last Name will pre-populate once you complete the student enrollment sheet and click on the "Populate" button. Please do not click on the "Populate" button more than once.
	Column D	Was the student promoted to Grade 7 at the end of the 2011–12 school year?  (Yes indicates student was promoted. No indicates a student is currently in Grade 7 for the second time. Please do not leave any blanks.)
	Column E	How many <u>Unexcused Absences</u> did the student have during the first two quarters of the school year?  (Enter number, with 0 indicating no unexcused absences. Blanks will be considered as 0 unexcused absences.)
	Column F	Has the student <u>completed pre-Algebra or equivalent</u> in Grade 6 or by March 31, 2013? Select or type Yes completed. Blanks will be considered as "No" did not complete or select/enter No.
	Column G	Has the student <u>completed an International Baccalaureate (IB)</u> class in Grade 6 or by March 31, 2013? Select or type Yes completed. Blanks will be considered as "No" did not complete or select/enter No.
	Column H	Please indicate if the student is currently <u>enrolled in an Advanced Mathematics Course</u> , by entering the name of the course (e.g., Honors Mathematics, Algebra I). "Advanced courses" are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student's school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered Advanced. (Campuses use a range of strategies to name such course including Honors Mathematics 7 or Mathematics 7 pre-AP.) Campus course name should make it clear that this is an advanced course. Grade 7 students enrolled in Mathematics 8 or Algebra I are also considered to be in an advanced course.  If campus does not offer an advanced mathematics course, please respond "N/A" for not applicable.
Column I		How many <u>hours in rigorous Mathematics curricula</u> did the student receive? Only students who were indicated as enrolled in an advanced mathematics course should have number of hours calculated. Count number of hours from enrollment to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 42.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not enrolled in rigorous Mathematics curriculum (i.e., Advanced Mathematics Course).

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
<p>3. Advanced Courses (Cont.)</p>	Column J	<p>Please indicate if the student is currently <u>enrolled in an Advance English/Language Arts (ELA) Course</u>, by entering the name of the course. “Advanced courses” are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student’s school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered Advanced. Campus course name should make it clear that this is an advanced course. If campus does not offer an Advanced ELA course, please respond “N/A” for not applicable.</p>
	Column K	<p>How many <u>hours in rigorous ELA curricula</u> did the student receive? Only students who were indicated as enrolled in an Advanced ELA course should have number of hours calculated. Count number of hours from enrollment to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 42.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not enrolled in rigorous ELA curriculum (i.e., Advanced ELA Course).</p>
	Column L	<p>Please indicate the student is currently <u>enrolled in an Advance Science Course</u>, by entering the name of the course. “Advanced courses” are classes that are identified as above grade level by the student’s school. Most honors and pre-AP courses are considered Advanced. Campus course name should make it clear that this is an advanced course. If campus does not offer an advanced science course, please respond “N/A” for not applicable.</p>
	Column M	<p>How many <u>hours in rigorous Science curricula</u> did the student receive? Only students who were indicated as enrolled in an advanced science course should have number of hours calculated. Count number of hours from enrollment to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 42.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not enrolled in rigorous Science curriculum (i.e., Advanced Science Course).</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
4. Academic Services	Column A-C	Local ID, First Name and Last Name will pre-populate once you complete the student enrollment sheet and click on the “Populate” button. Please do not click on the “Populate” button more than once.
	Column D	<p>How many <u>hours of In-Person Mathematics Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? In-Person Tutoring/homework assistance services provide additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students. Tutoring can occur one-on-one or in small groups before school, during school, after school, during study or lunch breaks, or on weekends and be provided by GEAR UP staff, hired tutors, teachers, trained peers, and/or volunteers. In-person indicates that the tutoring is face-to-face, virtual tutoring is counted separately.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in in-person tutoring for mathematics.</p>
	Column E	<p>How many <u>hours of Virtual Mathematics Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? Tutoring/homework assistance is defined in the same way as in person but here you are counting hours provided virtually. Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in virtual tutoring for mathematics.</p>
	Column F	<p>How many <u>hours of In-Person ELA Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? In-Person Tutoring/homework assistance services provide additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students. Tutoring can occur one-on-one or in small groups before school, during school, after school, during study or lunch breaks, or on weekends and be provided by GEAR UP staff, hired tutors, teachers, trained peers, and/or volunteers. In-person indicates that the tutoring is face-to-face.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in in-person tutoring for ELA.</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
4. Academic Services (cont.)	Column G	<p>How many <u>hours of Virtual ELA Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? Tutoring/homework assistance is defined in the same way as in person but here you are counting hours provided virtually. Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in virtual tutoring for ELA.</p>
	Column H	<p>How many <u>hours of In-Person Science Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? In-Person Tutoring/homework assistance services provide additional academic instruction designed to increase the academic achievement of students. Tutoring can occur one-on-one or in small groups before school, during school, after school, during study or lunch breaks, or on weekends and be provided by GEAR UP staff, hired tutors, teachers, trained peers, and/or volunteers. In-person indicates that the tutoring is face-to-face.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in in-person tutoring for science.</p>
	Column I	<p>How many <u>hours of Virtual Science Tutoring/homework assistance</u> did the student receive? Tutoring/homework assistance is defined in the same way as in person but here you are counting hours provided virtually. Virtual tutoring services include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</p> <p>Count number of hours from enrollment in tutoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in virtual tutoring for Science.</p>
	Column J	<p><u>Decision to Tutor</u>: Please select one of the following to indicate how the decision was made to have the student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/Counselor Input only</li> <li>• Diagnostic Data Only</li> <li>• Both Teacher/Counselor Input AND Diagnostic Data</li> <li>• Other (if other reason please specify in Column K)</li> </ul>
	Column K	<p><u>Other Reason Tutor</u>: If student received tutoring based on reasons other than teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data, please specify how decision was made (e.g., student requested, parent requested).</p>
Column L	<p><u>Hours of In-Person Mentoring</u>: If the student participated in comprehensive mentoring, please indicate the number of hours of mentoring received. Count number of hours from enrollment in mentoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in mentoring.</p>	



Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
		<p>Please count in-person and virtual hours of mentoring separately.</p> <p>Comprehensive mentoring services are provided when GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff identifies students who would benefit from an ongoing supportive relationship with a trained, caring adult or older student, i.e., “mentor.” Mentors meet regularly with their assigned student(s). Meetings may be on or off campus and either during or outside of the school day. Typical issues addressed during mentoring meetings include academic, social, organization or life skill development. Per the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), comprehensive mentoring must provide students with financial aid information, and encourage students to stay in school, enroll in rigorous and challenging coursework, apply for postsecondary education, and, if applicable, the GEAR UP scholarship.</p> <p>Mentoring Programs may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional mentoring programs that match one youth and one adult.</li> <li>• Group mentoring that links one adult with a small group of young people.</li> <li>• Team mentoring that involves several adults working with small groups of young people, ideally with a ratio of no more than four youth to one adult.</li> <li>• Peer mentoring that connects caring youth with other adolescents.</li> </ul>
	Column M	<p><u>Hours of Virtual Mentoring</u>: If the student participated in virtual comprehensive mentoring, please indicate the number of hours of mentoring received. Count number of hours from enrollment in mentoring to March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 12.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not in mentoring. Please count in-person and virtual hours of mentoring separately. The definition of mentoring is the same as for in-person mentoring.</p>
	Column N	<p>Virtual comprehensive mentoring includes mentoring services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means (E-mentoring that functions via email and the internet).</p> <p><u>Decision to Mentor</u>: Please select one of the following to indicate how the decision was made to have the student be involved in tutoring/homework assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/Counselor Input only</li> <li>• Diagnostic Data Only</li> <li>• Both Teacher/Counselor Input AND Diagnostic Data</li> <li>• Other (if other reason please specify in Column O)</li> </ul>
	Column O	<p>If student received mentoring based on reasons other than teacher/counselor input and diagnostic data, please specify how decision was made (e.g., student requested, parent requested).</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
5. Student Services	Column A-C	Local ID, First Name and Last Name will pre-populate once you complete the student enrollment sheet and click on the “Populate” button. Please do not click on the “Populate” button more than once.
	Column D	<p><u>Hours of In-Person Financial Aid Counseling/Advising:</u> If the student participated in in-person financial aid counseling/advising, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours of financial aid counseling/advising separately.</p> <p>Financial aid counseling/advising services assist students understanding and navigating the complexities of financial aid, including providing hands-on assistance with the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and scholarship applications, presentations on financial aid or literacy, using financial aid or literacy curriculum, and the benefits and how-tos of participation in college savings plans.</p>
	Column E	<p><u>Hours of Virtual Financial Aid Counseling/Advising:</u> If the student participated in virtual financial aid counseling/advising, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours of financial aid counseling/advising separately.</p> <p>Virtual financial aid/counseling/advising is defined the same as in-person but includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
	Column F	<p><u>Hours of In-Person Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling:</u> If the student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately.</p> <p>Counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling services span a spectrum of activities with individual students or small groups of students. Services are defined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling: Discussing personal growth issues such as decision making, problem solving, goal setting, attendance, behavior concerns, or family issues.</li> <li>• Advising: Providing assistance on course selection (secondary or postsecondary), college and/or career choices, or college and/or career planning.</li> <li>• Academic planning: Providing assistance on coursework selection, course of study choices, college major selection, assessment advising or interpretation of scores, or assistance with placement tests.</li> <li>• Career counseling: Providing assistance about career choices, career planning, internships, or career interests.</li> </ul>
	Column G	<p><u>Hours of Virtual Counseling/Advising/Academic Planning/Career Counseling:</u> If the student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately.</p> <p>Virtual counseling/advising/academic planning/career counseling is defined the same as in-person but includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</p>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
<p>6. Student Events</p> <p>NOTE On this sheet each column will provide information about a given student event that multiple students may have participated in. Grade 7 student participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled 7. Events Student Attend. This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend event.</p>	Row 2	<p>Provide the specific <u>name of the event</u> that was held for students. The name will generally describe the event. Events will include (see below for details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College Visits</li> <li>• Job Site Visits</li> <li>• Educational Field Trips</li> <li>• Student Workshops</li> </ul>
	Row 3	<p><u>Provide a brief description of this event.</u> For example, if it is a college visit indicate who supervised the trip; if it is a workshop indicate who presented and topics, etc. If event lasted several days, please describe here (only hours can be entered below).</p>
	Row 4	<p><u>Event Cost:</u> Describe any costs associated with the event. This should include actual dollar amounts to the extent possible. For example, costs to charter a bus or to bring in a speaker.</p>
	Row 5	<p><u>Event length:</u> Enter event length in number of hours. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours).</p>
	Row 6	<p><u>Event Type:</u> Select from the following list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>College visit:</b> A physical visit to a college campus by a student facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. College visits should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, financial aid, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments.</li> <li>• <b>College student shadowing:</b> A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day on a college campus with an undergraduate student seeing typical college life.</li> <li>• <b>Virtual college visit</b> includes college visit services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Job site visits</b> offer students exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest and reinforces the link between classroom learning, work requirements, and the need for postsecondary education. Students witness the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training, and potential career options. Select from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physical Job Site Visit:</b> A physical visit to a local business/work environment</li> </ul>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
		<p>facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff. Job site visits should include visits to local businesses, employers, and agencies to explore different professions or career selections, and can be followed by job shadowing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Job shadowing:</b> A one-on-one experience in which a middle or high school student spends a day at a business or work environment with an employee seeing typical job duties.</li> <li>• <b>Virtual job site visit:</b> Virtual job site visit includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual job visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical job visit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Educational field trips</b> are services during which students leave their school or travel to another location, and include an academic component that is linked to classroom activities. Examples would include a science demonstration on a college campus (the purpose of the event was the science demonstration not a college visit), a class trip to attend a science or history museum linked to curriculum, academic competitions, cultural experiences such as performing arts, museums, or similar activity, and field trips that complement and enhance existing curriculum in key content areas. Select by content area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mathematics Educational Field Trip</b></li> <li>• <b>ELA Educational Field Trip</b></li> <li>• <b>Science Educational Field Trip</b></li> <li>• <b>Other Educational Field Trip</b> (content other than Mathematics, ELA or science)</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Workshops</b> are services that include interactive informational classroom-level or large- or small-group sessions that involve hands-on experience for each student in the workshop. Workshops are offered to groups of students on topics like secondary school success and college awareness, and general elements of college readiness such as study skills, self-monitoring, goal-setting, time management, and problem-solving. This includes guest speakers that motivate students and highlight careers. Workshops are informational in nature and are not intended to provide direct counseling or guidance to individual or small groups of students. Be sure to indicate detail regarding these issues in description of event and be sure the description indicates the subject area focused on in the workshop if any (e.g., Mathematics, ELA, science, other). <i>Workshops should be recorded by subject area.</i> Select from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-person Student Workshop: Mathematics</b></li> <li>• <b>In-person Student Workshop: ELA</b></li> <li>• <b>In-person Student Workshop: Science</b></li> <li>• <b>In-person Student Workshop: Other</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Virtual student workshops:</b> Virtual student workshops include services that are provided via remote access</p>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
		<p>through the internet or other means.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Virtual Student Workshop: Mathematics</b></li> <li>• <b>Virtual Student Workshop: ELA</b></li> <li>• <b>Virtual Student Workshop: Science</b></li> <li>• <b>Virtual Student Workshop: Other</b></li> <li>• <b>Family Event:</b> are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians. Family events include GEAR UP activities that recognize the role of families in student success, and are not defined under a previous category.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> If an event does not fit into one of the categories provided, please select other and be sure description provides details to help us understand the event.</li> </ul>
	Row 7	If the event was a college visit, indicate the name of the college visited.
	Row 8	If the event was a college visit, select if the college visited was a 2 or 4 year institution.
	Rows 9-16	If this event was open to <u>students</u> in grades other than Grade 7, indicate the number of students at each grade level who attended the event. Grade 7 student attendance will be reported on the worksheet labeled "7. Events Students Attend."

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
7. Events Student Attend	Column A-C	Local ID, First Name and Last Name will pre-populate once you complete the student enrollment sheet and click on the "Populate" button. Please do not click on the "Populate" button more than once.
	Column D	Student Attendance at Event 1: For the first event you described on the sheet entitled "6. Student Events", please indicate Grade 7 student attendance by selecting or typing Yes next to each student who attended. Blanks indicate student did not attend event (or you can select/type No did not attend).
	Columns E-I	Complete student Attendance for each event you described on 6. Student Events by indicating Yes/No attended. If you only describe three events, attendance will be indicated in Columns D-F.



Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
<p>8. Parent Events</p> <p>NOTE: On this sheet each column will provide information about a given parent event that multiple parents may have participated in. Parent of Grade 7 student participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled “9. Events Parents Attend.” This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend event.</p>	<p>Row 2</p>	<p>Provide a specific <u>name for an event</u> that was held for parents. Please note that while we use the term parents it can include parents and guardians. The name will generally describe the event. Events will include (see below for details):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop on college preparation/financial aid</li> <li>• College Visit</li> <li>• Family Event</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
	<p>Row 3</p>	<p><u>Event Type</u>: Please select from the following in drop down:</p> <p><b>Workshops of college prep/financial aid</b> services include a parent/guardian or adult family member’s attendance with or without their child(ren) at a workshop that demonstrates how to assist their student with college preparation or financial aid information. These services include informational sessions for parents focusing on college entrance requirements and financial aid opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-Person Parent Family Workshop:</b> Parents</li> <li>• <b>Virtual parent/family workshops:</b> Virtual parent/family workshops include services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means.</li> </ul> <p><b>College visit</b> services take place on college campuses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In-Person College visits:</b> A physical visit to a college campus by a parent/guardian, with or without a student, facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, college representatives, or other school staff. The primary objective of the event would be to conduct a college visit. Should include an official tour, presentation(s) by admissions, academic departments, athletics, student affairs, residence life, multicultural affairs, or other college departments.</li> <li>• <b>Virtual college visits:</b> Virtual parent/guardian college visits includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means. Virtual college visits must be facilitated/supervised/led by GEAR UP staff, teachers, or other school staff and include the same elements as a physical college visit.</li> <li>• <b>Family events</b> are services in which parents or families participate. These services involve GEAR UP students and their families/guardians or just their parents/guardians. Family events include GEAR UP activities that recognize the role of families in student success, and are not defined under a previous category.</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> If an event does not fit into one of the categories provided, please select other and be sure description provides details to help us understand the event.</li> </ul>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
	Row 4	<u>Provide a brief description of this event.</u> For example, if it is a college visit indicate who supervised the trip; if it is a workshop indicate who presented and topics, etc. If event lasted several days, please describe here (only hours can be entered below). Indicate if both students and parents could attend event.
	Row 5	<u>Event Cost:</u> Describe any costs associated with the event. This should include actual dollar amounts to the extent possible. For example, costs to charter a bus or to bring in a speaker.
	Row 6	<u>Event length:</u> Enter event length in number of hours. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours).
	Row 7	If the event was a college visit, indicate the name of the college visited.
	Row 8	If the event was a college visit, indicate if the college visited was a 2 or 4 year institution (select from drop down).
	Rows 9-16	If this event was open to Parents of students in grades other than Grade 7, indicate the number of parents of students at each grade level attended the event. Parent of Grade 7 student attendance will be reported on worksheet labeled “9. Events Parents Attend.”

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
<p>9. Events Parents Attend</p> <p>NOTE: Parents of Grade 7 students will be identified based on student name (pre-populated based on student enrollment).</p>	Column A-C	<p>Local ID, First Name and Last Name will pre-populate once you complete the student enrollment sheet and click on the “Populate” button. Please do not click on the “Populate” button more than once.</p>
	Column D	<p><u>Number of Parents attending In-Person Parent/Family Counseling/Advising.</u> If one or more parents of this student have participated in this service, please indicate the number of parents (e.g., 2 might indicate a mother and father attended, 3 might indicate a mother, father and stepparent attended). Blanks will be considered as no parent of the student participated (or you can enter 0). Parent/family counseling/advising services span a spectrum of activities with individual students or small groups of students. Services are defined as follows:</p> <p><b>Counseling/advising</b> services span a spectrum of activities that can include one-on-one or small group advising for parents/guardians/adult family member designed to meet the specific needs of the individuals engaged in the activity. These services include when a parent/guardian or adult family member meets with the GEAR UP school staff or counselor, with or without a student, to discuss student’s academic goals, college plans, school progress, etc.</p> <p><b>Counseling:</b> Meeting with parents/guardians to discuss student’s personal growth issues such as decision making, goal setting, behavior concerns, family issues, home visits.</p> <p><b>Advising:</b> Providing individual assistance to parents/guardians on their student’s college choices, college planning, financial aid planning, etc.</p>
	Column E	<p><u>Total Hours of In-Person Parent/Family Counseling/Advising:</u> If at least one parent of this student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. If multiple parents participated please count the total number of hours across parents. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately. Note that since in most cases this is one-on-one or small group it is anticipated hours will vary by parent.</p>
	Column F	<p><u>Number of Parents attending Virtual Parent/Family Counseling/Advising.</u> If one or more parents of this student have participated in this service virtually, please indicate the number of parents. Blanks will be considered as no parent of the student participated (or you can enter 0). Virtual parent/family counseling/advising services includes services that are provided via remote access through the internet or other means</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
	Column G	<p><u>Total Hours of Virtual Parent/Family Counseling/Advising:</u> If at least one parent of this student participated in this service, please indicate the number of hours received. If multiple parents participated please count the total number of hours across parents. Count hours through March 31, 2013. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours). Blanks will be considered as not participating. Please count in-person and virtual hours separately. Note that since in most cases this is one-on-one or small group it is anticipated hours will vary by parent.</p>
	Column H	<p><u>Number of Parents in Attendance at Event 1:</u> For the first event you described on the sheet entitled “8. Parent Events”, please indicate the number of parents of this student who participated in this event (e.g., 2 might indicate a mother and father attended, 3 might indicate a mother, father and stepparent attended). Blanks will be considered as no parent of the student participated (or you can enter 0).</p>
	Columns I-M	<p>Complete Parent Attendance for each event you described on 8 by indicating the number of parents who participated in the event. If you only describe three events, participation will be indicated in Columns H-J.</p>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
<p>10. Teacher Professional Development</p> <p>NOTE: On this sheet each column will provide information about a given teacher professional development opportunity that multiple teachers may have participated in. Teacher participation will be tracked on the sheet entitled "11. Teacher PD Enrollment." This page works on the assumption that length of attendance is the same for all who attend.</p>	Row 2	<p>Provide a specific <u>name for the teacher professional development</u>. The name will generally describe the event.</p>
	Row 3	<p><u>Provide a brief description of this event</u>. For example, if it is a college visit indicate who supervised the trip; if it is a workshop indicate who presented and topics, etc. If event lasted several days, please describe here (only hours can be entered below).</p>
	Row 4	<p><u>Event length</u>: Enter event length in number of hours. Enter number of hours as whole numbers with .5 indicating ½ hours (e.g., 2.5 hours).</p>
	Row 5	<p><u>Event Cost</u>: Describe any costs associated with the event. This should include actual dollar amounts to the extent possible. For example, costs to charter a bus or to bring in a speaker.</p>
	Row 6	<p><u>Event Delivery Type</u>: Please select from drop down if the PD was provided:</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person (face-to-face)</li> <li>• Virtual</li> </ul>
		<p>Note: If some attend in-person and some attend face-to-face please count it as two events but indicate in the description that it is the same event.</p>
	Row 7	<p><u>Event Content</u>: Please select if each of the following topics/content was included in this professional development. Select all that apply by checking the appropriate box.</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated instruction</li> <li>• Advanced instructional strategies</li> <li>• Project based learning</li> <li>• Vertical team preparation (The vertical team preparation should be conducted with teams of teachers from both middle and high school).</li> <li>• GEAR UP implementation.</li> </ul>
	Row 8	<p><u>Number of Grade 7 Teachers Attending</u>: Please indicate the total number of Grade 7 teachers who attended this event. You will also name them on "11. Teacher PD Enrollment."</p>

Worksheet	Row	Data to Enter
	Row 9	<u>Number of Grade 7 Content Area Teachers Attending:</u> Of the total number of Grade 7 teachers who attended this event, please indicate the number who were content area teachers (i.e., Mathematics, ELA, science, social studies).
	Rows 10-17	<p>If this event was open to Teachers of students in grades other than Grade 7, indicate the number of teachers of students at each grade level attended the event. If the teacher teaches across grade levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they predominately teach at a given grade level, code as that code.</li> <li>• Otherwise code as teaching at the highest grade level they teach (e.g., if they teach Grade 11 and 12 equally, code as a Grade 12 teacher).</li> </ul> <p>Please also name all teachers who attended on “11. Teacher PD Enrollment.”</p>



Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
11. Teacher PD Enrollment	Column A-C	Please provide the Last four numbers of the teacher’s social security number, First Name and Last Name. Providing the last four digits facilitates our match to PEIMS. If grantees prefer this can be left off, but please try to put in teacher name as input into PEIMS in order to facilitate matching.
	Column D	<p><u>Grade Level Teach</u>: Please indicate the grade level this teacher teaches by selecting from the following drop down menu (when possible, indicate an individual grade level based on primary responsibilities):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade K-4</li> <li>• Grade 5</li> <li>• Grade 6</li> <li>• Grade 7</li> <li>• Grade 8</li> <li>• Multiple Middle School grade levels</li> <li>• Grade 9</li> <li>• Grade 10</li> <li>• Grade 11</li> <li>• Grade 12</li> <li>• Multiple High School grade levels</li> </ul>
	Column E	<p><u>Content Area Teacher</u>: Please select from the following which best describes the content taught by this teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mathematics Teacher</li> <li>• ELA Teacher</li> <li>• Science Teacher</li> <li>• Social Studies Teacher</li> <li>• Not a content area teacher (Middle/High School)</li> <li>• Not applicable (teaches across subjects [Elementary])</li> </ul>
	Column F	<p>Teacher Attendance at Event 1: For the first event you described on the sheet entitled “10. Teacher Professional Dev.”, please indicate teacher attendance by selecting or typing Yes next to name of each teacher who attended. Blanks indicate a teacher did not attend event (or you can select/type No to indicate did not attend).</p>
	Columns G-K	<p>Complete Teacher Attendance for each event you described on “10. Teacher Professional Dev.” by selecting Yes/No. If you only describe three events, attendance will be indicated in Columns F-H.</p>

Worksheet	Column	Data to Enter
12. Partners	Column A	Provide a <u>name for each GEAR UP partner</u> at the school.
	Column B	<u>Partner Completion Status</u> : Has this partner completed a Partner Identification Form and Cost Share Worksheet? Enter Y (or select from drop down) to indicate yes. Blanks will be considered no or select N from drop down.
	Column C	<u>Partner Type</u> : Select from the drop down list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Organization</li> <li>• Faith-based Organization</li> <li>• Historically Black College and University (HBCU)</li> <li>• Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)</li> <li>• Other Postsecondary Institute</li> <li>• School/District</li> <li>• Other Type of Organization</li> </ul>

## Appendix D: Evaluation Instruments

This appendix includes copies of the instruments that were used to collect data that are presented in this report.

### D.1 Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG) Student Survey: Spring 2013

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program at your school. Because you were enrolled in a GEAR UP school in 2012–13, we would like to include you in the study of the Texas Education Agency GEAR UP program. As part of this important research, you are being asked to complete a survey which should take approximately 15-20 minutes. Please answer the following questions about your school experiences, future education plans and opinions about GEAR UP.

Your parent or guardian has been informed that you will be asked to complete this survey and will let your school know if they would not like you to participate. Filling out this survey is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time. Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and all findings will be reported by summarizing data across students – individual responses will not be reported. Your name will not be on the survey and ICF will not share your individual responses with your teachers, administrators, other students and your parents/legal guardians. The study presents minimal risk to you. If you feel uncomfortable/upset during or after the survey and want to talk with someone, please let someone at your school know or see your guidance counselor. Study participation helps build knowledge in the state and nationally about how to support students to prepare for postsecondary education. Where appropriate, GEAR UP grantees can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, you or your parent/legal guardian can call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 225-2276.

For students taking the paper-based version: By signing the attached student assent form, you acknowledge that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the survey. Separate the form from the survey and place each in the appropriately marked envelope once you have finished. Do NOT put your name on the survey.

For students taking the on-line version: By clicking on the button below, you will be provided with the information on the assent form and informed that completing the survey indicates that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the on-line survey. If you need to stop the on-line survey before completing it and return to it at a later time, you will be able to do so. Here is a link to the on-line version of the survey: [https://www.research.net/s/Gear\\_Up\\_Students](https://www.research.net/s/Gear_Up_Students)

**Please confirm that this is the only time you completed the GEAR UP Student Survey in Spring 2013.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes this is my only time completing this survey. | <input type="radio"/> No, I completed the survey online. Please <b>STOP</b> and do not complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online. |
|--|--|

#### **ABOUT COLLEGE**

##### **1. What is the highest level of education that you...**

	<i>High School or Less</i>	<i>Some College but Less Than a 2-Year or 4-Year College Degree</i>	<i>2-Year College Degree (Associates)</i>	<i>4-Year College Degree (Bachelors) or Higher</i>
a. Would like to obtain?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Expect to obtain?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**2. Has participating in GEAR UP activities at your school helped you to decide to go to college after high school graduation?**

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No, I was already planning on going to college	<input type="radio"/> No, I still don't plan to go to college	<input type="radio"/> Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP
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**3. If you do not continue your education after high school, what would be the reason(s)? (Select all that apply)**

<input type="radio"/> It costs too much/I cannot afford it	<input type="radio"/> My grades are not good enough
<input type="radio"/> I <u>need</u> to work after high school	<input type="radio"/> I want to join the military service
<input type="radio"/> I <u>want</u> to work after high school	<input type="radio"/> Family issues (e.g., have/will have child to support; help support parents/siblings)
<input type="radio"/> I will not need more than high school to succeed	<input type="radio"/> Other (please write in other reason):
<input type="radio"/> Not applicable, I plan to continue my education after high school.	

**4. Has anyone from your school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about...**

	Yes	No
a. college entrance requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your future college education. (Select all that apply)**

<input type="radio"/> Research that I have done on my own	<input type="radio"/> Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: <a href="http://www.texasgearup.com">www.texasgearup.com</a> or <a href="http://www.ownyourownfuture.com">www.ownyourownfuture.com</a>
<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with parents/family members
<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with friends or other people my age	<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events
<input type="radio"/> Other (please describe other sources):	

**6. On average, how much do you think or would you guess it costs (tuition and fees only) to attend for one year at...**

	\$1 to \$1,000	\$1,001 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$4,500	\$4,501 to \$7,400	\$7,401 to \$12,000	\$12,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
a. Your local public two-year community college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A four-year public college in Texas?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. Do you think you will be able to afford to attend...**

	<i>Definitely not</i>	<i>Probably not</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Probably</i>	<i>Definitely</i>
b. A public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family's resources?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. How much do you know about each of the following?**

	<i>No Knowledge</i>	<i>Slightly Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Extremely Knowledgeable</i>
b. SAT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. STAAR	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Federal student loans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**9. On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits to you in pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge to 5 = extremely knowledgeable).**

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**ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES**

**10. Think about the following school sponsored activities you may have participated in this school year. How effective have those you participated in been in helping you to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?**

	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>

	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>
e. Tutoring/homework assistance in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Academic or career counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Educational field trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Family/cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Other (please specify): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?**

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Don't Know/ Doesn't Apply</i>
a. Attending college is important for my career goal and future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. It is too early for me to think about college.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I am planning to take an advanced course in English/writing next year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your school?**

<input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Does not apply, I am not aware I have participated in GEAR UP
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**13. What kind of information, support, or activities do you need from your school/GEAR UP to help you be successful in school and be prepared for college?**



**BACKGROUND**

**14. Please select the school you attend:**

<choices removed from this version of the survey for the report to protect confidentiality>

**15. What is your current grade level?**

<input type="radio"/> Grade 6	<input type="radio"/> Grade 7	<input type="radio"/> Grade 8	<input type="radio"/> Grade 9	<input type="radio"/> Grade 10	<input type="radio"/> Grade 11	<input type="radio"/> Grade 12	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):
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**16. What is your age (in years)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**17. What is your gender?**

<input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="radio"/> Male
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**18. Do you participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?**

<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Not Sure
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**19. What is the language you use most often...**

a. At home?	<input type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Spanish	<input type="radio"/> Another language (please specify):
b. With friends?	<input type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Spanish	<input type="radio"/> Another language (please specify):

**20. Ethnicity/Race**

a. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Choose One)

<input type="radio"/> Yes, Hispanic or Latino (A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.)	<input type="radio"/> No, Not Hispanic or Latino
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b. What is your race? (Choose one or ALL that apply)

<input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.)	<input type="radio"/> Asian (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.)	<input type="radio"/> Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
<input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.)	<input type="radio"/> White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.)	

***Thank you. Your time and answers are greatly appreciated.***

## D.2 Texas GEAR UP SG Parent/Guardian Survey: Spring 2013

Schools throughout Texas are participating in a statewide study to learn about preparing middle and high school students for college or other postsecondary education. The Texas Education Agency has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the impact of the GEAR UP program in which your child is participating. Because of your child’s enrollment in a GEAR UP school in 2012–13, we would like to include you in the study of the Texas Education Agency GEAR UP program. As part of this important research, you are being asked to complete a survey which should take approximately 15-20 minutes. These questions are about your child’s experiences in school and your expectations for his/her future. Please answer the following questions about your child who is in Grade 7, participating in GEAR UP. If you do not have a Grade 7 child, but have a child in different grade who is participating in GEAR UP please complete the survey for that child. If you have more than one child in GEAR UP, please complete a survey for each child.

Filling out this survey is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or stop taking the survey at any time. Your answers to these questions will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law and all findings will be reported in a summary manner to preserve your identity. Your name will not be on the survey and ICF will not share your responses with your children, their teachers, their administrators, other students and other parents/legal guardians. Survey responses will be combined before they are presented in reports – individual responses will not be reported. The study presents minimal risk to you. If you feel uncomfortable/upset during or after the survey and want to talk with someone, please let someone at your child’s school know. Study participation helps build knowledge in the state and nationally about how to support students to prepare for postsecondary education. Where appropriate, GEAR UP grantees can use the information learned to adjust GEAR UP programming.

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a study participant, please call Thomas Horwood, ICF International at (703) 225-2276.

For parents/legal guardians taking the paper-based version: By signing the attached consent form, you acknowledge that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the survey. Separate the form from the survey and place each in the appropriately marked container once you have finished. Do NOT put your name on the survey.

For parents/legal guardians taking the on-line version: By clicking on the link below, you will be provided with the information on the consent form and informed that completing the survey indicates that you understand the purpose of the study and agree to participate by completing the on-line survey. If you need to stop the on-line survey before completing it and return to it at a later time, you will be able to do so. Here is a link to the survey: [https://www.research.net/s/Gear\\_Up\\_Parents](https://www.research.net/s/Gear_Up_Parents).

**Please confirm that this is the only time you completed the GEAR UP Parent/Guardian Survey in Spring 2013.**

<input type="radio"/> Yes this is my only time completing this survey.	<input type="radio"/> No, I completed the survey for another student I have participating in GEAR UP. This is my first time completing for this child. Please complete this survey.	<input type="radio"/> No, I completed the survey online. <i>[Please <b>STOP</b> and do not complete this survey. Thank you for completing it online.]</i>
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**1. a. Do you currently have a child in Grade 7? Please complete the survey thinking about this child.**

<input type="radio"/> Yes (if yes, go to item 2)	<input type="radio"/> No
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**b. If no, in what grade do you have a child participating in GEAR UP for whom you would like to complete a survey?**

<input type="radio"/> Grade 6	<input type="radio"/> Grade 8	<input type="radio"/> Grade 9	<input type="radio"/> Grade 10	<input type="radio"/> Grade 11	<input type="radio"/> Grade 12	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):
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**2. Please select the school your child attends:**

<choices removed from this version of the survey for the report to protect confidentiality>

**ABOUT COLLEGE**

**3. What is the highest level of education that you...**

	High School or Less	Some College but Less Than a 2-Year or 4-Year College Degree	2-Year College Degree (Associates)	4-Year College Degree (BA/BS) or Higher
a. <u>Would like</u> your child to obtain?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. <u>Expect</u> your child will obtain?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**4. Please answer each of the following:**

	Yes	No
a. Has anyone from your child’s school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about college entrance requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Do you know what your child needs to do to get accepted into college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Have you talked with your child about attending college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Have you spoken with your child about college entrance requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Do you have enough information about college entrance requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Has anyone from your child’s school or GEAR UP ever spoken with you about the availability of financial aid to help you pay for college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Do you have enough information about financial aid to help you pay for college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**5. Select the sources of information that have helped you to think about your child’s future college education. (Select all that apply)**

<input type="radio"/> Research that I have done on my own	<input type="radio"/> Doing research specifically at one of the Texas GEAR UP websites: <a href="http://www.texasgearup.com">www.texasgearup.com</a> or <a href="http://www.ownyourownfuture.com">www.ownyourownfuture.com</a>
<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with teachers/school counselors	<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with friends or other parents
<input type="radio"/> Information from or discussions with GEAR UP staff or GEAR UP events	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify other sources):

**6. How much do you think or would you guess it costs (tuition and fees only) to attend for one year at...**

	\$1 to \$1,000	\$1,001 to \$1,900	\$1,901 to \$3,000	\$3,001 to \$4,500	\$4,501 to \$7,400	\$7,401 to \$12,000	\$12,001 to \$18,000	More than \$18,000
a. Your local public two year community college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A four-year public college in your state?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**7. How much do you know about each of the following?**

	<i>No Knowledge</i>	<i>Slightly Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Extremely Knowledgeable</i>
a. FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. SAT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. ACT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. STAAR	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Federal Pell Grants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Federal student loans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Federal work-study	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Scholarships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. General requirements for college acceptance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Importance/benefit of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Various college options	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**8. On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge to 5 = extremely knowledgeable).**

<input type="radio"/> 1 No Knowledge	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 5 Extremely Knowledgeable
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**9. Do you think that your child could afford to attend a public 4-year college using financial aid, scholarships, and your family’s resources?**

<input type="radio"/> Definitely not	<input type="radio"/> Probably not	<input type="radio"/> Not sure	<input type="radio"/> Probably	<input type="radio"/> Definitely
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**ABOUT YOUR CHILD’S AND YOUR EXPERIENCES**

**10. Think about the following school-sponsored activities/services your child may have participated in this school year. How effective were those your child participated in at helping your child to succeed in school/preparing your child to go to college?**

	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>
a. Taking an advanced mathematics course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Taking an advanced English/writing course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Taking an advanced science course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Tutoring/homework assistance in mathematics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Tutoring/homework assistance in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Tutoring/homework assistance in science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>
g. Academic or career counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Financial aid counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. College visits/college student shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k. Job site visit/job shadowing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l. Educational field trips	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m. Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n. Family/cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o. Other (please specify): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**11. Think about the GEAR UP events/activities you participated in this school year. How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?**

	<i>Not Effective</i>	<i>Slightly Effective</i>	<i>Mostly Effective</i>	<i>Very Effective</i>	<i>Not applicable/ Did not participate or attend</i>
a. Parent/family counseling/advising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Parent workshops on the importance/benefits of college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Parent/family workshops about college options/requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Parent/family workshops about financing college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Parent/family high school or college visits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Family/cultural events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Meeting(s) with GEAR UP staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Other (please specify): _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**12. Have any of the following contributed to your being able or willing to attend school sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)**

<input type="radio"/> Incentives (food, raffle, etc.)	<input type="radio"/> Encouragement from your child
<input type="radio"/> Outreach from school/GEAR UP staff	<input type="radio"/> Interest/relevance of topics
<input type="radio"/> Translated services/material available	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):

13. Have any of the following contributed to your not being able or willing to attend school sponsored GEAR UP events? (Select all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Time/schedule
<input type="checkbox"/> Child care	<input type="checkbox"/> Interest/relevance of topics
<input type="checkbox"/> Language barriers	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):

14. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Don't Know/ Doesn't Apply</i>
a. Attending college is important for my child's career goal and future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. It's too early to think about my child going to college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. GEAR UP has helped my child be more successful in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. GEAR UP has helped my child better prepare for college.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I will encourage my child to take advanced courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I will encourage my child to participate in summer GEAR UP activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child's school?

<input type="checkbox"/> Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply, I have not participated in GEAR UP
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16. What kind of information, support, or activities do you need from GEAR UP to help your child be successful in school and be prepared for college?

**BACKGROUND**

17. Was your child in this same school last year?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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18. Does your child participate in the free or reduced-cost lunch program at school?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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19. What is your child's gender?

<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male
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20. What is your gender?

<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male
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**21. What is the language you use most often at home?**

<input type="radio"/> English	<input type="radio"/> Spanish	<input type="radio"/> Another language or multiple languages (please specify):
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**22. Other than the child you focused on in completing this survey, in what other grades do you have children? (Select all that apply.)**

<input type="radio"/> I do not have any children other than the one for whom I completed this survey	<input type="radio"/> Kindergarten through Grade 5	<input type="radio"/> Grade 7	<input type="radio"/> Grade 9	<input type="radio"/> Grade 11	<input type="radio"/> College student or college graduate
<input type="radio"/> Younger than kindergarten	<input type="radio"/> Grade 6	<input type="radio"/> Grade 8	<input type="radio"/> Grade 10	<input type="radio"/> Grade 12	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): _____

**23. Ethnicity/Race**

a. Are you Hispanic/Latino? (Select One)

<input type="radio"/> Yes, Hispanic or Latino (A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.)	<input type="radio"/> No, Not Hispanic or Latino
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b. What is your race? (Select one or ALL that apply)

<input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaska Native (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.)	<input type="radio"/> Asian (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Philippine Islands.)	<input type="radio"/> Black or African American (A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.)
<input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii or other Pacific islands such as Samoa and Guam.)	<input type="radio"/> White (A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.)	

**24. What is your highest level of education?**

<input type="radio"/> High School or Less	<input type="radio"/> Some College but Less Than a 2-Year or 4-Year College Degree	<input type="radio"/> 2-Year College Degree (Associates)	<input type="radio"/> 4-Year College Degree (BA/BS) or Higher	<input type="radio"/> Graduate or Professional Degree (MA, MS, Ph.D., JD, MD)
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***Thank you. Your time and answers are greatly appreciated.***

## D.3 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: TEA Interview

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as a partner – how your partnership with TEA came about and what services or input you provide or will provide to the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this interview to take approximately 30-45 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary and all data collected will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data (summary reports may indicate particular organizations by the roles they describe but challenges and successes will be reported confidentially); and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording and the transcript which will name the organization and individuals interviewed. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking detailed notes. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *You will indicate your consent to participate by answering the questions.*

Note to interviewer: Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. ICF will review existing documents such as the original RFP and any in place partner agreements to guide questions where appropriate.

### Interview Questions

- 1) In 2-3 sentences, please briefly describe your organization and your role in the organization.
- 2) Please describe your organization's role in supporting TEA and specifically Texas GEAR UP.
  - a. *Are there other individuals at your organization that I should interview to offer additional insight regarding your partnership with Texas GEAR UP?*
  - b. *What, if any, work has your organization been involved in with Texas Education Agency other than GEAR UP?*
  - c. *If you have engaged with previous versions of statewide GEAR UP initiatives, how, if at all, has this relationship changed over time?*
  - d. *What types of supports/services does your organization provide to TX GEAR UP?*
  - e. *What is the current status of the work? What is your organization's current level of involvement? How actively engaged is your organization? How do you see this changing over time?*
  - f. *Does your organization serve similar roles in other state GEAR UP initiatives?*
- 3) What, if any, is the extent of your organization's involvement relative to statewide GEAR UP initiatives and at each GEAR UP school (in the 4 districts, 7 target schools and their feeder high schools)?

#### Statewide Initiative

- a. *Are you involved in GEAR UP statewide efforts? If so, how?*
- b. *What portion of your organization's work is devoted to supporting the state? districts? schools? students?*
- c. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*  
**School Programs [Note: Only ask if direct services to schools have begun. Some TEA partners may not work as directly with schools.]**
- d. *How is the support your organization provides similar/ different across sites? Are there specific GEAR UP districts or schools that your organization primarily focuses on? If so, which ones and how was that decided?*
- e. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
- 4) What, if any, are benefits you see in your organization's role as a GEAR UP partner?
  - a. *What prompted your organization's interest in becoming a GEAR UP partner? What are the perceived benefits to TEA? districts? schools? students? State?*
  - b. *What factors (facilitators) have helped the partnership to succeed? Have you faced any barriers to a successful partnership? If yes, have you been able to overcome the barriers and how?*

- 5) In what ways, if any, does your organization collaborate with other Texas GEAR UP partners?
  - a. *What, if any, formal/informal opportunities are there to interact with other partners?*
  - b. *Are there particular partners you work closely with? Who? How?*
  - c. *What supports or resources does the Texas Education Agency provide to GEAR UP partners with regard to collaborating with one another? Clarify any facilitators or barriers to collaboration.*
- 6) Do you have a partnership agreement in place (MOU)? To what extent is your organization's current role aligned with the partner agreements initially established?
  - a. *If different, why is it different than intended?*
  - b. *What factors have facilitated being able to fulfill this plan? What factors have hindered being able to fulfill this plan? Have you been able to overcome any barriers? To what extent do you anticipate being able to overcome these barriers?*
- 7) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your work with Texas GEAR UP, TEA and/or partners?

***This concludes our discussion. Thank you so much for your ideas and your time.***

## D.4 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: TEA Partner Interview

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as a partner – how your partnership with TEA came about and what services or input you provide or will provide to the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this interview to take approximately 30-45 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary and all data collected will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data (summary reports may indicate particular organizations by the roles they describe but challenges and successes will be reported confidentially); and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording and the transcript which will name the organization and individuals interviewed. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking detailed notes. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *You will indicate your consent to participate by answering the questions.*

Note to interviewer: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. ICF will review existing documents such as the original RFP and any in place partner agreements to guide questions where appropriate.*

### Interview Questions

- 1) In 2-3 sentences, please briefly describe your organization and your role in the organization.
- 2) Please describe your organization's role in supporting TEA and specifically Texas GEAR UP.
  - a. *Are there other individuals at your organization that I should interview to offer additional insight regarding your partnership with Texas GEAR UP?*
  - b. *What, if any, work has your organization been involved in with Texas Education Agency other than GEAR UP?*
  - c. *If you have engaged with previous versions of statewide GEAR UP initiatives, how, if at all, has this relationship changed over time?*
  - d. *What types of supports/services does your organization provide to TX GEAR UP?*
  - e. *What is the current status of the work? What is your organization's current level of involvement? How actively engaged is your organization? How do you see this changing over time?*
  - f. *Does your organization serve similar roles in other state GEAR UP initiatives?*
- 3) What, if any, is the extent of your organization's involvement relative to statewide GEAR UP initiatives and at each GEAR UP school (in the 4 districts, 7 target schools and their feeder high schools)?

### Statewide Initiative

- a. *Are you involved in GEAR UP statewide efforts? If so, how?*
- b. *What portion of your organization's work is devoted to supporting the state? districts? schools? students?*
- c. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*  
**School Programs [Note: Only ask if direct services to schools have begun. Some TEA partners may not work as directly with schools.]**
- d. *How is the support your organization provides similar/ different across sites? Are there specific GEAR UP districts or schools that your organization primarily focuses on? If so, which ones and how was that decided?*
- e. *How frequently are these services provided? Who initiates/requests these services?*
- 4) What, if any, are benefits you see in your organization's role as a GEAR UP partner?
  - a. *What prompted your organization's interest in becoming a GEAR UP partner? What are the perceived benefits to TEA? districts? schools? students? State?*
  - b. *What factors (facilitators) have helped the partnership to succeed? Have you faced any barriers to a successful partnership? If yes, have you been able to overcome the barriers and how?*
- 5) In what ways, if any, does your organization collaborate with other Texas GEAR UP partners?
  - a. *What, if any, formal/informal opportunities are there to interact with other partners?*
  - b. *Are there particular partners you work closely with? Who? How?*
  - c. *What supports or resources does the Texas Education Agency provide to GEAR UP partners with regard to collaborating with one another? Clarify any facilitators or barriers to collaboration.*
- 6) Do you have a partnership agreement in place (MOU)? To what extent is your organization's current role aligned with the partner agreements initially established?
  - a. *If different, why is it different than intended?*
  - b. *What factors have facilitated being able to fulfill this plan? What factors have hindered being able to fulfill this plan? Have you been able to overcome any barriers? To what extent do you anticipate being able to overcome these barriers?*
- 7) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your work with Texas GEAR UP, TEA and/or partners?

***This concludes our discussion. Thank you so much for your ideas and your time.***

## D.5 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Coordinator Interview Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role as the day-to-day coordinator / contact for GEAR UP at your school. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this interview to take approximately 45 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*

**Note to interviewer:** *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. The most recent APR data and action plans will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site specific probes.*

### INTERVIEWER QUESTIONS

- 1) What are your roles and responsibilities in GEAR UP?
  - a. *What is your job title?*
  - b. *What GEAR UP activities are you involved with? (e.g., vertical team, before/after school services, teacher PD, partners, statewide etc.)*
- 2) Tell me about the main GEAR UP goals/objectives for this first year of the grant at your site? (NOTE: Review grantee action plan for specific probes.)
  - a. *What are this site's primary goals for this year? Probe for: Preparing more students for Algebra I and/or pre-AP; teacher PD on differentiated instruction or rigor, etc.)*
  - b. *Who was involved in the GEAR UP planning process (parents, school leaders, teachers, principal)? Who is involved now?*
  - c. *How does preparing for long-term success of GEAR UP fit into first year planning?*
- 3) Based on the data in your APR, your school conducted the following student and parent events (list events from APR). (NOTE: If no events held to date, probe grantee on why events not held and what is planned.)
  - a. *Any other events that were not mentioned in the APR (perhaps conducted since 3/31/13)?*
  - b. *Were participation / attendance levels consistent with program targets? If not, why not?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these events? What factors may have contributed to the success of these events?*
  - d. *What challenges did you face? Were you able to overcome them or how might you overcome them in the future?*
- 4) Let's discuss the student support services (tutoring / mentoring / academic support) that GEAR UP has offered this year. (NOTE: Review student support services identified in the APR.)
  - a. *If none identified, on your APR you indicated that no student support services have been offered by GEAR UP to date. Is that still correct? What challenges has the school faced in providing these types of services? When do you anticipate you will be able to begin providing such services?*
  - b. *How did you recruit students? Were participation / attendance levels consistent with program targets?*
  - c. *On what student academic performance outcomes do you think the services will have the greatest effect (e.g., homework completion, Algebra readiness, grasp of materials, test scores, grades, coursework, course completion)? Any early indicators of success?*
  - d. *What school factors facilitated the development/use of these student support services?*
  - e. *What are your perceptions about their success? What challenges did you identify? Were you able to overcome any challenges? What would you change for the future?*
  - f. *How can these services be sustained for next year's/future Grade 7 students? What factors do you think contribute to your ability to sustain support services over time?*
- 5) From the APR data collected from [insert name of school], we know that these advanced/honors courses have been made available to Grade 7 students (Cite list of advanced/honors mathematics, English, science courses). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment?
  - a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
  - b. *Are there additional advanced courses offered at your school that were not identified in the APR (e.g., social science)?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/districts are to take these courses?*
  - d. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of and student enrollment in advanced courses.*
- 6) This year your school provided [insert teacher/administrator PD based on site-specific APR data]. (NOTE: Review teacher PD information from APR and probe for gaps in information.)
  - a. *If none provided so far, what has prevented site from conducting these types of PD? What is the plan to begin conducting PD? How might any barriers to conducting be overcome?*
  - b. *How pleased are you with the number and type of PD related to GEAR UP you have been able to provide so far? Is there any PD that you hoped to have conducted by now but were not able to?*
  - c. *Did attendance at provided PD meet expectations? Probe for any needed clarity regarding who was offered the training (e.g., grade levels, content areas, administrators and teachers) and the PD was delivered (i.e., online/face-to-face)?*
  - d. *To what extent did any given PD align with GEAR UP goals (e.g., improved academic rigor, student success)? What gaps in PD have you identified with regard to alignment to GEAR UP goals?*
  - e. *To what extent did the PD focus on vertical alignment with regard to meeting GEAR UP goals?*
  - f. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement (e.g., pre-AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.) To what extent were they successful? What factors contributed to their success?*
  - g. *What barriers did you face in implementing GEAR UP PD programs this year? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*



- h. *How can these PD services be sustained for future teachers? How might the skills taught be enhanced in teachers who have already participated?*
- 7) Have community partners supported GEAR UP at the school this year (e.g., through providing services, holding/participating in events)?
- If no, what challenges have you faced in engaging partners to participate in GEAR UP?*
  - If yes, how have community partners supported GEAR UP at the school this year? What services / support has the partner provided?*
  - Tell us about the partners' role in providing matched funding to the GEAR UP program. If any partner provided matching funds, please describe.*
  - What factors helped facilitate partner involvement? How might you build on this in the future?*
  - What barriers did you encounter in working with partners? How did you address them/how might you address them in the future?*
  - Do you anticipate that you will be able to sustain the partnership in future years? Why/why not?*
  - Do you plan on recruiting new partners? If so, how many and/or what types of additional partners would you like to recruit?*
- 8) Do you have any summer programs planned for summer 2013?
- If no, probe for planning for next school year if it was not discussed so far – activities that are preparing for the future in addition to current year activities.*
  - If yes, what type of summer program? How have you/will you recruit students for these programs? Would these programs have been possible without the GEAR UP grant?*
- 9) How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?
- Did you/your school/students/parents participate in any statewide activities/events? What was the purpose of the event? Who/how many attended?*
  - Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, which resources how did you use them? If not, why not?*
  - Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?*
- 10) What other comments or suggestions do you have about GEAR UP at this school?

**Thank you for your time.**

## D.6 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Administrator Interview Protocol

### Interviewer Guidelines:

- Note to briefly discuss the purpose of the interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your role in GEAR UP as a school/district leader. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this interview to take approximately 45 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the interview is voluntary and all data collected will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop the interview at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) interview data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If you choose not to have the interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*

**Note to interviewer:** *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. The most recent APR data and action plans will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site specific probes.*



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How and to what extent are you involved in GEAR UP?
2. Relative to being college ready and college going -- What are the characteristics of this school and its students (e.g., student and staff demographics, student needs)? How did you consider these characteristics/needs in designing a GEAR UP action plan at the school this year?
  - a. *How many youth from the district have been going to college? (NOTE: Ask if district administrator being interviewed.)*
  - b. *What are the characteristics of households from which students come? (Family structure, employment status, education, attitudes toward postsecondary education)*
  - c. *How involved are parents in their children's education?*
  - d. *What programs and student support services (other than GEAR UP) are available to students? (e.g., other programs that encourage/support attending college; summer school programs; student support services that assist with on-time promotion and school success (e.g., mentoring, counseling, tutoring))*
  - e. *What programs and services (other than GEAR UP) are available to families? (e.g., other programs that inform about college; family nights; support services (e.g., counseling))*
3. Did GEAR UP help promote the goals of student success this year? If so, how? If not, why not? (NOTE: Major goals for this year include taking/preparing to take advanced courses and preparing to take Algebra I in Grade 8.)
  - a. *For tutoring / mentoring/ academic support services, how were students recruited?*
  - b. *How were students and parents recruited for college readiness/awareness events, if any held so far this year?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about the success of these efforts? What factors facilitated the success of any given event/activity or service?*
  - d. *What barriers did you encounter in promoting goals of GEAR UP? Where you able to overcome any barriers?*
  - e. *How/to what extent was the school keeping in mind long-term GEAR UP goals in conducting events/activities and providing services?*
4. From the APR data collected from [insert name of school], we know that these advanced/honors courses have been made available to Grade 7 students (Cite list of advanced/honors mathematics, English, science courses). Does your school have a specific plan to increase the number of advanced courses offered in these grades and/or to increase enrollment in advanced courses?
  - a. *If yes, please tell us about what you have been doing/planning, including who is involved. If no, why not?*
  - b. *Are there additional advanced courses offered at your school that were not identified in the APR (e.g., social science)?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions about how prepared students in your school/district are to take these courses?*
  - d. *Discuss any facilitators and barriers to long term planning for increasing number of, and student enrollment in, advanced courses.*
5. What are the school's/district's major goals for teacher and administrator professional development related to GEAR UP?
6. This year your school provided [insert teacher/administrator PD based on site-specific APR data]. Probe for any additional PD activities that we should be aware of that were not reported in APR (may have occurred after March 31, 2013).
  - a. *If none so far, why/why not?*
  - b. *Has the number of PD events held so far met your expectations? Why/why not? What about participation in these events, did it meet expectations?*  
*Probe: Are there any critical PD that you feel still need to be held at your school in order for GEAR UP to be successful?*
  - c. *What are your perceptions on the success of GEAR UP's teacher PD strategies deployed to improve academic rigor and promote student achievement (e.g., pre-AP courses and training, data-driven instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, etc.).*
  - d. *What factors contribute to current successes related to PD?*
  - e. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them/might you overcome them in the future?*
7. This school provided [insert vertical alignment efforts from site-specific APR data]. (NOTE: If vertical teaming not identified in APR, site visit will confirm status of this during site visit.)
  - a. *If none identified, has the school begun to work on establishing a team/plan to ensure that vertical alignment occurs? Why/why not? When do you anticipate beginning to work on vertical alignment?*
  - b. *What are your perceptions about the success of this work? What factors contribute to successes?*
  - c. *What barriers have been encountered? How did you overcome them?*
8. How involved / knowledgeable are you about Texas statewide GEAR UP activities/ resources/events?
  - a. *What statewide activities/events did you/your school/district participate in?*

- b. Did you/your school utilize statewide resources this year? If yes, how did you use them? If not, why not?
  - c. Discuss facilitators and barriers to successful participation in/interaction with statewide GEAR UP activities/resources/events?
9. Looking ahead, what roles would you like GEAR UP to play at your school?
- a. How might GEAR UP activities be sustained for next year's Grade 7 students and their families? For Grade 7 students in the future?
  - b. How might GEAR UP activities be sustained with any new teachers at the school?
  - c. What strategies do you anticipate will be difficult to sustain?
  - d. What factors do you think contribute to your ability to sustain or not activities over time?
10. Anything else you would like us to know about GEAR UP? What other comments do you have?

**Thank you for your time.**

## D.7 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Student Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). Students selected for the focus group should have experience with one or more GEAR UP activities/workshops.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: Explain to students that those funding the GEAR UP program would like to know what it is like to be a part of the program. Particularly, they are interested in students' experience with GEAR UP's college awareness activities, tutoring, mentoring, and field trips this year. Explain that this is not an evaluation of your school or your GEAR UP leaders. The purpose of this focus group is getting a variety of views about the program, so that we can gather information about activities to help plan for the future. People can agree or disagree with comments, but only one person can speak at a time. The session will take approximately 30-50 minutes.
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: (1) the focus group is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time – participation will not impact you at school; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group data will be maintained in secure areas; and (5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.
- Ask permission to record the focus group: In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If at least one person chooses not to have the focus group recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any information that can be used to identify a student will be removed from transcripts prior to being shared.
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. Review and ask participants to sign the assent form. Parent consent forms will be collected prior to event.
- Each focus group should have six to 10 participants. The focus group is open to any GEAR UP student in the 2012–13 school year. Ideally at least some will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.

### Materials

- Name tag (first names only), pen for each participant
- Paper (to write down their thoughts)
- Chart paper and markers to be used by facilitator

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
<b>2min</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Please introduce yourself, your name.		

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
3 min	<p><b>WHAT IS GEAR UP?</b></p> <p>When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What activities, events, or programs do you think of? <i>Probe for where they have heard about GEAR UP at school, if anywhere. Provide examples of activities from APR to help get students started if needed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Basic knowledge if available</li> </ul>	<p>List student ideas on chart paper. <i>Provide background if students lack basic knowledge.</i></p>
5 min	<p><b>EXPERIENCE WITH GEAR UP</b></p> <p>We would like to know the range of any activities/events you attended or participated in to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. What did you do? When did you do it? Who wants to go first? <i>(Review list of site specific from APR to provide examples of activities if needed to get started. If no services are mentioned, note that some students might have a mentor or receive tutoring to help them succeed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o When</li> <li>o Nature of activity</li> <li>o Content covered/goal of activity</li> </ul>	<p>List student responses on chart paper. Then ask to see if other students participated in named activities. Prompt for recent activities in the past month.</p>
5-8 min	<p><b>LEARNING / ATTITUDE CHANGE</b></p> <p>Take a piece of paper in front of you. Write down things you learned from any activities/events you attended or services you received to help you succeed in school and be prepared to go to college. Write as many as possible. (Note: Use list of activities created in the previous discussion. If a student did not attend any activities, ask them to think about what they have learned about GEAR UP and it's goals and what they would like to learn more about.)</p> <p>(after 2min) I'd like each of you to select the most valuable learning experience from your list. Please share with the group and talk about why you selected it. Ask if others in the group agree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Change in attitude</li> <li>o Change in knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>List ideas shared. Discuss how different ideas may be related.</p> <p>Separate ideas based on attendance vs. not at activities.</p>
5-8 min	<p><b>MORE GENERAL: ACADEMIC RIGOR AND ADVANCED COURSES</b></p> <p>One goal of GEAR UP is to improve how challenging courses are at your school and to encourage student participation in advanced courses. Have you participated in course activities/courses that you find particularly challenging? Are you currently in any advanced courses? Why/why not? What do you like/not like about challenging/advanced courses? <i>Probe: Are there courses that you wish you could take a more challenging level in but none is offered? In general, how challenging do you find courses?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Perceptions and participation</li> <li>o Barriers and challenges</li> </ul>	<p>List what students are participating in</p> <p>Focus in on subject area</p> <p>Why/why not taking list</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
<p><b>7-10 min</b></p>	<p><b>EFFECTIVENESS</b></p> <p>We would like you to tell us what is “working well” in GEAR UP and at your school as far as helping you to be successful in school and to prepare to go to college. What issues might we want to look at to improve your school for the future? We will use the chart paper to write down your thoughts. Please tell us what is working well and issues that could be improved. Who wants to go first?</p> <p><i>(NOTE: If students begin to focus on issues like a disliked teacher or cafeteria food, remind them that we want to focus on success in school in general. Let them know that if they think some teachers engage in strategies that do/do not help them to be successful we want to know about that but we do not need to analyze any given teacher, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implementation issues</li> <li>○ Student learning</li> <li>○ Outcome (change in attitude, views, knowledge)</li> <li>○ Factors that shape specific implementation, learning and outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Use the chart paper to list students’ ideas for each category. Prompt for tutoring, mentoring, college visits if needed. Note that students may have different views about whether a service or program is working well.</p>
<p><b>5-8 min</b></p>	<p><b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b></p> <p>We would like to create a map of where information and knowledge about college are coming from. We know people learn not just from classes, but from other people, and we want to capture this information. Could you list where you learn about college and career? Please list as many sources as you can think of. Who wants to go first?</p> <p><i>PROBE: Any people / information / resources you would like to have access to in order to prepare for college?</i></p> <p><i>If state websites do not come up, ask if they have heard of them and/or visited state GEAR UP websites.</i></p> <p><i>Consider probing for who they think provides the best / most accurate the information they receive from various resources is and any barriers to seeking information.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Formal (school, GEAR UP)</li> <li>○ Informal (friends, family, media)</li> </ul>	<p>List and group student responses.</p>
<p><b>3-5 min</b></p>	<p><b>STUDENT SUGGESTIONS</b></p> <p>Do you have any suggestions to improve the GEAR UP program? What opportunities would you like to have/information do you need to succeed in school and to feel prepared to go college after high school?</p> <p><i>Possible follow up questions to their ideas:</i></p> <p><i>“Why is that important?” “How will it change the way you learn about college?”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Implementation issues</li> <li>○ Content</li> <li>○ Delivery</li> <li>○ Resource</li> <li>○ Where students are in their learning about college</li> </ul>	<p>If no suggestions offered, focus on information needs</p>

Time	Opening Questions	Aspects to be covered	Facilitator's Activity
2 min	<p><b>CLOSING</b></p> <p>Is there anything else we should know to understand how students in your grade in this school are working with GEAR UP staff and programs?</p>		

Thank you very much for your time.

## D.8 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Parent Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). This session is expected to include a translator.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The initial purpose of this focus group is to better understand parents thinking about the GEAR UP program and how parents are participating in services and activities under the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this focus group to take approximately 45 minutes.*
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group is voluntary and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participation at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) focus group data will be maintained in secure areas; and (5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the focus group: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Only evaluation team members will have access to the recording. If at least one person in the focus group chooses not to have it recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*
- Each focus group should have six to 10 participants. The focus group is open to any parent of a GEAR UP student in the 2012–13 school year. Ideally at least some will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.
- Note to facilitator: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate. The most recent APR data and action plans will be reviewed prior to conducting the site visits in order to add any site specific probes.*

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Conduct introductions. In addition to Grade 7 students, do you have students in any other grades?
2. When someone mentions GEAR UP, what do you think of? What do you know about it? (If needed, facilitator provides a short overview of the program including specific examples from APR where appropriate.)
  - a. *What is your understanding of the goals of GEAR UP at your school? For students? Parents? Teachers? The school/district? Statewide?*



- b. *What activities, events, or programs do you think of when you hear GEAR UP? (e.g., College workshops/visits for students, Tutoring/mentoring/academic support services, workshops for parents.)*
3. Have your children shared any information with you about their experiences in the GEAR UP program? If so, what information have they shared?
  - a. *Experience with college awareness (including workshops, tours); Experience with tutoring / mentoring; Experience with information resources / educational planning (e.g., encourage/prepared to take advanced courses)?*
  - b. *What, if anything, do you think about the events/activities your student has participated in? Any ideas about events/activities you would like you child to participate in/have made available to your child based on what you know about GEAR UP?*
  - c. *Are there any GEAR UP activities that you are aware of that you wish your child could participate in but was not/ will not be able to? What factors facilitate or hinder your child's ability to participate in GEAR UP?*
4. Knowing what GEAR UP can provide to your children, do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services have been / would be helpful to your children as far as helping them to succeed in school/be ready for college? If yes, in what ways?

*Probe for helping students succeed/stay in school; support students to take higher-level classes; promoting early college awareness; usefulness in planning for college academically/financially*

*If no, probe for what concerns they may have about GEAR UP and its ability to help their children*

5. Have you or another adult in your household attended a GEAR UP activity or event this school year?
  - a. *If yes, what activities or events did you attend? What did you most like about what you participated in? Least like? What did you learn from them? What factors facilitated your participation/encouraged you to participate?*
  - b. *If no, why not? What barriers prevented you from attending (e.g., schedule, child care/family issues, work schedule, other)? What services or supports might help you attend future GEAR UP activities or events?*
  - c. *Probe whether few/some/all parents were aware of activities and events*
6. Do you believe GEAR UP activities, events, and services are / would be helpful for you as a parent? If yes, in what ways? How do they build on what you already know?
  - a. *What do you think has been/would be most helpful for your child's school to do to help your child succeed in school / be prepared to go to college?*
  - b. *Probe for helping related to GEAR UP goals: supporting you in helping your child to succeed in school/learning to advocate for your child; usefulness in academic planning for college (supporting you in encouraging your child to enroll in higher-level classes / stay in school); usefulness in financial planning for college; usefulness in learning about college admission requirements*
7. The program at this school is part of a statewide Texas GEAR UP program. Have you received any information about statewide GEAR UP? [describe statewide initiative in more detail based on discussion with TEA/partners].
  - a. *If yes, what information did you receive? How/from whom?*
  - b. *Have you accessed any statewide resources to date? If so, what did you learn from them? What did you think of them? Probe for quality of the resources and ability to meet various levels of understanding/literacy*
  - c. *If no, facilitator will describe (at least in general: the goal is to develop a single online site that parents could go to to learn about a range of topics that would help them to help their child succeed in school and be college ready). Would you like to learn more about statewide initiative/ resources? What would be the best way to inform you about statewide initiatives? What ways are not helpful in informing you about new resources?*
8. What more would you like to learn from GEAR UP about helping your child to succeed in school / preparing for your child to attend college?
  - a. *Are there things you really feel you do not yet know enough about to help your child? (Gaps in knowledge)*
  - b. *Ideas for future workshops/activities/resources*
9. What final thoughts do you have about GEAR UP and how it can help you and your child?

***Thank you for your thoughtful participation and spending time to discuss with us.***



## D.9 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Teacher Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group: *GEAR UP is a federally funded strategy to promote college awareness and academic achievement at the nation's most challenged middle schools. In support of that goal, GEAR UP also supports school-wide improvements and professional development that can help current and future students. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals and the impact of the program. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. Note that there are no right and wrong answers to the questions in this session, and that the goal is for all participants to contribute to the discussion. We expect this focus group will take approximately 50-55 minutes.*
- Convey to each participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) participation is voluntary; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participating in the focus group at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; and (4) data will be maintained in secure areas.*
- Ask permission to record the focus group: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. Evaluation team members and the Texas Education Agency will have access to the recording. If at least one person chooses not to have the focus group recorded, we will not record the session but will take notes. We will not include your name(s) in these notes.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. Review and ask participants to complete the consent form.
- Note to facilitator: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Reserve 5 minutes to discuss focus group purpose and obtain signatures.*
- Each focus group should have six to 10 participants. *The focus group is open to any teacher of a GEAR UP student in the 2012–13 school year. We anticipate 2-3 teacher focus groups per school, if possible to schedule. Teachers of students in the target grade are the primary focus for participation. Groupings might include one for content area teacher and one for teachers in non-tested subjects, although the group can be mixed. If appropriate given GEAR UP planning at the school, a focus group may be held with a vertical team of teachers. (NOTE: Facilitator will be trained to probe/check for differences in group particularly when group is mixed.)*

### Materials

- Name tag (first names only), pen for each participant
- Paper (to write down their thoughts)
- Chart paper and markers to be used by facilitator
- Digital Voice Recorder

### FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1) *First, I would like to begin with some background information. Please tell me your first name, how long you have been working at this school, and how long you have been a teacher (3 min.)*  
*What grade(s)/subjects do you primarily teach? (Facilitator: Note # of core content teachers)*
- 2) Have you heard of GEAR UP before today? What do you know about it? (5-8 min.)
  - a) *How ready do teachers in the group feel that students and families are for reaching the goals of GEAR UP (to succeed in schools and be college ready)? What do they perceive to be the major challenges with regard to the students and families they serve in reaching goals of the program? Probe for student support services, and student/family activities/events,*
  - b) *What do you know about goals of teacher professional development (PD)?*  
*If little or no knowledge at all, provide brief description of program (2 min.)*  
*If little or no knowledge of PD goals, provide brief description of PD and vertical alignment goals (from local action plans/APR data) (3 min.)*
- 3) To your knowledge, have you participated in any GEAR UP-sponsored professional development during this school year? (10 min.)
  - a. *For those answering Yes, ask teachers what programs/workshops/events they recall. Probe for participation in pre-AP training, differentiation strategies, project-based learning, professional learning communities, data-driven instruction offered by GEAR UP. Ask them to recall details on the sessions.*

- Facilitator: Mention any PD sessions listed in the APR but not cited by participants. Ask if they recall such PD.*
- b. *For those answering No, ask teachers if they were invited to participate and, if invited, why they did not participate.*  
*Probe for scheduling conflicts, inability for others to cover classes, status as non-core content teacher, other factors.*
  - 4) For teachers who participated in GEAR UP-sponsored professional development, what did you think of the PD? Was it pertinent to your work? (8-10 min.)
    - a. *Were any of the PD sessions particularly successful (i.e., you would recommend that new teachers take the same PD)? Why/why not? Why were some sessions less successful and how might you improve less successful sessions?*  
*Probe for successes/issues with delivery, make up of group, content, timing, etc.*
    - b. *What strategies have you taken away from these PD sessions? (List on Chart Paper if available.) Did you incorporate them into your instruction? If Yes, how? If No, why not?*
    - c. *Are there factors at school that have helped you implement strategies/content learned at PD? Were there barriers that prevented you from using the PD? How did you overcome these barriers? Will you be able to sustain implementation in the future or might additional training be needed?*  
*Probe for areas of agreement/disagreement and differences based on subjects taught.*
  - 5) Looking to the future, what other professional development subjects or workshops would be most helpful to you in supporting student achievement and/or supporting students/families to be ready for college? (5 min.) *(Facilitator list and group responses on Chart Paper if available.)*
    - a. *Do you see a need to have any PD that builds on PD you participated in so far?*
    - b. *If not already clear, what PD might new teachers to the school need to participate in to be ready to support GEAR UP goals?*
  - 6) GEAR UP seeks to improve the readiness of students to succeed in rigorous high school courses and, later, attend college. What more do you think your school or GEAR UP could be doing to prepare more students for such a future? (5 min.)
    - a. *How/to what extent have PD opportunities supported you as a teacher in improving rigor? (NOTE: this may have already been addressed in earlier responses.)*
    - b. *Overall, how challenging would you say courses are for students at your school? To what extent do they/don't they challenge students at a level that will prepare them for college? Are there some students who consistently receive content in a manner that is not challenging enough (e.g., ELL students)?*  
*Probe for honors classes and ask whether participants teach any honors/advanced classes and future plans for such classes.*
    - c. *Discuss any facilitators or barriers to improving academic rigor at your school (e.g., teacher enthusiasm/resistance, student skill levels).*
    - d. *To what extent do you believe that any increases in academic rigor will be able to be sustained over time? What factors might influence sustainability?*
  - 7) In order to meet the long-term goals of GEAR UP, schools will need to vertically align what they are doing. In vertical alignment, teachers across different grades work together to promote student transition and curriculum alignment. This includes alignment with high school teachers/curriculum. What can you tell us about vertical alignment activities at your school? (7 min.) (NOTE: If a vertical alignment team is identified for their own focus group, this group will focus on a deeper discussion related to this item.)
    - a. *To your knowledge have activities begun at your school focused on facilitating vertical alignment? If not, why do you think this is? Are there plans to begin working on vertical alignment?*
    - b. *Have you participated in vertical alignment activities? If Yes, probe for extent of involvement and topics covered, frequency of meetings, composition of the vertical team. Ask teachers their perceptions of vertical alignment and future plans for group.*  
*If No, probe for reasons for not participating (time, scheduling, teaching non-core content area)*
    - c. *How successful has your school been at integrating strategies across grade levels to improve academic rigor (i.e., how challenging the course is to students)? To increase the number of advanced courses offered by the schools? Discuss any facilitators and barriers to vertical alignment with regard to each issue.*
  - 8) Do you have any additional comments/anything else you would like us to know about you or your school and GEAR UP? (2 min.)

***That concludes the focus group. Thanks so much for your ideas and your time.***

## D.10 Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013: Community Partner Interview/Focus Group Protocol

### Facilitator Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself and/or leaders of the focus group as representatives of ICF International and describe your roles in supporting the meeting (i.e., facilitator, note taker). If needed, a given community partner can be interviewed individually.
- Briefly discuss the purpose of the focus group/interview: *The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has contracted with ICF International to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas GEAR UP grant program to better understand strategies that grantees use to meet program goals. The initial purpose of this focus group/interview is to better understand how partners role in the GEAR UP program. Your contribution to the evaluation effort is extremely valuable and will give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the successes, benefits, and challenges associated with GEAR UP. Please know that ICF is an independent, external evaluator. We expect this focus group/interview to take approximately 30-40 minutes.*
- Convey to interview participant our confidentiality policy: *(1) the focus group/interview is voluntary and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law; (2) you can decline to answer any questions, or you can stop participation at any time; (3) the information will be held in confidence by the evaluation team who have signed confidentiality agreements ensuring the protection of data; (4) focus group/interview data will be maintained in secure areas; and 5) please respect others' privacy by not sharing any information outside of the focus group.*
- Ask permission to record the interview: *In order to capture the discussion, I would like to record the session. If you choose not to have the focus group/interview recorded, we will be taking notes but will not include your name in reporting. Any transcripts of the conversation shared with TEA will have all identifying information removed.*
- Ask if they have any questions for you before you begin. *Please review and sign the consent form.*
- Each focus group should have up to 8 participants. The focus group is open to any local partner of a GEAR UP grantee. More than one focus group may need to be conducted if there are a large number of local partners. If a partner identified as very important to the grantee as far as their role with GEAR UP cannot attend a focus group, a one on one interview (during site visit or after via telephone) may be conducted. Ideally at least some partners will have participated in GEAR UP activities/events/services but this is not required for participation in the focus group.
- Note to interviewer: *Italicized questions are to be used as probes to encourage respondents to expand upon their responses. Consider prior responses to customize the inclusion, order, and language of questions as appropriate.*

### QUESTIONS

*Thank you for agreeing to meet with us about GEAR UP. First, we would like some background on you and your organization.*

1. Conduct introductions. Tell us about your organization(s). *Probe for organizational background and context; role in the community; expertise in education, career services, mentoring, etc.*
2. Tell us a little about how your partnership with the school came about and to what extent you work collaboratively as partners? What school officials or other partners have you met with this year regarding GEAR UP? How did you collaborate with these individuals?
  - a. *What is the frequency/format of contact / meetings?*
  - b. *Discuss current status of MOU (APR will have snapshot of MOU)*
  - c. *Is the level of collaboration appropriate from your perspective (e.g., with the school and/or with other partners)?*
  - d. *What factors facilitate successful partnerships/collaborations? What are the barriers, if any, you have faced regarding engaging in a successful partnership? How have / will you overcome them?*
3. Please tell us about your role in the GEAR UP program with regard to activities/events/resources? If you were the sponsor or lead of the activity/event/resource please let us know that.
  - a. *Have you provided support in college preparation and awareness, including financial aid?*

- b. *Have you provided supplemental academic assistance (mentoring/tutoring or other services to students, including summer programs)*  
*Also probe for: Career exploration; College visits – where and when; College workshops – format and content; Parent outreach activities*
- c. *If you have not yet been involved in any activities/events/resource implementation – what is your plan to do so?*
- d. *In general, any plans/next steps for involvement in activities/events/resources? Probe specifically for summer activities if appropriate.*
- 4. In your view, how successful were these activities/events/resources with regard to supporting the goals of GEAR UP (success in school/college readiness) or other goals of your partnership?
  - a. *Impact (e.g., be clear impact on what and to what extent felt impact; if appropriate probe for impact relative to cost)*
  - b. *Attendance if an event – did it meet expectations?*
  - c. *Support from GEAR UP / school -- did it meet expectations/needs?*
  - d. *What factors facilitated success? Any barriers and challenges (e.g., scheduling, access to students, etc.)? What might you do differently next time or how did you handle any challenges?*
- 5. Are you aware of statewide Texas GEAR UP activities/events/resources?
  - a. *If Yes: What are you aware of? Have you/will you participate/utilize? What factors are facilitators barriers to participating/using?*
  - b. *If No: What activities/events/resources from the state might you find useful or want to participate in?*
- 6. Based on what you learned this year, what would you change for next year in order to help the program be more successful (at helping students to succeed in school and prepare for college)?
  - a. *Ideas for future workshops / courses*
  - b. *Ideas for scheduling / outreach*
  - c. *Gaps in services*
- 7. What other final thoughts do you have about GEAR UP that you would like to share?

***Thank you for your time.***

## Appendix E: Site Visit Case Studies

The following are case studies on each of the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) programs operating in subrecipient districts as part of the Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG) during the 2012–13 school year. Findings are based on site visits to all seven schools within four districts during May 2013. These case studies provide an overview of the implementation of grant activities to date. Viewpoints from important stakeholders, namely the students served through the grant and their parents, teachers of these students, and administrators implementing the grant activities have been incorporated. These viewpoints will serve as a baseline for longitudinal analyses of implementation and provide context for best practices that are identified. The case studies refer to staff responsible for the Texas GEAR UP SG in the district, such as the GEAR UP coordinator, as program administrators; school staff including principals, assistant principals, or other similar positions are referred to as school administrators. As noted elsewhere in this report, these findings must be viewed with caution due to the November/December 2012 start to the program and the shortened time frame for implementation. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) applied for the GEAR UP grant in July 2011 and planned to implement the program beginning in the 2011–12 school year. However, the agency did not receive funding until April 2012 due to a deferred award cycle. During this period between application and award, TEA experienced staffing changes, as did schools that originally had agreed to participate in the program. After award of the grant, TEA provided funding to subrecipients in November/December 2012, at least three months into the new school year. As a result, schools had been implementing the program for only six months at the time of the site visits. Moreover, this period of implementation also occurred after the 2012–13 school year was well underway. Further, all of the districts included in the Texas GEAR UP SG had grant activities planned for summer 2013, which are included in the Year 1 implementation. These activities include summer programs for students as well as teacher professional development (PD) opportunities.

### E.1 Case Study: District 1

#### E.1.1 Overview

ICF evaluators conducted the site visit in District 1 in May 2013. During this site visit they interviewed a GEAR UP program administrator and school administrator. In addition, ICF evaluators conducted focus groups with teachers, Grade 7 students, and parents of Grade 7 students. Regarding experience and familiarity with college among families in the district, a school administrator said, “If our students head to college, many of them will be first generation college students.” This helps to show the importance of sharing college and career information with students and parents in the district. At this site, Grade 7 students were able to take advanced courses in mathematics, English language arts, and science. This section of the report is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District 1.

#### E.1.2 Description of Year 1 GEAR UP Activities (2012–13)

The GEAR UP coordinator indicated that the main goals for District 1 in the first year of the Texas GEAR UP SG were to plan events for the students and to accomplish all of the tasks laid out in the grant plan. Additionally, district leaders wanted to build technology into instruction and train teachers in using this technology, as they indicated that many teachers are not proficient in using technology in the classroom. To help meet these goals, the district planned and executed various activities in the areas of academic support, parent outreach, partnerships, and PD.

In District 1, there is a GEAR UP coordinator who plans GEAR UP activities, distributes permission forms for GEAR UP activities to parents, talks to parents, and helps teachers in



relation to GEAR UP activities. The GEAR UP coordinator in this district is also the college prep coordinator, which means that she teaches students and parents about college readiness. She also indicated that, at times, she is responsible for student discipline. In addition to GEAR UP, the coordinator is responsible for several grants and is the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) coordinator on campus. Many times, GEAR UP activities or goals will merge with other programs or grants for which she is responsible, making the management of these multiple roles easier. As support for the GEAR UP coordinator, an assistant principal in the district indicated that he helps to oversee the grant. While the coordinator is the person that keeps the program moving, the assistant principal oversees what the coordinator is doing and obtains resources needed for the program.

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

To provide academic support to students and promote college readiness, District 1 implemented multiple activities. Specifically, this district utilized tutors, conducted college visits, encouraged student participation in advanced classes, and incorporated technology into learning. The GEAR UP coordinator and district staff decided to use college students as tutors in the Grade 7 classrooms with a goal of providing support to teachers as well as inspiring students to go to college. Additionally, they expected tutors to be positive examples of courtesy and attentiveness, encouraging the students to do the same. The tutors worked with Grade 7 students during the school day throughout the year. Tutoring occurred during school because many students are unable to stay after school; they were otherwise committed to participating in other events such as athletics or other afterschool programs. Tutors worked in all different types of classrooms (e.g., English language arts, reading, mathematics, science, choir, art). Each tutor worked up to 19 hours per week, although the specific amount of time worked varied across tutors. The tutors were not subject-specific, and each worked in multiple classrooms with Grade 7 students throughout the day. For example, one tutor might work in a science classroom, then go to band, then go back to a science classroom. So each tutor worked with a variety of students, but saw the same students each day. In the classes, tutors worked in various ways—sometimes they pulled students aside for one-on-one assistance, while other times they worked with the whole class.

During the site visit, participants in the focus groups and interviews were asked about impressions of the tutors and their work. They provided mixed feedback about the implementation and effectiveness of tutoring, which indicates that District 1 may benefit from a review the GEAR UP tutoring activities to make improvements.

- A program administrator thought that these tutoring relationships were successful; she said, “[Tutoring] has been successful. The teachers recently provided evaluations of the tutors...Many of the teachers said that they would want the tutors again. Many [teachers] also said the tutors were very helpful.”
- A school administrator indicated that the effectiveness of tutoring depended on the tutor, with some tutors being more helpful than others are. This individual described some changes he would like to see in the tutors for the future: “I would like to see a more academic approach with the tutors. They did a lot of getting acclimated to [our school] and how the teachers run the classrooms. The tutors have been there...to be a role model, but I would like to see them do more help of an academic nature.”
- Overall, students in the focus groups said they found the tutors helpful and that the tutors were able to help them understand problems or assignments. Specifically, one student in the focus groups said, “They made the work more simple for us.” Another student in the focus groups said, “They helped us in class.”
- Teachers in the focus groups had a mixed view of the tutors. They found some tutors helpful, but said others lacked content knowledge to provide consistent help. One teacher



said, “I have five or six tutors assigned to me. I think that there needs to be some criteria to become a tutor; I had one tutor who taught students to do things wrong.” Another teacher said, “One tutor, she jumps right in and helps the kids...I have had others who are not comfortable in the environment. I started out by asking them to make copies or pass things out to get them acclimated.” The teachers in a focus group also suggested that there be more structure in selecting tutors and providing them with training or background information before they begin work in the classroom. Such a process would convey clear expectations for the tutors, as described by one of the teachers: “If we came up with our expectations in advance, then [the mathematics coach] could talk to the tutors before they work in the classroom...It would be really good to let them know the expectations in advance.”

Grade 7 students also went on a college visit to a local university. To schedule this, the GEAR UP coordinator called a contact at the university to see if students could visit. The cohort class was split in half for the trip; the girls visited one day and the boys went on a separate day. During the visits, students did scavenger hunts to explore the campus, and college staff provided information about financial aid and the costs associated with attending college. The college visits were seen as an effective activity by the GEAR UP coordinator and students. These visits allowed students to ask questions and have them answered by college personnel in a college setting.

- A program administrator noted that there were no discipline problems with students, and they seemed interested and asked many questions about “what a dorm looks like, how many hours of college students have a week, how much does college cost, and what the food tastes like.”
- Students who participated in the focus groups were excited about the college visit trips and enjoyed them. They also described activities that they participated in that helped them learn about various topics. One student stated, “I learned about financial aid, budgeting, and how much money you need to set aside for college.” Other students described the impact that the lessons had for their thinking about school and life. Another student said, “I learned that I need to study for college to have a good future to live.”

In this district, students are encouraged to participate in advanced courses. A school administrator noted that this is because they “want [their] students to start feeling success and be prepared for school beyond [middle school].” All students are required to enroll in at least one pre-advanced placement (AP) course. District leaders selected students for these courses by looking at their grades and asking students about their preferences on a class choice sheet. A school administrator noted that when enrolling students in pre-AP courses, teachers and administrators “have to see if they are ready and can handle the extra load. We have been aggressive in placing them in these classes.” The assistant principal said that if students are challenged, they would step up and accomplish more, which was an impetus behind implementing the advanced course requirement. Teachers in the focus groups noted that some students are successful in the advanced courses: “Half of the pre-AP kids are willing and might be ready for more rigorous courses.” This teacher indicated that the other half of students are not prepared for the advanced courses. Another teacher in the focus group agreed that many students are not ready for rigorous coursework and do not want to try to accomplish it. “Our kids do not like to be challenged,” said this teacher. While a school administrator thought that the students would thrive if challenged in advanced courses, it appears that teachers who participated in the focus group do not think that they always experience this outcome in the classroom. The focus group teachers noted that they are hopeful changes in the curriculum, such as incorporating project based learning (PBL), will help to remedy this.

Finally, to support student achievement and incorporate technology into learning, the district used Texas GEAR UP SG funds to order iPad<sup>®</sup> minis for each cohort student. These iPad<sup>®</sup> minis will be used in the classroom during the 2013–14 school year and beyond. Evaluators will continue to track the implementation of this student support activity and ask about it during future site visits given that it was new at the time of the site visit.

### **PARENT OUTREACH**

At the time of the site visit, District 1 had not implemented any parent events. Parents who attended the focus groups indicated that they would like to receive information and to be made more aware of the GEAR UP program, its activities, and the benefits to their children as they were not very knowledgeable about the GEAR UP program. “I haven’t really heard anything about this [program]; my son just talked about it,” said one parent. Another parent added, “I don’t know the purpose or focus of GEAR UP.” They recommended that GEAR UP meetings be held at multiple times (i.e., one meeting before school, one meeting after school) so that parents with varying work schedules would be able to attend. A program administrator also said that she would like to focus on working to increase parent involvement in the future.

In terms of preparing students for college, a school administrator noted that if students from this district go to college, many of them would be first generation college students. Because of this, many of the parents may not know how to help their children prepare for college. While the school administrator believes that parents want their children to be successful, he said, “They are as involved as they can be. Many of [the parents] cannot come to school because of transportation reasons. When it comes to education, they are supportive but don’t always know how to support.” This demonstrates one challenge also described by a program administrator: that there is a lack of parent involvement in events she has seen in the district. The program administrator noted, “I wanted to invite the parents [to attend student interest assessments] so that they would know about it. I only had one parent attend. We sent notes and letters home and had a [automated] call-out. We did all of this and still only got one parent.” It may be helpful to provide guidance from districts that have effectively recruited parents to participate in events that will help other districts. Districts like this one, for example, have had difficulty engaging parents in meetings or activities. Additionally, the recommendation from parents in the focus group that meetings be conducted at multiple times could be beneficial in enabling more parents to attend meetings or events.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

District #1 developed partnerships with two local universities. One university invited students for a college visit; the other university provided tutors for the GEAR UP program. Another partner is a pastor in the community who is in the district several days a week and works with students across grade levels. This pastor said that he participates because, “I am a community representative and am concerned for the students’ well-being.” He also serves on a parent advisory committee that includes “civic- and community-oriented parents who are an advocate for schools.” The district has also worked with College Board to implement Ready Step testing for Grade 8 students and indicated that College Board is committed to meeting other district needs. Two other partners provided support to students in the district—the Emerging Youth Leaders (EYL) and The Manhood Program. EYL is a group for girls on campus that is free of charge. This group takes girls on field trips and provides additional experiences beyond the classroom. EYL helped to support GEAR UP goals by providing support to female students and by providing college and career information; one EYL field trip was to a local university for a mentor dinner, while another field trip was to see a cosmetology program at a local high school that the girls could potentially attend. The Manhood Program is for young men in Grades 6 to 8 in which the students work with the assistant principal and community members; it provides

counseling and mentoring to male students in the program, which includes students in the GEAR UP cohort (Grade 7).

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

For Grade 7 teachers, the GEAR UP coordinator conducted a training session on GEAR UP and its goals. However, in the focus groups, teachers indicated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the GEAR UP program. While teachers in the focus groups said that they had been involved in meetings to help plan for the technology aspect of implementing GEAR UP and understood that GEAR UP is a college prep initiative, many of the participating teachers did not have a great understanding of the program and all that it entails. “We did not know what GEAR UP [the acronym] stood for until reading through the consent form,” said one teacher. Another teacher expressed a lack of understanding of the program: “I thought that GEAR UP was just technology. I didn’t know that there was more beyond that.” Regarding teacher PD, training was provided to teachers on using Cornell Notes in the classroom. The training was provided at the beginning of the year and a refresher course was provided when the district started implementing Texas GEAR UP SG. Not all teachers were required to attend this training as it occurred before school; however, all core and elective teachers were expected to use Cornell Notes in the classroom. One session of training for PBL was also provided to teachers, according to the GEAR UP coordinator. The GEAR UP coordinator, as well as several teachers, also visited a school where teachers use PBL to see how it works. Teachers who attended the focus groups said that they did not participate in the PD offered through GEAR UP but indicated that they would be interested in additional PD opportunities. One teacher indicated a desire to receive PD on integrating technology into the classroom. “I am expected to incorporate technology (in the classroom) to receive grant funds, but I have no idea as an educator how to incorporate this technology into a CSCOPE lesson,” she said.

#### **E.1.3 Emerging Promising Practices**

At the time of the site visit, this district was still in the start-up phase of GEAR UP; it was working to prepare and develop GEAR UP activities. For example, the district purchased iPad® minis for each of the GEAR UP students, which it received the week before the site visit. As such, the devices still needed to be catalogued and distributed to students before activities with them could begin. Because it is clear that the GEAR UP coordinator and the school administrators are working to get strong GEAR UP practices in place, evaluators will continue to look for emerging promising practices throughout the evaluation.

#### **E.1.4 District Challenges**

A program administrator in this district described two main challenges in implementing the program. First, she noted that there is a large amount of work that had to be done for the grant and that it is difficult to find time because of other responsibilities required by her job, including work on other grants. Additionally, the program administrator noted that recruiting community partners has been a challenge because many people work during the day and are not able to find time to interact with the district or its students.

#### **E.1.5 Future Plans**

GEAR UP is scheduling mathematics and reading programs for summer 2013. For the 2013–14 school year, the tutoring program in place in spring 2013 will continue with the GEAR UP cohort, which will be in Grade 8 in fall 2013. Additionally, the district will provide tutoring for non-GEAR UP students through another grant; the tutors hired through this new grant will also support students in Grade 6 and Grade 7. With regard to sustaining practices occurring through GEAR UP, the district plans to continue college visits in the 2013–14 school year and hopes to organize a college visit that is out of town. This activity will expose students to another institute

of higher education outside of the immediate area. The out of town college visit will benefit Grade 8 students, but the GEAR UP coordinator indicated that the local college visit could continue for future Grade 7 students. The district will also offer a college week in fall 2013 during which college recruiters come to campus to talk to the students. This event has also been offered in previous years, but will continue and will be a means of introducing additional college information to students. During college week, the recruiters who come to the district hand out college brochures, answer questions that students have, and talk to the students about college and opportunities. As a part of the college week, the local high school cheerleaders typically come to lead cheers and students have a tailgate lunch, both of which help to get students excited about future educational pursuits.

The district has had discussions about teacher PD and incorporating vertical alignment that includes high school teachers as well as those at middle schools. A school administrator believes that if high school teachers attend these meetings and other GEAR UP events, they will be more familiar with GEAR UP when the student cohort moves up to high school.

The evaluation team will conduct two additional site visits to District 1 at the beginning and the end of the 2013–14 school year to conduct interviews and focus groups with the same people as in May 2013. Future evaluation reports will report on analysis of data collected across the multiple site visits to explore common themes about program implementation and impact over time.

## **E.2 Case Study: District 2**

### **E.2.1 Overview**

The site visit to District #2 occurred in May 2013. This site visit included interviews with a program administrator and central office administrator. The central officer administrator oversees multiple programs, such as GEAR UP, a community-based college access initiative, and AVID, and then has a different coordinator for each program. ICF evaluators also conducted interviews with two school administrators. Additionally, there were two focus groups with Grade 7 students, six focus groups with teachers, and one focus group with parents of GEAR UP students. An additional parent focus group was scheduled, but no parents attended this session. During the site visit evaluators also observed students participating in a GEAR UP activity—the afterschool mathematics program. When asked about the characteristics of this district, a school administrator said, “The population that we serve is [predominantly] low income. A lot of our students would be first generation college students...so we try to talk about it.” She noted that they always try to talk about college within the district and share college experiences with the students. As such, the GEAR UP activities that are organized to promote college readiness fit into the campus culture. This section of the report is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District 2, supplemented with other evaluation data.

### **E.2.2 Description of Year 1 GEAR UP Activities (2012–13)**

Within District 2, the GEAR UP coordinator identified multiple goals and objectives for the first year of the GEAR UP program. She indicated that the goals the district wanted to accomplish included:

- informing students and parents about the GEAR UP program and its benefits to them,
- holding family nights to introduce parents to college resources and financial awareness information,
- showing teachers they are not just teaching a subject but also preparing students for life, and
- placing 30% of the Grade 7 students into Algebra I classes in Grade 8.

The district planned activities to support each of these goals and worked toward accomplishing them. The district planned and executed various activities in the areas of academic support, parent outreach, partnerships, and teacher PD. These findings are presented below.

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The district implemented two main activities to provide support to students—an afterschool mathematics program and tutoring in mathematics classes. According to teachers who participated in the focus groups, this mathematics program is how people in the school identify GEAR UP. “GEAR UP would be nothing without [the afterschool mathematics program],” said one teacher. According to a school administrator, the district was looking to increase the number of students in Algebra I, with a goal of including about one third of the current Grade 7 cohort. This was an impetus behind developing the afterschool mathematics program. The afterschool mathematics program was designed to help prepare students to take Algebra I as Grade 8 students. As such, the district selected students to participate by benchmarking results that identified the top students based on mathematics scores. Additionally, teachers helped to identify students who may be successful in the program. These top students in mathematics were selected because it was believed that, with the help of this afterschool mathematics program, they would be prepared to be successful in Algebra I in Grade 8. A school administrator noted that they also talked to the students and the parents to make sure that the students wanted to participate in the program. A teacher at the school who previously attended training for the AVID summer bridge curriculum, which is used in the afterschool mathematics program, was identified to be a leader of the program. While the AVID summer bridge curriculum was used, teachers in the school who participated in the afterschool mathematics program implemented it, not AVID tutors. There were seven teachers for the program. Some teachers for the afterschool math program met together each week. These meetings were meant to keep the different classes aligned. “We meet every week. We try to hit the same foundational topics, but may do different activities in the different groups. We look at the curriculum and plan what we want to accomplish in the next week,” described one teacher.

Rather than being taught like a typical mathematics class, the afterschool mathematics program focused on projects and game-based activities, with many hands-on activities. Students were encouraged to work on their own without the teacher. One teacher said, “It is fun to see them work because they have to manage themselves and work out problems with each other. It is good for learning communication as well as learning the math.” Often, competition between groups was implemented to make the activities more fun for students. Teachers who participated in the focus groups thought that students responded well to these types of activities. “One thing that has gotten them the most excited is that they have competitions and they get to compete against one another,” said one teacher who teaches in the afterschool mathematics program. Teachers involved in the afterschool mathematics program indicated that the lessons were more challenging and hands-on than in a typical mathematics class.

Overwhelmingly, students who participated in the focus groups said that they liked going to the afterschool mathematics program. “I really like [the afterschool mathematics program] because it is a good refresher on what we have learned and it helps us understand even more,” said one student. Another student said, “I really like [the afterschool mathematics program] because before it I would just go home and play video games, but [the afterschool mathematics program] makes me focus on getting ready for college.” Student focus group participants specifically talked about the fact that they liked the hands-on activities and working with other students.

Parents who participated in the focus groups were also happy with the afterschool mathematics program and their children’s experiences. One parent said, “My daughter is not the kind of kid who comes home excited about school, but the fact that she told me about it tells me that she is



learning.” A school administrator also noted that he was pleased with the success of the afterschool mathematics program. “It has been a challenge to get kids here after school before, and [the afterschool mathematics program] has been working,” he said. “I am surprised to see that many students are staying after school to do math. I am still happily skeptical.”

According to a program administrator, approximately 20–25% of the Grade 7 students in the district participated in the afterschool mathematics program. Teachers in the afterschool mathematics program noted that attendance was typically consistent at the program. GEAR UP students met in the cafeteria for about half an hour to do homework. During this time, students could participate in other afterschool programs, such as athletics or band, before the mathematics program started. Students then broke into groups of approximately 10 to 20 students, with each group meeting in a separate classroom. The students worked for about an hour and a half before going back to the cafeteria for dinner and bus transportation home. The GEAR UP coordinator indicated that she was given deals at community restaurants to provide dinner to the students in the afterschool mathematics program. The GEAR UP coordinator said that feeding the students was essential because the program went until shortly after 6:00 p.m. Because of the bus routes, some students may not have arrived home until as late as 7:30 p.m. Teachers in the afterschool mathematics program who participated in the focus groups said that they believe this program helped students prepare for Algebra I in Grade 8. One teacher said, “I think that what we have been able to do with this program is to reach more kids that would have been overlooked.” Another teacher said, “I think that we are seeing academic gains. It is hard to underestimate the social construct of going into algebra in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. For some kids, it might be the first time they are in an honors class...Students who were not academically motivated are now seeing that it isn’t a bad thing to do well in school.”

In addition to the afterschool mathematics program, tutors were also employed in District 2 to help students develop mathematics skills. In this district, AVID tutors were already in the classrooms two days a week. Because these tutors were already available and knew some of the students, they were selected to be the GEAR UP tutors. As GEAR UP tutors, they spent two days a week in a mathematics classroom. Additional tutors were hired as needed if there were not AVID tutors available to work in the mathematics classrooms. Tutors that were hired outside of AVID also spent two days a week in the mathematics classrooms. On tutoring days, tutors would stay with the same teacher for the whole day. One tutor described how he typically worked in the mathematics classroom, “A lot of the time, [the teacher] will have a worksheet or group work. He pulls aside the students that are having the most trouble. Then I will help either these students or the rest of the class...For GEAR UP tutoring, I usually wait until the students get stuck and then help them.” Tutors typically walked around the classroom to see if students needed help and helped those who were having problems.

Most teachers in this district who participated in the focus groups thought that the tutoring was effective and helpful. “Tutoring has been highly effective. Having more than one person in the classroom, you can cover questions more effective[ly]. It also allows me to work with students who do not speak English,” said one mathematics teacher. Another teacher said, “[The tutor] assists me with educating the students. She is taking on the role of helping. She works one-on-one with the students or in small groups...She is fabulous.” While tutors were able to assist students in learning mathematics and provide support to teachers in the classroom, one tutor indicated that he thought the tutoring program would be more successful if there were clear standards for the tutors and the teachers knew how the tutors could best help to meet the classroom needs. Similarly, one teacher provided recommendations for improving tutoring in the future: “I think that there should be more guidance. Also, we weren’t given goals for the tutors or any direction for what they should be doing, which as a problem. It would be better if they shared those expectations with us and provided guidance and training for the tutors,” she



said. Some mathematics teachers in the district who participated in the focus groups indicated that there had been some problems with turnover of the tutors that were hired for GEAR UP (i.e., did not also serve as AVID tutors). “We have had a couple of changes in terms of the tutors. The first one was let go and then my next one was just called to duty in Afghanistan, so I am back again with no tutor,” described one mathematics teacher. Additionally, some teachers who participated in focus groups in this district indicated that tutors were often not available to tutor because they were called in to substitute teach. Teachers participating in the focus groups indicated tutors, when available, were helpful

### PARENT OUTREACH AND EVENTS

In this district, GEAR UP sponsored a three-part workshop series for parents by the time the site visit was held in May 2013. One of the main purposes of the workshop series was to build rapport with parents and work toward developing a long-term relationship with them to support student goals to be successful in college or a career. To help increase parent attendance at these events, some teachers called parents to inform them of the event. A Grade 7 teacher said, “The seventh-grade teachers split up the list [of Grade 7 students] and personally invited all of the parents to the meeting. This was an idea that the teachers had.” The district also sent information home with all students about the events and made “robo-calls” to their homes. A school administrator thought that parent attendance at these events was good. “At the last [parent workshop], we had 37 families, which is the most parents that we have ever had at an event,” she said. In a further effort to increase parent attendance, the district provided childcare at each of the parent workshops so that parents with younger children could still attend the event. Additionally, a Spanish translator was available at all of the events to provide the information to Spanish-speaking parents. This translator indicated that there were about 20 Spanish-speaking parents at each event.

The content for each of the parent events was different. At the first event, parents were introduced to resources such as the Own Your Own Future website that is being promoted by Texas GEAR UP SG. The GEAR UP coordinator in this district worked with the college coordinator at a district high school to determine the types of information and resources that could be provided to parents. The second parent event focused on financial literacy and financial aid for college. The final session featured a representative from a local community college who talked about opportunities at the college, free summer educational programs for students, available majors, and services available to families.

Parents who participated in the focus group indicated that they received useful information at each of the events. “From each [parent workshop], I gleaned something useful,” said one parent. Additionally, students who participated in the focus groups thought that the events in the parent workshop series were good. One student said, “It was fun because they told us a lot about how college helps you prepare for what you want to be when you grow up. I was there with my parent, and they talked a lot to the kids about the types of scholarships available and ways to go to college for free.” Other students said that they liked these nights because the events taught them about financial aid and helped to inform their parents about college. When asked for suggestions to improve GEAR UP next year one student said, “Maybe have more [parent events]. A lot of people came and if they know that it will help their children they will come.” Another student thought that the information provided at the parent events was good, but it could have been presented in a better way. “[The parent workshop] was not really that interesting because it is just a whole bunch of people talking. The information is interesting but not how it was done. It would be better if there were more activities or visual aids and examples,” she said. Teachers who participated in the focus groups thought that all of the sessions offered good information for parents. Some teacher focus group participants thought that the parent workshops could have been improved. One teacher said, “I think it was a lost

opportunity. They weren't awful, but they could have been better." Another teacher elaborated on this: "If you are going to have parents come into school for the first time in a long time, you need to make the presentation good," he said. For future parent events, the GEAR UP coordinator has asked parents for input on how the events could be improved and other resources or information that they would like to see included in these events.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

In the first year of the grant, partners in District 2 included a large electronics company, a local technology company, a nearby art organization, and the Education Foundation for the district, which fundraises for the school throughout the year to provide student and teacher scholarships, to help provide innovative resources, and to give directly to the district. Goals of these partnerships were to provide mentors, train teachers, support robotics and art, and to create and provide printed materials, including developing any desired art. To facilitate effective partnerships, the district thinks that it is important to meet with the partners regularly and recognize them. Each year, the district holds a breakfast to recognize partners and their contributions to the district.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Tutorology<sup>®</sup> training, which focuses on helping students work through problems on their own, was provided to tutors in the district as well as to teachers working with students in the afterschool mathematics program. The district provided teachers with additional PD regarding core subjects and keeping students engaged, but this was not accomplished using GEAR UP funds. Teachers who participated in the focus groups indicated that they had not received any PD through GEAR UP. "We initially had a brief introduction to the [GEAR UP] program, but there has not been any specific PD for the grant," described a teacher. Another agreed, adding, "If there were professional development opportunities, I would be interested."

## **E.2.3 Emerging Promising Practices**

### **AFTERSCHOOL MATHEMATICS**

In District 2, one of the main programs that was implemented to support students was the afterschool mathematics program. Both students and staff that participated in focus groups and interviews viewed this program as effective. With competitions and hands-on activities, the program was often quite different from mathematics instruction during the regular school day. The district will measure the full success of the program after students test to see if they can take Algebra I in fall 2013 as Grade 8 students, which will occur after the completion of a summer 2013 program. According to one teacher, the program's greatest benefit was that it was able to reach students who would have been overlooked when considering an advanced mathematics program. Another teacher said that the success of the program was evident in academic gains seen in the classroom and that students are now more motivated to succeed in school. One other teacher noted that the afterschool mathematics program was effective in helping students learn skills that they may have difficulty learning with only instruction in the classroom. Further, the students who participated in the focus groups said that the afterschool mathematics program helped them to develop mathematics skills and they liked staying after school for the program.

### **PARENT ACTIVITIES**

At each of the parent events, the district provided Spanish translation services so that Spanish-speaking parents, who may not have otherwise attended the event, had access to the information provided. For the translation services, parents could wear an earpiece that allowed them to listen to the translator as the information was being presented. Additionally, childcare

was provided for younger children of the attending parents. Both of these services encouraged parents who may not have otherwise attended the events to go to the events. Dinner was also provided during the parent events, which was seen as a draw by parents who attended the focus groups and shared this with the GEAR UP coordinator, who in turn described this appeal. Each of these practices can be used to help bring in parents who may otherwise be hesitant to attend an event at the school. Attendance at the GEAR UP parent events was greater than attendance at other district parent meetings.

#### **E.2.4 District Challenges**

One challenge identified in this district was that new teachers must be trained each year for GEAR UP. In this first year of the grant, Grade 7 teachers were informed about the program. In the 2013–14 school year, the Grade 8 teachers will need to be informed and trained about the program so that they understand its purpose and know how GEAR UP is functioning within the district.

Another challenge identified in this district was lack of knowledge of GEAR UP. While most teachers who participated in focus groups knew something about GEAR UP, they indicated that they did not have an overarching understanding of the program or how it would be used to benefit the students within the Grade 7 cohort as they prepare for college.

#### **E.2.5 Future Plans**

Two sessions of a summer program have been planned for GEAR UP in summer 2013. This program includes a mathematics focus, and students preparing to take Algebra I in Grade 8 will attend both two-week sessions. District teachers will staff the summer program, and GEAR UP is encouraging Grade 8 teachers to serve as instructors to learn to work with students they will have in the 2013–14 school year. The district also encouraged teachers who already have worked with GEAR UP students to participate in the program as teachers. The district sent home flyers and made calls to parents to recruit students for the program. While the main emphasis is on mathematics, the summer program also will include time for arts and athletics as well as other academic endeavors to focus on the whole child. The GEAR UP coordinator in this district also discussed plans to conduct college visits during the summer if feasible given college and student schedules.

For the 2013–14 school year, the district plans to continue conducting parent nights through a parent workshop series-type format. One idea under consideration is to provide a binder for each family that attends the events. This binder will have tabs for each topic covered and include contact information for the school as well as information from websites with information. This type of resource will ensure all information is in one place and easily accessible by parents. To help increase attendance at parent nights, the district is considering holding events at times when parents will already be coming to school, such as for band concerts or talent shows. This will help the district in working toward the goal of all parents attending the informational meetings.

Additionally, the GEAR UP coordinator expects that the district will conduct vertical alignment among teachers in the 2013–14 school year. It hopes to bring college and career readiness standards, which focus on student work products, into this discussion to help teachers across grade levels prepare students for college and a career. In terms of sustainability for future students, the GEAR UP administrators in the district believe that a great deal of sustainability will come from these vertical alignment efforts. By engaging teachers across multiple grade levels and bringing in aspects of college and career readiness, all teachers, not just those associated with the GEAR UP cohort, will know how to instruct students and help them to prepare for college or a career.

The evaluation team will conduct two additional site visits to District 2 at the beginning and the end of the 2013–14 school year to conduct interviews and focus groups with the same people as in May 2013. Future evaluation reports will report on analysis of data collected across the multiple site visits to explore common themes about program implementation and impact over time.

## **E.3 Case Study: District 3**

### **E.3.1 Overview**

ICF evaluators conducted a site visit to this district May 15 to 16, 2013 that included focus groups with students, teachers, parents, and community partners, plus interviews with a program administrator, school administrator, and central office administrator. The team also reviewed documents including Annual Performance Report data and artifacts of student work related to college visits. It also included observation of classroom activities. The grant funds 100% of the cost of the GEAR UP coordinator in this district. For Grade 7 students, the district offers advanced courses in mathematics, English language arts, and science. This section of the report is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District 3.

### **E.3.2 Description of Year 1 GEAR UP Activities (2012–13)**

Goals for the program during the 2012–13 school year were to introduce students, parents, and staff to the GEAR UP program in an effort to build a strong college-going culture at the school. “Because we started so late in Year 1, it was really about starting to transition the culture,” a program administrator said. “There is a mentality in this community that high school is the end of school. We want to start the culture that college access and desire to go to college starts much earlier.”

Another major objective was mathematics, with a goal of at least 30% of students enrolling in and succeeding in Algebra I as Grade 8 students in the 2013–14 school year. This goal was reflected in the PD for teachers, identification of students who would be likely to succeed in Algebra I in Grade 8, and summer 2013 mathematics programs for students. The district hired a full-time GEAR UP coordinator funded by the Texas GEAR UP SG who began work in late January 2013. This coordinator was primarily responsible for all aspects of the program, including student, parent, and teacher activities. In spring 2013, the program hired a bilingual tutor who provided support in the classroom to all students, but particularly to those with limited English proficiency (LEP). These GEAR UP staff carried out the activities in the areas of academic support, student support, summer student support, parent involvement, partnerships, and PD.

#### **ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

This site emphasized in-school academic support for students via an in-class tutor beginning in spring 2013. While the tutor was available to help all students, a particular emphasis was placed on students with LEP since the tutor was bilingual. GEAR UP originally planned to hire three tutors but had only one applicant. During site visit focus groups, teachers said this bilingual tutor was doing important work in the classroom, particularly by targeting students that have the most learning challenges.

Another major academic activity was to prepare students to enroll and succeed in Algebra I in the 2013–14 school year. Much of this work was to take place in summer 2013. To meet Algebra I success goals, the site has organized summer 2013 activities for more than 60% of students in the cohort. Eighty students will participate in an Algebra I camp at a nearby college, while 105 students will attend a program at the local high school focused on algebra prep and PBL activities. In addition to mathematics activities, this program will include a one-hour college

success class each day on study skills, study strategies, and college-going behavior. It will be “like a miniature college development course,” according to a program administrator. Another 12 students will attend an engineering prep program at another university. Through these varied programs, the school is aiming to go beyond the GEAR UP goal of 30% of Grade 8 students succeeding in Algebra I in Grade 8. In the focus groups with teachers, mathematics teachers generally believed that most or all of their students should be in Algebra I as Grade 8 students to prepare for the rigor of high school. As the school has discussed such a universal algebra initiative, it wants to set ambitious targets for next year. “If we are able to get those kids in algebra earlier, they will be better prepared for math in high school,” one teacher at a focus group said. GEAR UP also has organized a summer reading initiative to serve all students in the cohort, selecting two young adult books it believes will appeal to students. Teachers will also read these books so that discussion can occur across subjects during the 2013–14 school year.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

This school has developed extensive community partnerships within a short time following the grant award. These partnerships are playing a critical role in GEAR UP services. One major partnership is with Communities In Schools (CIS), which also has a dedicated person on site at the school. In a community partner focus group, the CIS representative described a close relationship with GEAR UP that includes daily informal interaction as well as more formal coordination of services and activities. Through this partnership, GEAR UP offered three opportunities to participate in job shadowing activities in winter/spring 2013. One trip was to a local automobile plant, while another brought students to the local headquarters of a large regional grocery chain. The third job shadow activity was a trip to the local government center, which was facilitated in part by another GEAR UP partner, the municipal government including the town’s mayor. For this job shadow activity, students were given a municipal issue to discuss and then made presentations.

CIS also has supplemented GEAR UP services by mentoring at-risk students. CIS is now “a vital part of the mentoring component,” a program administrator said.

Another major partner is a local university that already works with the local high school to promote effective student transition to college. As a result of GEAR UP, the university now focuses on the junior high school as well. “We are trying to extend the pipeline [to Grade 7] and promote college access,” a university official said at a community partner focus group. This university will be the site for a summer mathematics and algebra prep program serving 80 cohort students. In addition to the mathematics focus, this summer program also will include a daily one-hour college success class. Looking toward the future, the university expects to help GEAR UP expand advanced courses in Spanish. To help promote the goal of rigorous courses, the school wants to introduce advanced courses in Spanish that can lead to dual enrollment at the university by Grade 10.

### **COLLEGE VISITS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Students had an opportunity to go on three college visits to two- and four-year institutions. These visits were popular among students and teachers. During the visits, students toured facilities and went on a scavenger hunt to find specific locations and landmarks. Some teachers in focus groups noted that students came back with a more serious attitude toward their education. “Now they are asking questions about SAT scores they need to get into college. They never asked questions like this before,” one teacher said. Teachers also designed activities related to college visits, including writing essays about what they learned, conducting research on colleges, and developing their own “brochure” for their dream college. “They are writing about GEAR UP, what they are seeing, experiencing and learning and how it applies to



their learning,” one teacher said. “They mostly talk about seeing the campuses because most do not often leave this community.”

Typically, about half of the students would go to a college visit on a particular day, while the other half would be back at school researching colleges or learning more about college. Some students also took a practice SAT. Students said they enjoyed the visits and learned more about the academic requirements for college and the connection to junior high and high school. One student said, “I learned college is important for your future but school right now and high school are important too. To get to college we need to do well in school in high school.”

The GEAR UP coordinator also conducted three student-focused workshops for the GEAR UP cohort during the school year—an introduction to GEAR UP; an exercise in which students made a six-year education plan; and a session on financial aid. All drew positive reactions from students in the focus groups. Also, as a result of these activities, students appeared to have a strong awareness of GEAR UP based on responses from two focus groups. When asked about GEAR UP, students said it was about readiness and preparation for college. “When I hear GEAR UP, I think of a program that is helping us get ready for college and how lucky we are to have a program like this when others don’t get to experience what we do,” one student said.

Another GEAR UP activity was the HEROs Club, a group of students interested in taking a leadership role at the school. According to a program administrator, the students in this club “really help to shape the [GEAR UP] program for the future. They are starting to generate ideas of where they want to visit and colleges they want to see.” Students who participated in the focus groups said that through this club, they work on projects that help to get other students excited about going to college. “We persuade our friends that college is important and not stupid. We talk about how college will benefit us,” said one student. “The HEROs Club is awesome,” one teacher said of the program that meets twice a week. GEAR UP also supported a Saturday STEM-focused academy for girls that included a college tour and various STEM and career-focused sessions.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Working with the principal, the GEAR UP coordinator was able to map strategies to increase parental involvement. The site offered two major parent events by mid-spring of 2013—a college awareness workshop utilizing Own Your Own Future materials and a breakfast providing information about the GEAR UP program. The GEAR UP coordinator also conducted some home visits with families. To encourage attendance, GEAR UP offered an incentive for parent involvement. A student would get first priority on approval of his or her electives for Grade 8 if a parent attended an event. As a result, 85 parents attended the second event. “It was motivation for students to have parents attend,” the coordinator said.

During a focus group, parents generally had strong knowledge of the program and found it beneficial. “I didn’t go to college, so it wasn’t something we had talked about before,” one parent said. Another noted that the college visits seemed to trigger changes in her child’s attitudes. “Every day she seems to talk about colleges that she wants to see,” one parent said. Another parent saw changes in her child’s grades that she attributed in part to GEAR UP, while others said there was much more discussion at home about college. Given the school’s rural location, it is sometimes difficult to access services or attend events. Yet parents said the GEAR UP coordinator was visible and easy to reach; the bilingual tutor also calls parents, particularly those with LEP, to talk about GEAR UP. Several parents noted that the school held a meeting to discuss the GEAR UP-sponsored summer programs to provide more information.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This district provided PBL training to teachers during three Saturdays in spring 2013, partly funded by GEAR UP. Despite being conducted on the weekend, approximately 30 of 42 possible teachers attended the sessions, the GEAR UP coordinator said. The goal is for teachers to learn principles of effective PBL with a goal of designing two project-based learning activities for students in the 2013–14 school year. In focus groups, teachers said they found this training useful. “The sessions are very informative and are helping us get over the anxiety and prepare for these projects,” one teacher said. Teachers also believed the training would meet a major need for students to do their own problem solving. There are students so afraid of being wrong,” one teacher said. “We have to teach them to use their own problem solving.”

In fall 2013, the school will offer College Board-sponsored training in pre-AP through GEAR UP; this is a priority since there is some concern that there is not enough of a distinction between pre-AP and regular courses. This site also has started to offer vertical alignment activities across Grades 5 through 8, beginning in mathematics due to the goal of algebra readiness. Independent from GEAR UP, this school offers ongoing weekly PD by cluster; a master teacher delivers this PD. Prior to GEAR UP’s launch at the school, teachers also participated in mathematics planning activities with high school teachers as well as training on incorporating technology into the classroom. Since the school already had extensive PD in place, they said they worked hard to coordinate any GEAR UP activities with what already was taking place in the school. As for the high attendance at weekend PBL workshops, a program administrator said the school has developed a positive climate that stems from the principal “praising teachers” and “a willingness of teachers to buy in and be a part of this.”

Overall, teachers in the focus groups had basic knowledge of GEAR UP, noting that the program would follow Grade 7 students through high school. One noted that she thought it was “a math and science program, mostly math.” Others cited more general goals such as preparing students for high school and college.

### E.3.3 Emerging Promising Practices

#### ADMINISTRATIVE APPROACH

The most significant activity in this district likely was the hiring of a full-time, grant-funded GEAR UP coordinator with no other responsibilities than to build the program. Housed in the school’s main office, the GEAR UP coordinator has regular access to a supportive school principal, as well as other programs at the school, such as CIS, with whom GEAR UP developed a promising partnership to provide job shadowing trips. The full-time GEAR UP coordinator, with ample school administrative experience, was able to manage all aspects of the program, from student and parent services to teacher PD, in a coordinated way. The GEAR UP coordinator also built relationships with community partners that facilitated the development of afterschool and summer activities geared around project goals such as increased college awareness and preparation for Algebra I in Grade 8.

#### COLLEGE VISITS

Similar to other GEAR UP programs, this site offered college visits that were deemed effective by students (as well as teachers) who attended the field trips. But this site also tied the college visits to specific activities within the school building, as teachers conducted pre- and post-visit learning activities. In English language arts classes, students researched colleges before and after the visits and, under one teacher’s direction, students designed three-panel brochures about a college they created for the activity. In an English language arts class for students with LEP, the teacher led a writing exercise in which students listed what they learned about college

and prepared an essay on the topic. Such activities provide a seamless and lasting link between an educational field trip and in-school activities.

### **JOB SHADOWING**

Through a partnership with CIS, the local municipal government, and local employers, this site offered three opportunities for students to attend job shadowing activities outside the school building. The experience in local government, where students played the role of city council members and examined municipal issues, was especially popular with students.

#### **E.3.4 District Challenges**

The site's location can be a challenge with scheduling afterschool activities, events, and field trips. One parent, for example, urged GEAR UP to offer tutoring not only to struggling students but also to those earning As and Bs, since students have few resources nearby such as libraries. In addition, teachers believed that pre-AP classes were not always more rigorous than regular classes; in response, the site plans pre-AP training for teachers to promote higher standards.

#### **E.3.5 Future Plans**

Based on interviews at the site, a key challenge is the school/district poverty rate, which may be reflected in a lack of understanding and interest in postsecondary education. As one school official said, "There is a mentality in this community that high school is the end of school."

As a result of the summer 2013 programs, the school expects half or more students to take Algebra I in the 2013–14 school year. Mathematics teachers on site strongly believe that the school can meet this goal successfully, and the school will offer academic support for students needing extra assistance. To promote PBL, GEAR UP may take teachers to sites in Texas that successfully deploy the strategy. The goal is for GEAR UP teachers to do two PBL activities with students in the 2013–14 school year.

The district and partners also plan to sustain many activities for future cohorts not participating in GEAR UP. Teachers served as chaperones for 2012–13 school year college visits, and the GEAR UP coordinator plans to recruit 'teacher-leaders' to take over responsibility for these visits for future Grade 7 students. The local university that worked with GEAR UP students this year also indicated it will continue outreach to future Grade 7 cohorts. Since the university already partners with the local high school and the GEAR UP program, it would incur only minimal costs to continue such outreach services to future Grade 7 students, a college official said.

The evaluation team will conduct two additional site visits to District 3 at the beginning and the end of the 2013–14 school year to conduct interviews and focus groups with the same people as in May 2013. Future evaluation reports will report on analysis of data collected across multiple site visits to explore common themes about program implementation and impact over time.

## **E.4 Case Study: District 4**

### **E.4.1 Overview**

ICF conducted a site visit to District 4 in May 2013 that included focus groups with students, teachers, parents, and community partners, plus semi-structured interviews with a program administrator and school administrators. This section of the report is a presentation of the analysis of the site visit data collected in District 4.

#### E.4.2 Description of Year 1 GEAR UP Activities (2012–13)

This district set project goals that mirror those of the overall Texas GEAR UP SG, including raising student and parent awareness about postsecondary education, increasing student participation and achievement in rigorous college preparatory classes such as pre-AP courses and Algebra I, and enhancing teacher skills through PD and opportunities for vertical alignment. At the district level, the GEAR UP coordinator has been engaged in this assignment since early in spring 2013. This individual does have other non-GEAR UP responsibilities in the district. At the school level, an assistant principal is the primary GEAR UP contact.

##### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

The district offered virtual tutoring to GEAR UP students during the school year with funds outside of the grant. GEAR UP students will have the opportunity to participate in a summer math camp, and the target population for this camp was described by one administrator as “bubble kids” who perform well academically but who may not be ready for Algebra I in Grade 8. This activity is designed to support the goal that at least 30% of cohort students succeed in Algebra I in Grade 8. The camp was expected to last up to three weeks.

##### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

This district scheduled a parent kickoff event to publicize GEAR UP to students and their families. The purpose of the event was to provide information about GEAR UP to families and explain how their students would benefit. In addition, the district held Princeton Review workshops for parents explaining the college application and admissions process. To encourage parent attendance at one session, students could get a longer lunch break if their parents attended the workshop. Overall, attendance at parent events was described by district officials as moderately successful, with individual events attracting 10 to 65 participants.

Parents attending site visit focus groups said they do want to be involved when they have advance knowledge of an event or activity. “We are active when we are aware,” one parent said. One challenge is that students may not tell parents about upcoming activities. Parents agreed that they need more information from the school about activities. Most of the parents attending the focus groups had little understanding of GEAR UP. As one said, “I’m here [at the focus group] because I want to learn more.” One parent noted that the GEAR UP survey was her only information about the program. Most parents at the focus groups, which were held in both English and Spanish, said they were interested in learning about college and, particularly, whether students might receive an iPad® through the program. Parents said their children do talk about college, but many lack self-esteem and confidence.

During the site visit, teachers and administrators indicated that parent involvement in the past had been low. One administrator also believed GEAR UP could be beneficial to parents by educating them about college and taking them on college visits. This official also said GEAR UP could help work with girls and their families to emphasize the importance of college, since families in the communities sometimes do not view postsecondary education as an option for females. In their focus groups, teachers said they were given a role in determining how to increase parent attendance at GEAR UP events. “There was an emergency faculty meeting that stressed 50% parent involvement at the kickoff event was needed,” one teacher said, noting that teachers were to make announcements about the kickoff. Teachers noted that GEAR UP faces a challenge because of a lack of college-going culture in the community. “Since many families in the community have survived without college, they do not see it as a necessity,” one teacher said.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Princeton Review is a current partner providing college admission awareness and education for the district. The district also partners with CIS, a private learning center, and a local university for tutoring. There was no community partner focus group as the coordinator indicated that the school was still developing this aspect of the program.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The district had not conducted any GEAR UP-related PD by the date of the site visit. However, it planned to send teachers of GEAR UP students to pre-AP training during the summer. Teachers at one focus group noted that attendance at this workshop is required if they want to teach pre-AP next year. As part of the summer PD, teachers said they were told they will “buddy up” with a high school teacher for the training, part of an effort to promote vertical alignment in the curriculum. At site visit focus groups, teachers noted there were occasional department meetings but they did not consider this vertical alignment. “It’s something we talk about but nothing we actually do,” one teacher noted.

### **E.4.3 Emerging Promising Practices**

Given the shortened implementation of the program, activities and events in this district were in the start-up phase at the time of the site visit. No discernible promising practices were observed or noted at the time of this report. However, it was clear that the district was working to engage students and teachers and working with the district GEAR UP coordinator.

### **E.4.4 District Challenges**

Based on the analysis of data collected during the site visit, several challenges emerged in the areas of staffing, parent involvement, lack of knowledge, and student readiness.

## **STAFFING**

One point emphasized by teachers in the focus groups was that the district GEAR UP coordinator had to juggle many responsibilities, including GEAR UP. These teachers believed that a larger staff commitment was needed to improve the program’s reach. At the school level, the district also changed the primary point of contact during the initial months of implementation. At first, a mid-level school staff member was the primary contact, but this individual “did not have the authority to make things happen,” one administrator said. The district now utilizes an assistant principal as the school-site point of contact.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Teachers and administrators who participated in site visit focus groups and interviews indicated difficulty with getting parents involved in school-related activities. Attendance at events is typically low. Possible reasons may be that parents, particularly those with LEP, do not have a high comfort level with schools. In Spanish-language focus groups, parents indicated the need to make sure that there are translation services available for all events.

## **LACK OF KNOWLEDGE**

Most parents who participated in focus groups had only limited knowledge of GEAR UP; program knowledge was uneven among both teachers and students, according to the focus group findings. At an English-language focus group, one parent described GEAR UP as a program “preparing them for the world,” though two parents noted that the program’s aim was to promote college exploration. Only a small number of parents at Spanish-language focus groups could identify the program as one that prepares students for college. When asked what GEAR UP was, one parent in the Spanish-language group laughed and said that her child told her, “When you go to the focus group, you’ll learn what it’s about.” Another parent at the focus

group questioned whether the program was just for struggling students. “My daughter already is doing well. I don’t really know why she is in the program.”

Teachers and students participating in the focus groups also had limited knowledge. “The program follows the kids and supports them, but I’m really not aware of any specifics,” one teacher said. Another identified it mostly as an afterschool program. Teachers who reported some knowledge of the program appeared to demonstrate only a surface-level understanding. One teacher noted that information received about GEAR UP is “last minute.” Students at one focus group said there had been no activities other than a kickoff meeting and parent events. “What is it?” one student asked about GEAR UP. Two students at this focus group said that GEAR UP involved college or “getting ready for education,” and they noted that a college visit was to take place within a few weeks.

### STUDENT READINESS

A majority of teachers in focus groups indicated that most students were not ready to be successful in pre-AP and AP classes. While a handful of students historically perform well, most students are lacking the needed prerequisite knowledge and skills to do well. These teachers indicated that pre-AP classes are not as rigorous as they should be, and that the district did not have a formal pre-AP curriculum. One teacher said, “teachers do not teach them any differently than any other class. It does not seem to be as rigorous as other districts.” Another added, “The kids in pre-AP are still behind what the teachers feel is true pre-AP.” Teachers said they sometimes customized their own materials for pre-AP classwork. Most also believed that any GEAR UP PD related to pre-AP and AP instruction would be beneficial. Two teachers noted that class sizes in pre-AP often are large, with up to 33 students, adding another challenge in promoting rigor. Teachers also recommended having more paraprofessionals in classes to address overcrowding. Teachers at one focus group also voiced concern about the ending of the AVID program, noting that it had been effective in reaching disadvantaged students. One teacher expressed hope that GEAR UP could help fill that gap in the future.

Despite more academic structure, however, teachers at the focus groups indicated that district students face many challenges. One teacher said he believed only a small number of students are interested in college, while others cited a lack of self confidence among many students. “For many it is a day-to-day existence,” one teacher said, as students may have incarcerated parents and basic needs that take precedence over future thoughts about college.

#### E.4.5 Future Plans

District 4 scheduled summer 2013 activities with a focus on preparing students to succeed in more rigorous courses in Grade 8. For students, the district scheduled a mathematics summer camp for many of those preparing to enroll in Algebra I in fall 2013. The district also scheduled pre-AP and AP teacher training focused on vertical alignment and advanced instruction. For the upcoming school year, GEAR UP staff plan to conduct college visits for students, continue Princeton Review workshops, and find ways to get more parents involved.

When prompted during interviews and focus groups, administrators and teachers cited a variety of potentially useful activities for the 2013–14 school year, such as job shadowing for students, college visits for parents, and more vertical alignment of teachers. Based on interviews, GEAR UP activities expected for the 2013–14 school year at all sites included additional Algebra I classes, more college visits, and more tutoring.

Given the shortened period of implementation this year, there has been little discussion about how to sustain GEAR UP activities for future, non-GEAR UP cohorts of students. This issue will be examined more closely next year, one official said.

The evaluation team will conduct two additional site visits to District 4 at the beginning and the end of the 2013–14 school year to conduct interviews and focus groups with the same people as in May 2013. Future evaluation reports will report on analysis of data collected across the multiple site visits to explore common themes about program implementation and impact over time.



## Appendix F: Implementation Analyses Technical Detail

To facilitate ease of reading, much of the data provided in Chapters 2 and 3 has been summarized to highlight issues of particular interest. This Appendix provides more detailed tables related to the range of findings reported in these chapters.

### F.1 Characteristics of Students Participating in Texas GEAR UP SG, 2012–13

As of March 2013, 1,965 Grade 7 students attended one of the seven participating Texas Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) state grant (SG) schools. Demographic information about the students is presented in Table F.1. Race/ethnicity varied by campus. On four of the seven campuses, the majority of students were Hispanic/Latino (ranging from 87% to 98%), most of whom identify as white, Hispanic. At the remaining three campuses, while large percentages of students were identified as Hispanic, the majority of non-Hispanic students identified as Black or African American (ranging from 67% to 93%). The percentage of students identified as limited English proficient (LEP), which averaged 13%, varied significantly by campus, with School D and School G having lower percentages of LEP students (1% and 6%, respectively) as compared to other campuses (12% to 21%). Future analyses will examine outcomes with regard to both current and former LEP status students. Across schools, an additional 7% of students had recently exited from LEP status. Additional demographic and prior performance information on students will be available in future reports. For example, economically disadvantaged status (free/reduced lunch participation) and performance on Grade 6 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness® (STAAR) was not available to the evaluation team when writing this report.

**Table F.1. Percentages of Students by Demographic Characteristic and School, 2012–13**

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Students	Female	Hispanic/ Latino Students	Limited English Proficient	Special Education
School A	310	48.7%	99.0%	12.3%	12.3%
School B	315	49.5%	98.1%	16.2%	12.1%
School C	255	44.3%	98.4%	19.9%	9.0%
School D	199	41.7%	42.7%	1.0%	14.6%
School E	266	44.4%	60.9%	21.4%	8.3%
School F	316	51.3%	58.5%	13.3%	10.8%
School G	304	44.4%	86.5%	6.3%	14.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,965</b>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>79.5%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2013.

**Table F.2. Percentages of Grade 7 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses, by Content Area, 2012–13**

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Students	Advanced Mathematics Course	Advanced English Language Arts	Advanced Science
School A	310	20.0%	16.5%	19.7%
School B	315	23.2%	26.3%	27.0%
School C	255	18.8%	13.7%	17.3%
School D	199	28.6%	38.2%	41.2%
School E	266	22.6%	0.0%	0.0%
School F	316	26.3%	31.6%	27.2%
School G	304	18.4%	10.2%	17.1%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2013.

**Table F.3. Percentage of Grade 7 Students Enrolled in Advanced Courses, 2012–13**

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of Students	Not Enrolled in Advanced Courses	Enrolled in at Least One Advanced Course	Enrolled in Two Advanced Courses	Enrolled in Three Advanced Courses
School A	310	74.5%	5.8%	8.7%	11.0%
School B	315	63.5%	10.8%	11.4%	14.3%
School C	255	72.2%	13.8%	13.8%	6.7%
School D	199	46.7%	14.6%	22.6%	16.1%
School E	266	77.4%	22.6%	0.0%	0.0%
School F	316	57.9%	14.2%	12.7%	15.2%
School G	304	78.9%	4.6%	5.6%	10.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2013.

**Table F.4. Description of Student Workshops/Events by School, 2012–13**

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Students Participating
School A	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	7
School A	MSTAAR Exam	The MSTAAAR exam assesses a student's readiness level to take Algebra I.	1	Other	221
School B	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	54
School B	MSTAAR Exam	The MSTAAAR exam assesses a student's readiness level to take Algebra I.	1	Other	252
School C	Road Map to College Session 1	The Princeton Review provided a college readiness session to inform students and parents on the college admission process.	1	Family Event	15
School C	Road Map to College Session 2	The Princeton Review provided a college readiness session to inform students and parents of the financial resources available to attend college.	1	Family Event	4
School C	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	7
School D	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
School E	GEAR UP Kick-Off	Talked about the goals and objectives of GEAR UP. Introduced all the services the students will have in the GEAR UP Program. Had a guest	1	Other	186

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Students Participating
		speaker to motivate the students to Kick-Off GEAR UP.			
School E	Parent Workshop Series Session 1	The parents and students explored career interests, learned about planning for future education and the many options that exist, learned more about college academic/campus life and support systems for students, and heard about the many ways to pay for a college education.	1.5	Family Event	24
School E	Student Workshop	Student Workshop on Goal Setting.	1	In-person Student Workshop	25
School E	Afterschool Mathematics Program Orientation	The Afterschool Mathematics Program is a readiness afterschool program. The program is designed to prepare students for success when taking Algebra I the following school year. The Afterschool Mathematics Program strengthens students' understanding of fundamental math and algebraic concepts to provide a solid foundation for success in Algebra I. The activities are engaging, interactive, and project based.	1	In-person Student Workshop: Math	60
School F	GEAR UP Kick-Off	Talked about the goals and objectives of GEAR UP. Introduced all of the services the students will have in the GEAR UP Program. Had a guest speaker to motivate the students to kick off GEAR UP.	1.5	Other	244
School F	Parent Workshop Series Session 1	The parents and children explored career interests, learned about planning for future education and the many options that exist, learned more about college academic/campus life and support systems for students, and also heard about the many ways to pay for a college education.	1.5	Family Event	24
School F	Student Workshop	Student workshop on goal setting	1	In-person Student Workshop	27
School F	Parent Workshop Series Session 2	Financial Literacy Part 1: Parents and students gained valuable information on financial aspects of college and the many ways to pay for education. Participants gained knowledge about scholarships, grants, student loans, and financial aid.	1.5	Family Event	23
School G	DUKE TIP SAT	Students were given an overview of the SAT test, the Duke Talent	1	In-person Student	31

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Students Participating
	Preparation	Identification Program (Duke TIP) and how it relates to college readiness.		Workshop	
School G	SAT Participation	Students took the SAT Test as a part of the Duke TIP.	5	Other	27
School G	Summer Engineering Program Information	Students were given an overview of the Summer Engineering Program at a local college.	0.5	In-person Student Workshop: Other	49
School G	Summer Engineering Program Information and Application Support	Students were provided a session on how to complete the summer engineering program application, writing a quality essay, and how this will connect to high school and college success.	1.5	In-person Student Workshop: Other	12
School G	GEAR UP Overview	Students were given an overview of the GEAR UP Program and brainstormed ideas for how to get Grade 7 students interested in college.	1	In-person Student Workshop	21
School G	Expand Your Horizons Girls STEM Conference	Girls in Grade 7 and 8 attended a Saturday STEM Conference at a local university. Students had a college tour and attended various STEM and career focused sessions.	6	College Visits	28
School G	College Awareness Sessions	Students were given a lesson on "Why College?" They worked on creating a poster that was then put in a campus display.	1.5	In-person Student Workshop	78
School G	College Awareness Sessions	Students were given a lesson on "Why College?" They worked on creating a poster that was then put in a campus display.	1	In-person Student Workshop	184

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2013.

**Table F.5. Description of Parent/Family Events by School, 2012–13**

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Parents Participating
School A	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	5
School B	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	1

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Parents Participating
School C	Road Map to College Session 1	The Princeton Review provided a college readiness session to inform students and parents on the college admission process.	1	Family Event	15
School C	Road Map to College Session 2	The Princeton Review provided a college readiness session to inform students and parents of the financial resources available to attend college.	1	Family Event	4
School C	2013 District Career & College Family Event	The district-wide event provided students and parents with information about the career pathways available and guidance on how to prepare for college for those fields.	5	Family Event	7
School D	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
School E	Parent Workshop Series Session 1	The parents and students explored career interests, learned about planning for future education and many options that exist, learned more about college academic/campus life and support systems for students, and also heard about the many ways to pay for a college education. The parents navigated the websites "Own Your Own Future" and "Big Future."	1.5	Family Event	23
School F	Parent Workshop Series Session 1	The parents and students explored career interests, learned about planning for future education and many options that exist, learned more about college academic/campus life and support systems for students, and also heard about the many ways to pay for a college education. The parents navigated the websites "Own Your Own Future" and "Big Future."	1.5	Family Event	16
School F	Parent Workshop Series Session 2	The families learned about financial literacy at the session. They gained valuable information of financial aspects of college and the many ways to pay for education. Some of topics were scholarships, grants, student loans, and financial aid.	1.5	Family Event	13
School G	Breakfast Event Distribution of GEAR UP Information	Distributed GEAR UP brochure to Grade 7 parents who were present at the event	0.5	Other	8

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Parents Participating
School G	Mail out of GEAR UP Brochure, Program Information Letter, and "Own Your Own Future" Informational Flyer from the State Office	Mailed information to all actively enrolled cohort students.	0	Other	290
School G	College Awareness Workshop	Utilized "Own Your Own Future" materials to conduct a parent session titled, "Why College?"	1	In-person Parent Family Workshops	3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas GEAR UP SG Annual Performance Report, Spring 2013.

**Table F.6. Parents' Participation in Parent Events, 2012–13**

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of GEAR UP Students	Number of Activities Offered	Average Hours of Participation	Average Activity Length (in hours)
School A	310	1	5.0	5.0
School B	315	1	1.0	5.0
School C	255	4	8.7	2.3
School D	199	0	0.0	0.0
School E	266	1	23.0	1.5
School F	316	2	14.5	1.5
School G	304	3	100.0*	0.5

Source: Texas Education Agency, Annual Performance Report for Partnership and State Projects, 2012–13.

\*School Annual Performance Report data reported mailing as an activity.

**Table F.7. Description of Teacher Professional Development by School, 2012–13**

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Teachers/Administrators Participating
School A	GEAR UP Workshop	GEAR UP Workshop in Las Vegas, NV	20	In-person	3
School B	GEAR UP Workshop	GEAR UP Workshop in Las Vegas, NV	20	In-person	1
School C	GEAR UP Workshop	GEAR UP Workshop in Las Vegas, NV	20	In-person	1
School D	Bridges	Focused on career and college readiness for students	1	In-person	3
School D	Cornell Notes	Focused on Cornell Notes strategies	1.5	In-person	19
School D	College Readiness	College Readiness TEKS Standards	0.5	In-person	3
School E	NCCEP/GEAR UP Capacity Building	GEAR UP 101 training was on the implementation for first-year awarded GEAR UP Programs. Attendees included Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Coordinators.	25.5	In-person	3



School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Teachers/Administrators Participating
School E	Training on Tutoring	Training on Tutoring is a strand designed for experienced AVID Teachers, Coordinators, and Site Team Members. It is a program to train, monitor, and coach tutors and students in implementing rigorous tutorials that increase student achievement.	12	In-person	4
School F	NCCEP/GEAR UP Capacity Building	GEAR UP 101 training was on the implementation for first-year awarded GEAR UP Programs. Attendees included Assistant Principal, Counselor, and Coordinators.	25.5	In-person	3
School F	Training on Tutoring	Training on Tutoring is a strand designed for experience AVID Teachers, Coordinators, and Site Team Members. It is a program to train, monitor, and coach tutors and students in implementing rigorous tutorials that increase student achievement.	12	In-person	8
School G	Active Inspire Advanced Training	Teachers received training on how to integrate technology and enhance rigor in the classroom.	6	In-person	8
School G	A Study of the TEKS: Strengthening the Alignment of Curriculum	Teachers in grades PK-12 attended a session at a center associated with a state university designed to look strategically at curriculum, TEKS, and assessments through a vertical lens.	7	In-person	19
School G	Serving Students in Special Programs and Bilingual and Migrant Education	Teachers received information on how to serve students in the special programs.	1	In-person	27
School G	Knowsys Vocabulary Builder Training	Training focused on building the academic language of at-risk learners.	3	In-person	28
School G	GEAR UP Program Information	Teachers were given an overview of the GEAR UP Program goals.	0.5	In-person	26
School G	Secondary Math Activities Workshop	Junior High and High School math teachers worked collaboratively to generate engaging math activities to meet the needs of varied learners in the classroom.	6	In-person	2
School G	Secondary Math Activities Workshop	Junior High and High School math teachers worked collaboratively to generate engaging math activities to meet the needs of varied.	6	In-person	2

School	Event Name	Event Description	Event Length (hours)	Event Delivery Type	Number of GEAR UP Teachers/Administrators Participating
School G	GEAR UP State Conference	School G's GEAR UP Implementation Team attended the state GEAR UP Conference in Austin, TX.	16	In-person	2
School G	GEAR UP Capacity Building National Conference	School G's GEAR UP Implementation Team attended the national GEAR UP Capacity Building Conference in Las Vegas, NV.	30	In-person	2
School G	GEAR UP Purpose and Program Overview	Teachers and staff received an overview of the GEAR UP program purpose and goals.	0.5	In-person	22
School G	GEAR UP Program Purpose and Vertical Planning with Curriculum Department	Shared detailed information with Curriculum Department and planned for vertical alignment	2	In-person	1
School G	GEAR UP Program Collaboration and Summer Planning with IHE	Worked collaboratively with partner at a local college to share a program overview and develop a summer program focused on grant goals and initiatives	2	In-person	1
School G	GEAR UP Program Collaboration and Planning with High School	Planned with High School CTE Coordinator and College Advisor for vertical planning and alignment	2	In-person	1

Source: Texas Education Agency, Annual Performance Report for Partnership and State Projects, 2012–13.

**Table F.8. Teachers' Participation in Teacher Professional Development, 2012–13**

Texas GEAR UP SG Middle School	Number of PD Activities Offered	Average Hours of Participation	Average Activity Length (in hours)
School A	1	3.0	20.0
School B	1	1.0	20.0
School C	1	1.0	20.0
School D	4	5.8	6.0
School E	2	3.5	18.8
School F	2	5.5	18.8
School G	13	10.0	6.3

Source: Texas Education Agency, Annual Performance Report for Partnership and State Projects, 2012–13.

## Appendix G: Student and Family Outcomes Analyses Technical Detail

To facilitate ease of reading, much of the data provided in Chapter 3 has been summarized to highlight issues of particular interest. This Appendix provides more detailed tables related to the range of findings reported in these chapters.

### G.1 Survey Data, 2012–13

#### G.1.1 Survey Administration

In May 2013, ICF conducted surveys with Grade 7 students and their parents/family members in the seven Texas GEAR UP SG schools. School and program staff members, as well as members of the evaluation team, administered online and paper-based student surveys; this use of multiple platforms enabled schools to choose an option most appropriate for their campus. For the parent surveys, methods for administration included having students take copies home and bring completed surveys back to school, requesting completion at Parent events. All seven schools were provided Spanish-language translated surveys, both online and paper-based; 49 parents/family members and 11 students completed the Spanish-language translated surveys.

Program goals, evaluation questions, and prior GEAR UP surveys informed the development of questions to include in the surveys. Analysis from this initial round of data collection will inform ways to improve construct measurement and response options in future survey administration. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all GEAR UP programs include archival survey data for national evaluation purposes. Throughout this section, required items are indicated with a footnote.

#### G.1.2 Data Cleaning

A total of 1,534 students and 431 parents/family members submitted the Texas GEAR UP SG Spring 2013 survey. The majority of students (1,320 respondents) and parents/family members (409 respondents) completed the survey on paper during the school day; 214 students and 22 parents/family members completed the online survey. Analyses included only surveys with at least 50% of items completed; Table G.1 shows the number of excluded surveys for this or other reasons. These surveys were excluded from the response rates reported in Table 3.1. Improved practices in administration and clarified directions will help to address the most frequent reasons for exclusion (completing less than 10% of the survey, declaring having already taken the survey, and indicating a different grade from survey cohort) to minimize the need for exclusion in the future. After data cleaning, 1,385 student surveys (90% of surveys received) and 401 parent surveys (93% of surveys received) remained for analysis. All of the following analyses in this report are based on these revised survey samples.

In an effort to analyze responses for “other,” the research team analyzed open-ended data for patterns and trends. Where appropriate, new categories were developed and data were recoded using the additional options. Future surveys will include these response options. Respondents could skip any item in the survey or stop the survey at any time. Survey results indicate the number of respondents who answered the given item; in many cases, this number is lower than the total number of surveys completed. Additionally, for items that included response options of “Not Applicable (N/A),” survey results calculated the percentages of responses based on the number of respondents who selected options other than N/A.

**Table G.1. Excluded Parent and Student Surveys, 2012–13**

Reason for Exclusion	Number of Parent Surveys Excluded	Number of Student Surveys Excluded
Dissented to take the survey	3	2
Declared that they already took surveys in the other format (online or paper)	3	20
Indicated Grade other than Grade 7/ Indicate they don't have any child in Grade 7	6	20
Completed only 41 to 50% of survey (50% of survey items missing)	2	14
Completed only 31 to 40% of survey (60% of survey items missing)	1	13
Completed only 11 to 20% of survey (80% of survey items missing)	4	10
Completed only 21 to 30% of survey (70% of survey items missing)	1	7
Completed 10% or less of survey (90% of survey items missing)	10	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>149</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

## G.2 Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The All surveys were collected anonymously; Respondents were directed to not put their name on the survey. However, they were asked to complete background items; see Figure 4.3 below for parent and student responses to items about ethnicity/race, gender, free- or reduced-price lunch participation, language spoken, and parent education level.

A majority of both parents (88% of respondents) and students (79% of respondents) identify as Hispanic or Latino. Of parents completing the survey, 83% were female. Students reported participation in free- or reduced-price lunch in smaller percentages than did parents (62% and 85% of respondents, respectively); however 22% of students reported being unsure if they received free- or reduced-price lunch. A similar percentage of parents and students reported speaking English at home (67% and 65% of respondents, respectively). More than half of parents surveyed (57% of respondents) reported that their highest level of education obtained was high school or less; 11% of respondents indicated that they completed a four-year college degree or higher. The 1,334 students who completed the open-ended item asking for their age submitted an average age of 13 years.

**Table G.2. Parent and Student Survey Respondent Demographic Characteristics, 2012–13**

	Number of Parents	Percentage of Parents	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
<b>Ethnicity/Race</b>				
Asian	0	-	11	<1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	<1%	12	<1%
Black or African American	12	3.0%	157	11.3%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	352	87.8%	1,087	78.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	-	2	<1%
White	25	6.2%	58	4.2%
Two or more races	1	<1%	33	2.4%
Race unknown	9	0.2%	25	1.8%
<b>Parent Gender</b>				
Female	333	83.0%	N/A	N/A
Male	55	13.7%	N/A	N/A
<b>Child Gender</b>				
Female	227	57.8%	674	49%
Male	166	42.2%	701	51%
<b>Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation</b>				
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Participation	334	85.4%	835	61.5%
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>				
English	262	66.8%	892	65.1%
Spanish	81	20.7%	373	27.2%
Both English and Spanish	31	7.9%	99	7.2%
Other or Multiple	18	4.6%	6	0.4%
<b>Language Spoken with Friends</b>				
English	N/A	N/A	1,219	90.6%
Spanish	N/A	N/A	45	3.3%
Both English and Spanish	N/A	N/A	79	5.9%
Other	N/A	N/A	3	0.2%
<b>Parent's/Family Member's Highest Level of Education</b>				
High school or less	220	57.0%	N/A	N/A
Some college but less than a two-year/four-year college degree	99	25.6%	N/A	N/A
Two-year college degree	26	6.7%	N/A	N/A
Four-year college degree or higher	31	8.0%	N/A	N/A
Graduate or professional degree	10	2.6%	N/A	N/A

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

### G.3 Educational Expectations and Aspirations Postsecondary Plans

**Table G.3. Parent and Student Comparisons on Educational Aspirations\* and Expectations,\*\* 2012–13**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
Parent Aspirations	373	2.4%	9.4%	8.8%	79.4%
Student Aspirations	1,269	5.9%	14.6%	17.0%	62.5%
Parent Expectations	363	2.5%	9.9%	19.6%	68.0%
Student Expectations	1,156	6.7%	17.8%	30.0%	45.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\* Parent aspirations differed significantly from student aspirations:  $\chi^2(3) = 32.88, p < .001$

\*\* Parent expectations differed significantly from student expectations:  $\chi^2(3) = 53.71, p < .001$

**Table G.4. Parent and Student Differences by School on Educational Aspirations\* and Expectations,\*\* 2012–13**

	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
School A Parent Aspirations*	76	5.3%	9.2%	5.3%	80.3%
School A Student Aspirations*	195	9.2%	17.4%	17.9%	55.4%
School A Parent Expectations**	76	5.3%	10.5%	15.8%	68.4%
School A Student Expectations**	175	12.6%	24.0%	32.0%	31.4%
School C Parent Aspirations*	101	1.0%	12.9%	9.9%	76.2%
School C Student Aspirations*	206	6.3%	13.6%	21.4%	58.7%
School C Parent Expectations**	99	2.0%	11.1%	23.2%	63.6%
School C Student Expectations**	162	8.0%	17.9%	34.6%	39.5%
School G Parent Aspirations*	134	2.2%	9.7%	11.9%	76.1%
School G Student Aspirations*	186	2.2%	15.6%	21.0%	61.3%
School G Parent Expectations**	128	1.6%	10.2%	20.3%	68.0%
School G Student Expectations**	178	3.9%	18.5%	26.4%	51.1%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\* Parent aspirations differed significantly from student aspirations at three schools: School A:  $\chi^2(3) = 12.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ; School C:  $\chi^2(3) = 12.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ; and School G:  $\chi^2(3) = 8.29$ ,  $p < .05$

\*\* Parent expectations differed significantly from student expectations at three schools: School A:  $\chi^2(3) = 29.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ; School C:  $\chi^2(3) = 15.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and School G:  $\chi^2(3) = 9.70$ ,  $p < .05$

NOTE: Significance tests were not run for schools with below at 25% response rate (School E, School D, School B, or School F).

**Table G.5. Parent Educational Aspirations by Expectations,\* 2012–13**

School	n	Expect High School or Less	Expect Some College	Expect Two-Year College Degree	Expect Four-Year College Degree or Higher
Aspire for High School or Less	7	0.0%	28.6%	42.9%	28.6%
Aspire for Some College	27	11.1%	51.9%	18.5%	18.5%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	33	3.0%	9.1%	57.6%	30.3%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree or Higher	280	1.4%	5.7%	15.0%	77.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

\*Parent aspirations differed significantly from parent expectations:  $\chi^2(9) = 115.78$ ,  $p < .001$

NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

**Table G.6. Student Educational Aspirations by Expectations,\* 2012–13**

School	n	Expect High School or Less	Expect Some College	Expect Two-Year College Degree	Expect Four-Year College Degree or Higher
Aspire for High School or Less	51	45.1%	33.3%	9.8%	11.8%
Aspire for Some College	148	12.8%	50.7%	25.0%	11.5%
Aspire for Two-Year College Degree	177	5.1%	25.4%	38.4%	31.1%
Aspire for Four-Year College Degree or Higher	713	2.9%	8.6%	31.1%	57.4%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\*Student aspirations significantly differ from student expectations:  $\chi^2(9) = 366.05$ ,  $p < .001$



### COMPARISONS BY SCHOOL: ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

For aspirations, the percentage of students who would like to obtain a four-year college degree or higher ranged from 53% to 75% across schools and was 70% or higher at School D and School F and below 60% of respondents at School A, School B, and School C. The percentages of students who expect to earn a four-year college degree or higher ranged from a low of 31% to a high of 57%. This expectation exceeded 50% of respondents at School D, School E, and School G, while at School A and School C percentages fell below 40% of respondents. In addition, the difference between students' aspirations and expectations with regard to obtaining a four-year college degree or higher was 10% or less at School B, School E, and School G.

**Table G.7. Student Differences by School on Educational Aspirations,\* 2012–13**

School	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
School A	195	9.2%	17.4%	17.9%	55.4%
School B	204	11.3%	21.1%	14.2%	53.4%
School C	206	6.3%	13.6%	21.4%	58.7%
School D	87	4.6%	12.6%	12.6%	70.1%
School E	159	4.4%	11.3%	17.6%	66.7%
School F	232	2.6%	9.5%	12.9%	75.0%
School G	186	2.2%	15.6%	21.0%	61.3%
<b>Overall (all 7 schools)</b>	<b>1,269</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>62.5%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\* Students' educational aspirations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 56.20, p < .001$

**Table G.8. Student Differences by School on Educational Expectations,\* 2012–13**

School	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
School A	175	12.6%	24.0%	32.0%	31.4%
School B	177	8.5%	19.2%	26.6%	45.8%
School C	162	8.0%	17.9%	34.6%	39.5%
School D	81	6.2%	13.6%	27.2%	53.1%
School E	158	3.2%	13.3%	26.6%	57.0%
School F	225	4.9%	16.0%	34.2%	44.9%
School G	178	3.9%	18.5%	26.4%	51.1%
<b>Overall (all 7 schools)</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>	<b>30.0%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\* Students' educational expectations differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 44.07, p < .01$

**Table G.9. Parent Differences by School on Educational Aspirations, 2012–13**

School	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
School A	76	5.3%	9.2%	5.3%	80.3%
School C	101	1.0%	12.9%	9.9%	76.2%
School G	134	2.2%	9.7%	11.9%	76.1%
<b>Overall (all 7 schools)</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>79.4%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

**Table G.10. Parent Differences by School on Educational Expectations, 2012–13**

School	n	High School or Less	Some College	Two-Year College Degree	Four-Year College Degree or Higher
School A	76	5.3%	10.5%	15.8%	68.4%
School C	99	2.0%	11.1%	23.2%	63.6%
School G	128	1.6%	10.2%	20.3%	68.0%
<b>Overall (all 7 schools)</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>2.5%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>68.0%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Comparisons were not run for schools with below a 25% response rate on parent surveys.

**Table G.11. Student Differences by School: Attending College is Important for My Career Goal and Future,\* 2012–13**

School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
School A	199	6.0%	3.0%	28.6%	62.3%
School B	200	2.5%	2.0%	27.5%	68.0%
School C	197	2.0%	2.5%	21.3%	74.1%
School D	105	2.9%	2.9%	12.4%	81.9%
School E	177	4.5%	2.3%	16.4%	76.8%
School F	244	5.3%	0.8%	24.2%	69.7%
School G	199	5.5%	1.5%	18.1%	74.9%
<b>Overall (all 7 schools)</b>	<b>1,321</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>22.0%</b>	<b>71.7%</b>

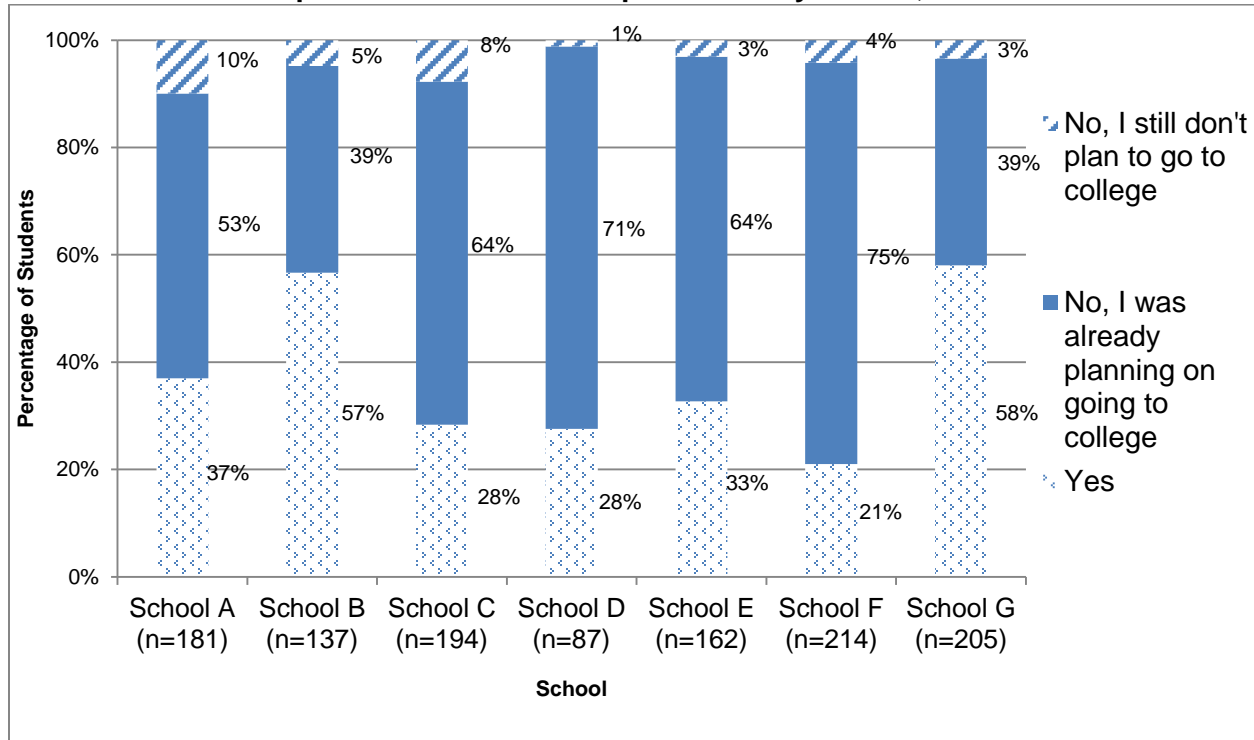
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 31.98, p < .05$

### COMPARISONS BY SCHOOL: PERCEIVED IMPACT OF TEXAS GEAR UP SG ON EDUCATIONAL PLANS

Percentages of students indicating a perceived positive impact (“yes”) ranged from 21% to 58% and were above 50% of respondents at School B and School G, but below 30% of respondents at School C, School D, and School F. The percentage of students indicating they already planned to go to college ranged from 39% to 75% across schools. More than 70% of students were already planning to go to college at School D and School F, while less than 40% of respondents planned to do so at School B and School G.

**Figure G.1. Percentage of Students Who Perceived Impact of Texas GEAR UP SG Participation on Education Expectations by School,\* 2012–13**

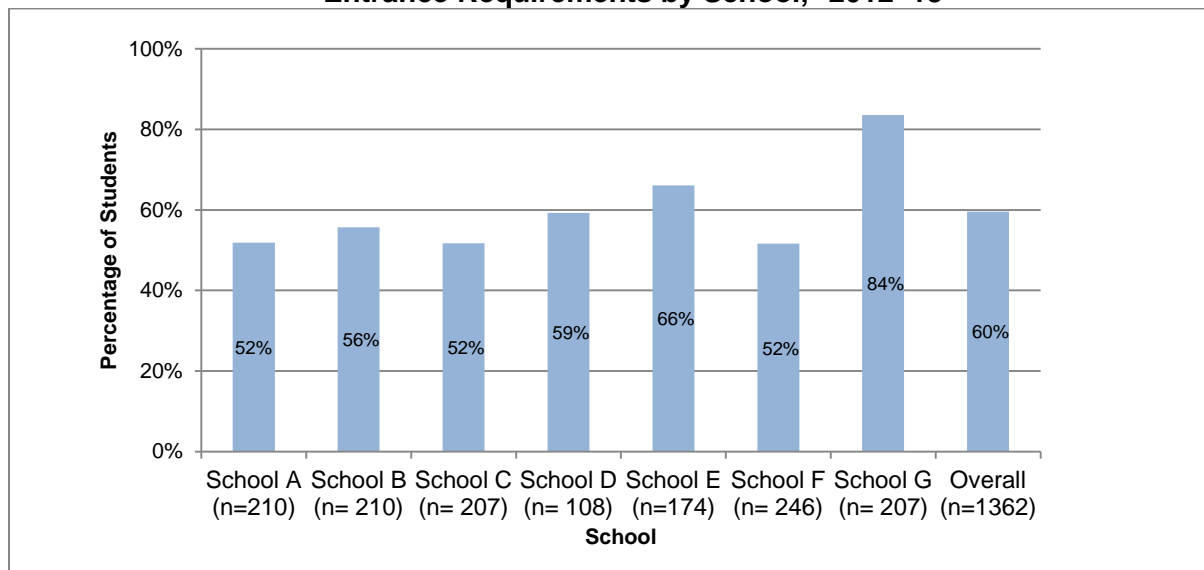


Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\*Student-perceived impact differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(12) = 121.7, p < .001$

#### G.4 Discussions and Knowledge about College

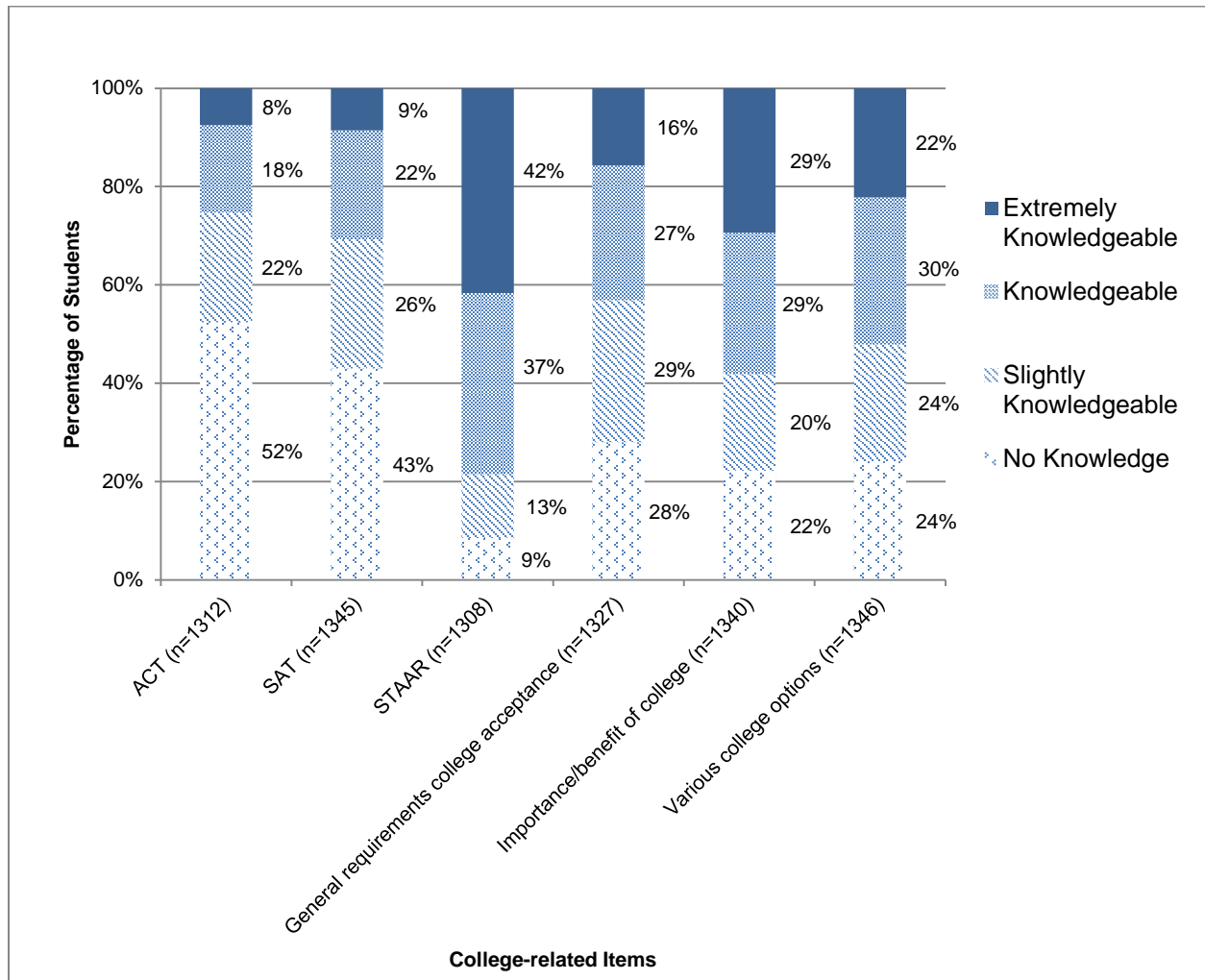
**Figure G.2. Percentage of Students Reporting “Yes” to Discussions about College Entrance Requirements by School,\* 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

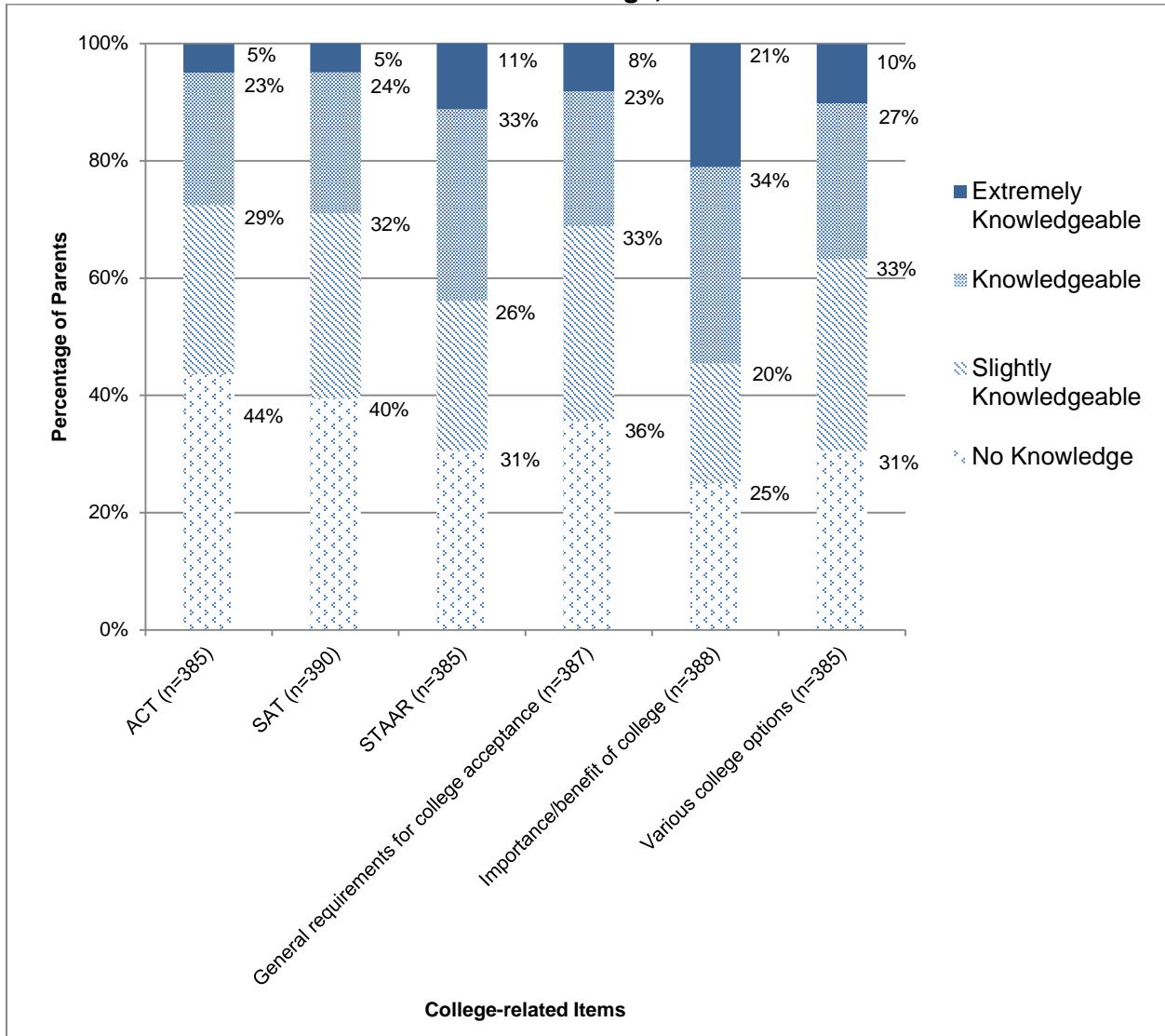
\*Student-reported engagement in discussions about college entrance requirements differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(1) = 70.83, p < .001$

**Figure G.3. Students' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

**Figure G.4. Parents' Perceived Knowledge about College: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

**Table G.12. Students' Plans to Take Advanced Courses: Percentages by Level of Agreement and Content Area, 2012–13**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am planning to take an advanced course in mathematics next year.	1,215	11.2%	20.6%	37.5%	30.7%
I am planning to take an advanced course in English/writing next year.	1,207	9.8%	22.8%	40.1%	27.3%
I am planning to take an advanced course in science next year.	1,210	11.4%	21.0%	36.3%	31.3%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Percentages of those who responded with some level of agreement may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Percentages above reflect the portion of those who responded with some level of agreement; 10–11% of respondents selected "Don't know/Doesn't apply."

**Table G.13. Student Differences by School: Student Plans for Taking Advanced Mathematics\* and English/Writing,\*\* 2012–13**

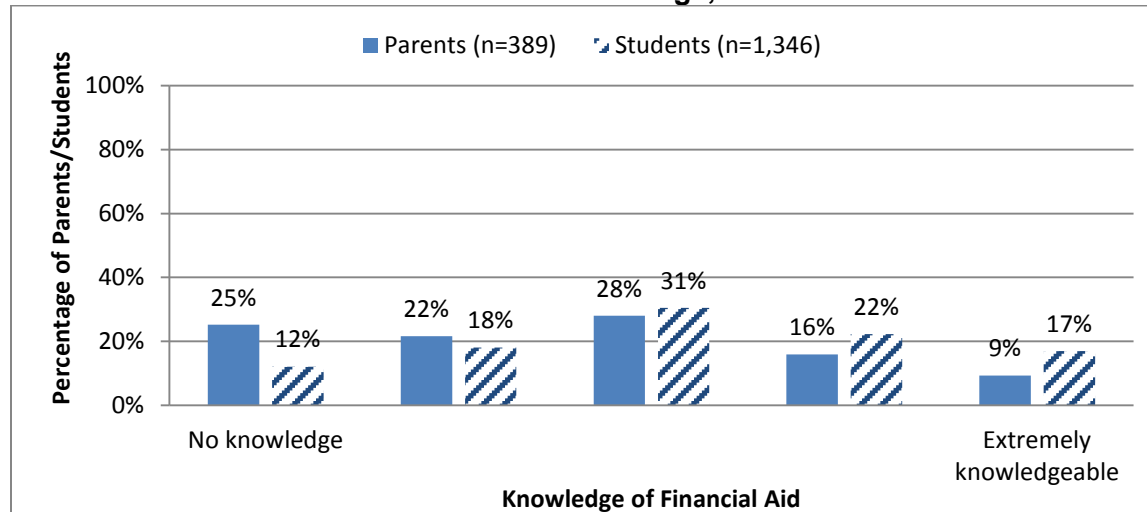
School	n	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Mathematics</b>					
School A	176	13.1%	19.3%	48.9%	18.8%
School B	182	10.4%	18.1%	44.5%	26.9%
School C	182	8.2%	19.8%	36.3%	35.7%
School D	91	8.8%	27.5%	30.8%	33.0%
School E	167	13.2%	18.0%	32.3%	36.5%
School F	232	13.4%	24.1%	31.5%	31.0%
School G	185	9.7%	19.5%	36.8%	34.1%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,215</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>
<b>English/Writing</b>					
School A	176	12.5%	23.3%	41.5%	22.7%
School B	185	5.4%	16.8%	48.1%	29.7%
School C	181	10.5%	23.8%	42.5%	23.2%
School D	97	8.2%	16.5%	35.1%	40.2%
School E	159	10.1%	20.8%	44.7%	24.5%
School F	228	11.0%	27.6%	33.3%	28.1%
School G	181	9.9%	26.5%	35.4%	28.2%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,207</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>40.1%</b>	<b>27.3%</b>

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

\*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 35.65, p < .01$

\*\*Student perceptions differed significantly across schools:  $\chi^2(18) = 31.78, p < .05$

## G.7 Understanding of Financial Aspects Related to Postsecondary Education

**Figure G.5. Parents' and Students' Knowledge Regarding Financial Aid and the Costs/Benefits of Pursuing Postsecondary Education: Percentages by Level of Knowledge, 2012–13**


Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Data are responses to the following questions: "On a scale of 1–5, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits of your child pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge; 5 = extremely knowledgeable)" and "On a scale of 1–5, to what extent are you knowledgeable about financial aid and the cost and benefits to you in pursuing postsecondary education (1 = no knowledge; 5 = extremely knowledgeable)."



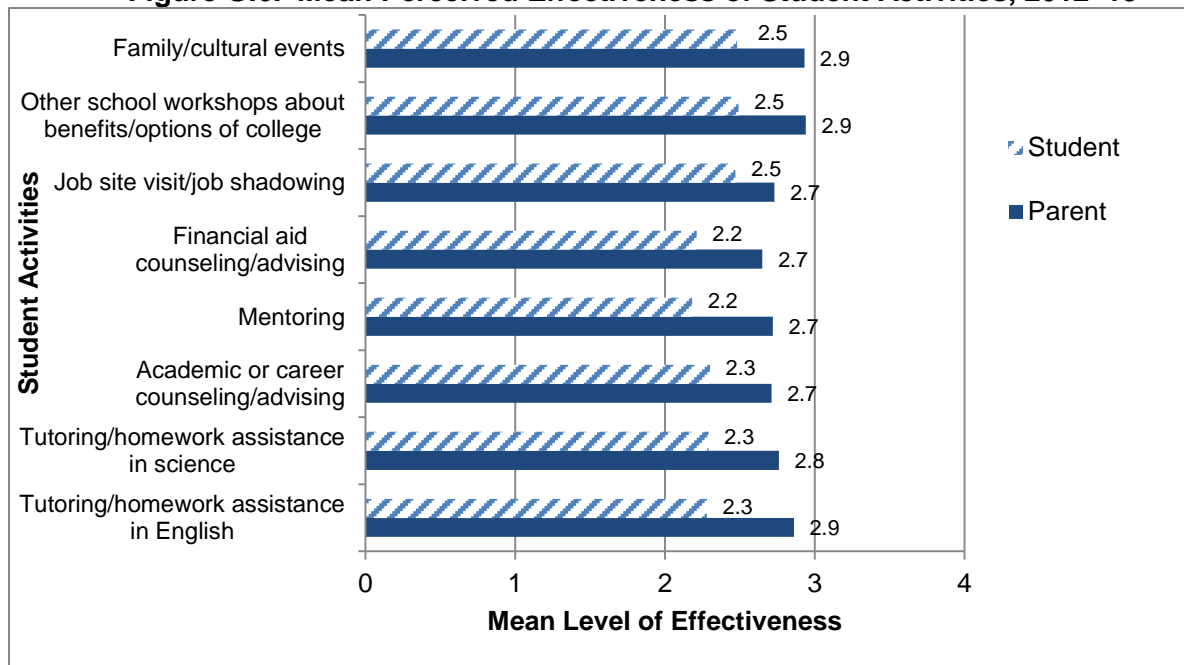
**Table G.14. Student and Parent Knowledge about Financial Aid Terms, 2012–13**

School	n	No Knowledge	Slightly Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
<b>Student</b>					
FAFSA	1,346	65.2%	20.7%	11.9%	2.2%
Federal Pell Grants	1,316	63.2%	22.4%	10.2%	4.2%
Federal student loans	1,336	36.2%	29.3%	25.1%	9.4%
Federal work-study	1,310	52.3%	23.8%	16.4%	7.5%
Scholarships	1,326	7.6%	15.3%	35.1%	42.0%
<b>Parent</b>					
FAFSA	390	38.7%	29.2%	24.1%	7.9%
Federal Pell Grants	387	38.5%	28.7%	24.5%	8.3%
Federal student loans	384	35.4%	28.4%	26.3%	9.9%
Federal work-study	384	51.6%	22.9%	17.7%	7.8%
Scholarships	391	22.8%	35.8%	28.9%	12.5%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

## G.8 Perceptions of Texas GEAR UP State Grant

**Figure G.6. Mean Perceived Effectiveness of Student Activities, 2012–13**



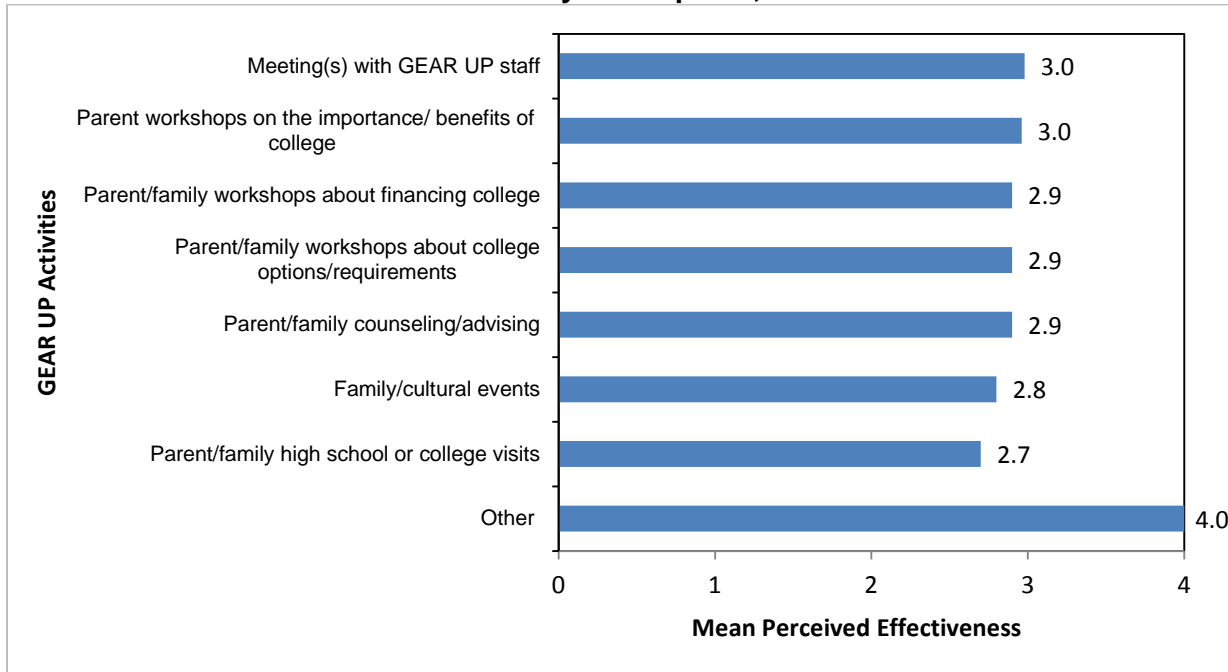
Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

**Table G.15. Student and Parent Knowledge about Financial Aid Terms, 2012–13**

Activity	n	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Mostly Effective	Very Effective
<b>Student</b>					
Taking an advanced mathematics course	1,085 (1,364)	16.2%	24.1%	30.9%	28.8%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	1,063 (1,362)	17.6%	28.4%	27.8%	26.2%
Taking an advanced science course	1,041 (1,355)	17.4%	25.5%	30.7%	26.4%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	1,043 (1,352)	18.3%	28.1%	29.1%	24.5%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	959 (1,358)	25.8%	29.5%	25.2%	19.5%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	957 (1,362)	26.2%	28.9%	26.2%	18.6%
Academic or career counseling/advising	952 (1,346)	27.3%	30.4%	26.5%	15.9%
Mentoring	945 (1,341)	29.1%	27.8%	25.9%	17.1%
Financial aid counseling/advising	914 (1,337)	30.4%	29.5%	23.5%	16.5%
College visits/college student shadowing	1,060 (1,356)	16.3%	23.4%	29.1%	31.2%
Job site visit/job shadowing	953 (1,346)	23.5%	24.9%	28.2%	23.4%
Educational field trips	1,138 (1,349)	13.0%	20.3%	29.1%	37.6%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	1,001 (1,339)	21.7%	24.7%	29.7%	24.0%
Family/cultural events	1,065 (1,335)	20.2%	25.2%	28.6%	26.0%
Other	20 (20)	10.0%	15.0%	15.0%	60.0%
<b>Parent</b>					
Taking an advanced mathematics course	237 (381)	9.3%	17.3%	31.2%	42.2%
Taking an advanced English/writing course	229 (376)	11.8%	15.7%	31.4%	41.0%
Taking an advanced science course	231 (376)	12.6%	15.6%	29.9%	42.0%
Tutoring/homework assistance in math	284 (382)	8.1%	20.0%	29.8%	42.1%
Tutoring/homework assistance in English	246 (381)	10.6%	21.1%	31.7%	36.6%
Tutoring/homework assistance in science	244 (379)	13.5%	21.7%	29.5%	35.2%
Academic or career counseling/advising	225 (372)	15.6%	21.8%	28.4%	34.2%
Mentoring	217 (370)	17.8%	20.1%	26.5%	35.6%
Financial aid counseling/advising	220 (377)	16.8%	24.5%	25.9%	32.7%
College visits/college student shadowing	279 (380)	9.0%	17.2%	27.2%	46.6%
Job site visit/job shadowing	190 (373)	19.5%	17.9%	28.9%	33.7%
Educational field trips	323 (380)	6.2%	14.5%	28.4%	50.9%
Other school workshops about benefits/options of college	250 (377)	12.7%	14.3%	31.5%	41.4%
Family/cultural events	261 (374)	9.9%	19.0%	30.0%	41.1%
Other	2 (2)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).  
 NOTE: Percentages exclude "Not applicable/Did not participate or attend" responses. Number of total responses including this choice is in parenthesis.

**Figure G.7. Parents’ Mean Perceived Effectiveness of GEAR UP Activities in Which They Participated, 2012–13**



Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Response options to the questions “Think about the GEAR UP events/activities you participated in this school year” and “How effective was each in helping your child to succeed in school/prepare to go to college?” are scaled as follows: 1 – Not Effective; 2 – Slightly Effective; 3 – Mostly Effective; 4 – Very Effective. Survey Data Appendix displays the percentages for each response option as well as standard deviations and subject specific data on advanced course taking and tutoring. Averages above reflect the portion of those who selected some level of effectiveness; for each item; 39.1% to 51.9% of respondents indicated “Not applicable/Did not participate or attend” across the items.

## G.9 Overall Perceptions of and Satisfaction with Texas GEARUP SG

**Table G.16. Parents’ and Students’ Overall Satisfaction with Texas GEAR UP SG: Percentages by Level of Satisfaction, 2012–13**

	n	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your child’s school?	274	2.2%	3.3%	48.9%	45.6%
Overall, how satisfied have you been with the GEAR UP program at your school?	1,028	5.4%	9.6%	57.0%	27.9%

Source: Texas GEAR UP SG Parent Surveys (Spring 2013); Texas GEAR UP SG Student Surveys (Spring 2013).

NOTE: Total percentages may not total exactly 100% due to rounding. Percentages above reflect the portion of those who selected some level of satisfaction; 23.9% to 28.5% of respondents indicated “Does Not Apply, I have not participated in GEAR UP.”